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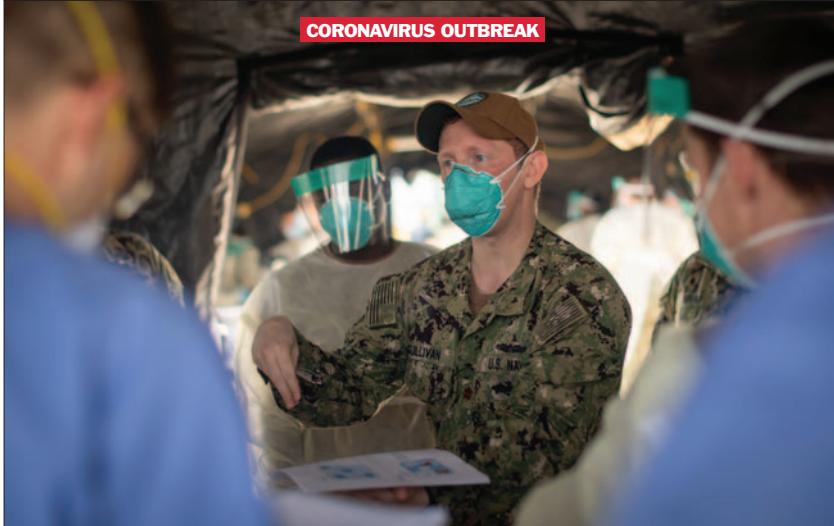
CONTINGENCY EDITION

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Free to Deployed Areas

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK



ALEX CORONA/U.S. NAVY

Lt. Cmdr. Andrew Sullivan, center, addresses the medical team while preparing for sailors aboard the guided-missile destroyer USS Kidd to arrive April 28 as part of the Navy's aggressive response to the COVID-19 outbreak on board the ship.

AFGHANISTAN

US-led coalition restricts release of violence data, watchdog says

By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The U.S.-led coalition in Afghanistan is for the first time withholding information about enemy attacks in Afghanistan from the public, as violence rises in the country and the U.S. begins drawing down its troops, a U.S. government watchdog said Friday.

Casualty figures among U.S.-trained and funded Afghan security forces have also been classified, adding to a growing list of data that's been restricted or is no longer tracked, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction John Sopko said in a quarterly report to Congress.

Enemy attack information, which was used to measure security in Afghanistan, "was one of the last remaining metrics" provided to SIGAR for public release, the watchdog said in the report. The U.S.-led NATO Resolute Support mission told SIGAR it is withholding the information because it's become a critical part of discussions in ongoing negotiations between the U.S. and Taliban, the report said.

The Defense Department may release the data once those discussions end, according to the report.

Instead of providing SIGAR with enemy attack information, including successful attacks, Resolute Support said that in the month following the signing of the U.S.-Taliban deal, attacks by the insurgents on coalition forces decreased but those on Afghan security forces were at levels beyond "seasonal norms," the report said.

The U.S. has begun withdrawing its forces as part of the deal signed with the Taliban, which would see

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Lessons learned

Information derived from USS Roosevelt outbreak helped USS Kidd

By ROBERT BURNS
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Navy destroyer USS Kidd was heading east across the Pacific from Pearl Harbor when it added an unusual twist to its transit — a quarantine-and-isolation drill. The practice was part of a new protocol built on lessons from a coronavirus outbreak aboard an aircraft carrier soon to be sidelined with sickness.

"That ... actually helped us quite a bit to prepare for what was to come," the Kidd's commanding officer, Cmdr. Nathan Wemett, said in a telephone interview Thursday from aboard the ship.

What was coming a few weeks later for Wemett and his crew of about 330 was a COVID-19 outbreak that is just the second aboard a Navy ship at sea. Nearly one-quarter of the Kidd's crew has the virus. Still,

INSIDE

Roosevelt cases exceed 1K; Navy launches probe

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Get the latest on the virus outbreak

stripes.com/coronavirus

lessons learned from the outbreak aboard the aircraft carrier, the USS Roosevelt, has allowed the Kidd to avoid a similar spectacle of crisis.

The Kidd's circumstance is not completely comparable to that of the nuclear-powered Roosevelt, whose crew of 4,900 is far larger and whose presence in the Pacific is a bigger symbol of American power. But Wemett says his ship benefited from information and guidance derived from the unfolding and unforeseen disaster aboard the aircraft carrier.

For example, on April 20, the Kidd received new medical guidance on additional symptoms to be watching for as indicators of possible coronavirus.

"That drove us to report our first case" that same day, Wemett said.

SEE KIDD ON PAGE 5

MILITARY

Army eyes return to major training exercises

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Army believes many of the service's large fighting formations can return to critical, high-level training exercises in the coming weeks at their home stations and the service's combat training centers, senior service officials said Thursday.

The Army has developed a rough framework meant to guide commanders through the processes of safely returning to field training operations across the force, Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy said Thursday in a news briefing from the Pentagon. Defense Secretary Mark Esper was recently briefed about the framework for his approval and the plan could soon be finalized, McCarthy said.

"The Army continues to need a manned and ready force," he said.

Ultimately, the decisions to return to large-scale training exercises for battalion- and brigade-sized units at their home stations will be left to those formations' commanders, according to a senior Army official. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to describe the plan before it is finalized and announced publicly.

The Army wants local commanders to understand the risks of coronavirus infections to their troops and have plans in place to monitor soldiers' health before beginning any training exercises. Commanders must also have plans to procure testing supplies quickly and test widely in units if outbreaks are suspected, the official said. Commanders should have an understanding of the virus' impact on their installations and neighboring communities within about 60 miles of their posts before returning large units to the field.

Commanders are expected to take similar precautions as Army



JOSE RODRIGUEZ/U.S. Army

A soldier looks out of the loading ramp of a C-27 aircraft while he and his fellow soldiers wear face masks and maintain social distance.

officials have with recruits at basic training locations — isolating units together to move in and out of training exercises, implementing social distancing measures when possible, and mandating the use of face masks, the official said.

The Army has varying testing capacities at its installations. While all major installations have some ability to test for the virus, those range from the capacity to conduct about one dozen per day to other bases that can conduct nearly 1,000 per day, such as Fort Jackson, S.C., the service's largest initial entrance training site, officials have said.

Gen. James McConville, the Army chief of staff, said Thursday that the service cannot simply

wait out the pandemic or continue halting most training until all its soldiers can be tested. Soldiers must still deploy to combat zones in places such as Iraq and Afghanistan and continue preparations for the Pentagon's primary mission to deter hostility from competitors such as China and Russia.

"Getting back to collective training is crucial," McConville said. "It's not going to be a one-size-fits-all solution. We're looking at the long game. We're not waiting for [the coronavirus] to go away."

As of Thursday, 1,646 soldiers across the active-duty, Reserve and National Guard had tested positive for the virus, including 525 who have recovered, accord-

ing to the Army. One soldier, a New Jersey National Guard officer, died of complication of the coronavirus.

McConville visited Fort Polk, La., this week to meet with officials who run that post's Joint Readiness Training Center, one of the Army's two major training locations in the continental United States, where brigade-sized units rotate in and out of every month to test their combat skills. Those rotations to JRTC and the service's National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., often serve as mission rehearsals for combat or deployments to areas such as Europe or Africa.

Those two training ranges were closed down in March as part of the military's efforts to

thwart the virus' spread, resulting in the cancellation of planned rotations for four brigades. The senior Army official said those brigades were expected to make up those rotations in the future, and the next training rotations set to begin in June are expected to be held.

The official played down the impact on the Army's overall combat readiness caused by the pause in large training operations at JRTC, NTC and other locations throughout the world. Small unit tactical training has continued at home stations in many places, the official said.

"Things did slow down," the official said. "But there are varying states of training going on across the Army. The Army never stopped."

Among the units set for a June rotation to a combat training center is the 4th Security Forces Assistance Brigade from Fort Carson, Colo., which is to train at JRTC to prepare for a deployment to Afghanistan in the summer. The JRTC rotation is critical for that new unit of 800 soldiers specially trained to advise and assist Afghan forces.

It was unclear Thursday whether the unit could be certified for deployment without completing that training.

But top Army officials do not believe that will become an issue. McConville on Thursday noted while areas in Louisiana, including New Orleans, had experienced large outbreaks of the virus, the areas around Fort Polk had not.

The post, about 220 miles northwest of New Orleans, is located in a largely rural area near the town of Alexandria.

"We're going to live in the [coronavirus] world for a while," the general said. "We have to train, and that's why we're putting these safety procedures in place."

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Air Force bombers continue US show of force in South China Sea

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. military continued its weeklong show of force in the South China Sea with a sortie over the contested waters on Thursday by two Air Force bombers.

The B-1B Lancers from the 28th Bomb Wing at Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., flew a 32-hour round trip to conduct operations over the sea as part of a joint bomber task force by the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and U.S. Strategic Command, the Air Force said in news release Thursday.

The mission further demonstrated the service's new "dy-

namic force employment model," which is intended to make its global bomber presence less predictable, the Air Force said.

China has claimed sovereignty over much of the South China Sea, an assertion disputed by other nations with competing claims, such as Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei.

During the past week, Navy warships operated near the Spratly and Paracel islands, two of the archipelagos China has claimed most vehemently.

The guided-missile cruiser USS Bunker Hill sailed near the Spratlys on Wednesday as part of its so-called freedom-of-navigation operations. They are intended

to challenge assertions by China and other claimant nations that military passing near the islands must first receive authorization.

The U.S. contends that international law allows for direct passage through the contested archipelagos.

On Tuesday, the guided-missile destroyer USS Barry sailed near the Paracel Islands.

The Air Force sortie on Thursday follows a similar B-1 bomber round trip April 22 from Ellsworth to Japan, where a B-1B Lancer joined 15 Japanese fighters for training near Misawa Air Base.

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U.S. Air Force

An Air Force B-1B Lancer from the 28th Bomb Wing at Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., prepares to refuel during a 34-hour round-trip sortie to the Indo-Pacific region Thursday.

WAR/MILITARY

Coalition strikes pound ISIS caves in Iraq

By CHAD GARLAND

Stars and Stripes

The U.S.-led coalition in Iraq destroyed caves sheltering Islamic State militants in a series of airstrikes this week, as Iraqi security forces ended April with nearly 100 operations against the group.

On Thursday, Operation Inherent Resolve released strike video and a statement saying the raid a day earlier took out 10 caves in northern Iraq's Hamrin Mountains, killing an estimated five to 10 ISIS fighters.

"Strikes like these help our Iraqi partners maintain relentless pressure on the Daesh scourge, no matter where these terrorists hide," said Maj. Gen. Eric Hill, commanding general of the coalition's special

operations joint task force, using an Arabic acronym for ISIS.

Initial estimates of the death toll were expected to be revised later, based on a ground search still being conducted by Iraq's 14th Army Division and security forces, the statement said. Though much of the cave complex was "inaccessible" after the strike, Iraqi forces had already discovered ISIS documents, electronic devices and weapons fragments, it said.

New estimates were not available early Friday, a coalition military official told Stars and Stripes via text message, adding that more strikes had been conducted Thursday night, killing an estimated five more fighters.

"Operations will continue throughout Ramadan," the official said, referring to

the Muslim holy month.

The northern Iraqi mountain range has for years been a safe haven for the militants. It's "one of their last remaining operating areas in Iraq," where they use "intricate tunnel and cave systems" to smuggle weapons, move senior leaders and plot operations, the earlier coalition statement said.

The militants have continued to carry out insurgent attacks in the region since losing the last of the territory they once claimed in Iraq in late 2017.

On Tuesday, about 60 miles to the northeast of where the cave system was destroyed, an attacker blew himself up outside the Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism Directorate in Kirkuk, wounding at least two security personnel in the blast,

the Iraqi government has said.

The militants have also taken refuge in the country's sprawling western desert in Anbar province, officials have told Stars and Stripes in recent months.

Iraqi air assault infantry crisscrossed that desert searching for ISIS hideouts this week, coalition spokesman Col. Myles B. Caggins III said Friday on Twitter.

Iraqi security forces conducted a total of 99 anti-ISIS operations in April, the coalition said in a social media post also on Friday.

"The presence of Daesh in Iraq continues to diminish, thanks to the efforts and sacrifices of our Iraqi partner forces," Hill said.

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Navy awards contract for next generation of guided-missile frigates

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Navy has agreed to spend an initial \$800 million on the newest class of guided-missile frigates as the service looks to develop a more flexible surface fleet to take on other naval powers around the globe, the service announced Thursday.

"The Navy's guided-missile frigate will be an important part of our future fleet," Adm. Mike Gilday, the chief of naval operations, said in a prepared statement. "[The guided-missile frigate] is the evolution of the Navy's small surface combatant with increased lethality, survivability, and improved capability to support the National Defense Strategy across the full range of military operations."

The Pentagon's 2018 National Defense Strategy shifted the military's focus from counterterrorism operations to "great-power competition" with China and Russia. The Navy has aligned its budget, ship building, and training with the strategy.

The new ship is the next generation of frigates for the Navy, improving on the capabilities of the

littoral combat ships. The frigates will be capable of conducting multiple missions, including anti-submarine warfare, surface warfare and electronic warfare.

The new ships will be part of the Navy's ongoing effort to grow their battle force fleet to 355 ships by 2030.

The ship will be constructed by Marinette Marine Corporation of Marinette, Wis. The design is by Fincantieri based on a frigate design used by the French and Italian navies, according to U.S. Naval Institute News. The company owns the shipyard in Wisconsin where it will be built.

"This is going to be a real workhorse for the United States Navy, supporting distributed maritime operations in the future. So, we are super excited about this ship," said Vice Adm. Jim Kilby, the deputy chief of naval operations for warfighting, requirements, and capabilities.

The initial contract for \$795 million to Marinette Marine Corp. is for the design and production of the first ship in the class. The contract has the option to allow for production of up to 9 additional ships as well as provide various supplies and services in-



U.S. Navy graphic

An artist rendering of the guided-missile frigate FFG(X). The new small surface combatant will have multi-mission capability to conduct air warfare, anti-submarine warfare, surface warfare, electronic warfare and information operations.

cluding training equipment and post-delivery availability support. The total cost for the first ship is \$1.281 billion, which includes the \$795 million for the shipbuilder for design and construction.

The contract is being awarded three months ahead of schedule

despite the coronavirus pandemic, said James Geurts, the assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition.

Detailed design for the ship will start in May and construction on the first frigate for the

class will start no later than April 2022, with its delivery to the Navy in 2026, according to Geurts. The ship is expected to reach full operational capability between 2031 and 2032.

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Watchdog: Taliban increased attacks on Afghan forces immediately after deal

FROM FRONT PAGE

all international troops out of Afghanistan by late spring 2021, provided the Taliban meets all of its obligations under the agreement. Those include beginning negotiations with the Kabul government, disavowing terror groups like al-Qaida and preventing any groups on Afghan soil from threatening the security of the United States and its allies.

But the Taliban ramped up attacks on Afghan forces immediately after signing the deal on Feb. 29, Sopko wrote in the

report.

"Although not all such attacks are expressly prohibited by the text, U.S. officials had said they expected the level of violence to remain low after the agreement came into effect," Sopko wrote.

Under the deal, the U.S. began drawing down from about 13,000 troops to 8,600. But despite more than \$86 billion in U.S. security assistance funding, Afghan security forces remain deeply dependent on U.S. and coalition forces. Even elite special operations troops needed support from international forces on about half of their

ground operations during the first three months of 2020, SIGAR said.

Within days of the Feb. 29 deal being inked, U.S. aircraft bombed the insurgents in defense of Afghan forces, but it remains unclear whether the U.S. has carried out further strikes. NATO officials in Kabul have declined to discuss the matter with Stars and Stripes. They also have not published a tally of U.S. airstrikes for the month of March.

U.S. officials have declined to discuss what would constitute a violation of the deal, and some observers fear the U.S.

will bury or ignore information that might jeopardize the pact. In a Foreign Affairs magazine article last month critiquing the agreement and highlighting difficulty Washington will likely face in enforcing it, former Afghanistan commander and CIA director David Petraeus wrote that U.S. decision-makers have a tendency "to downplay or disregard information that threatens to upend" a favored relationship or policy.

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VIRUS OUTBREAK

Navy: More than 1,150 Roosevelt sailors infected

By CATILIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — More than a fourth of the 4,000 crewmembers assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt have tested positive for the coronavirus, according to the Navy's latest update Thursday.

After more than a month of isolating sailors, sanitizing the ship and testing every crew member, there are 1,102 active cases of coronavirus among Roosevelt sailors, three of whom are hospitalized at U.S. Naval Hospital Guam, the Navy said. An additional 53 sailors have recovered and one has died.

The numbers have been increasing as previously negative sailors test positive for coronavirus in "exit tests" before leaving isolation despite not having symptoms, the service said.

The aircraft carrier was patrolling the Western Pacific when it diverted to Guam on March 26 after several of its sailors tested positive.

The prevalence of asymptomatic sailors with coronavirus has emphasized the importance of testing, Task Force 70 spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Sean Brophy said in an

email Tuesday.

An undisclosed number of sailors assigned to the carrier USS Ronald Reagan showed no coronavirus symptoms but tested positive in pre-boarding tests. The Reagan, in port at Yokosuka, is preparing for a deployment.

Brophy said catching the positive cases among sailors who otherwise appear healthy "highlights how our measures are working as they were designed to."

As of Thursday, the Navy reported 1,822 cases of coronavirus service-wide, according to a Defense Department daily update. That means about two-thirds of all coronavirus cases among active-duty sailors are associated with the Roosevelt.

Officials began moving sailors who have tested negative three times for the virus back onto the carrier Wednesday, according to a statement this week from the Joint Region Marianas Public Affairs Office in Guam.

On Friday, chief of naval operations Adm. Mike Gilday directed vice chief of naval operations Adm. Robert Burke to "conduct a follow-on command investigation into the events surrounding the (coronavirus) outbreak aboard USS Theodore Roosevelt," Gilday spokesman Cmdr. Nate Chris-



MacAdan Weissman/U.S. Navy

Essential watch standers and a cleaning team conduct a crew swap aboard the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt at Apra Harbor, Guam, on Wednesday.

tensen said in a statement Friday.

He said the investigation will expand on a recently completed preliminary inquiry prompted by the removal of the Roosevelt's commanding officer after a letter he sent pleading for additional help for his ship was leaked to the public.

The investigation, due to Gilday by May 27, will "provide a more robust documentation of events and give a fuller consideration of

the circumstances surrounding the matter," Christensen said.

In San Diego, the guided-missile destroyer USS Kidd continues to battle an outbreak among its sailors. There were 78 active cases among its crewmembers as of Thursday, according to the Navy. None were hospitalized.

Kidd sailors have disembarked and will be required to spend "at least 14 days in quarantine or isolation and achieve two nega-

tive tests before returning to the ship," the Navy said in its update.

Because all sailors on the Roosevelt and Kidd have been tested, the Navy will no longer provide daily tallies, instead reporting only "significant changes on these vessels and new cases on other deployed vessels," according to its Thursday update.

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Kidd: Navy destroyer directed to nearest US port after virus found aboard

FROM FRONT PAGE

The ill sailor was medically evacuated to a medical facility in San Antonio two days later for testing, and the following day a positive result was reported. By this time the ship was putting its at-sea drills to use by placing some crew members in isolation.

Even before the first test result was known, the Navy assembled a medical team in the United States and dispatched it to the Kidd. The team leader, Cmdr. Michael Kaplan, the director of medical services at Naval Hospital Jacksonville in Florida, said he was not standing by in anticipation of such a mission.

"We had no heads up whatsoever," Kaplan said.

But the team was on its way in a few hours and arrived aboard the Kidd by helicopter the same day. By evening the doctors had tested about 25 people, and within 24 hours nearly a quarter of the crew had been tested. The Navy also diverted an amphibious assault ship, the USS Makin Island, to provide additional support to the Kidd. The Makin Island has fully equipped medical facilities,



MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST 2ND CLASS ALEX CORONA/U.S. Navy

Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Shane Miller, left, and Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Austin Kelly, both assigned to Fleet Surgical Team 9, draw blood from a sailor assigned to the guided-missile destroyer USS Kidd in San Diego on Wednesday.

including an intensive care unit.

Kaplan said his team also made a point of testing sailors without coronavirus symptoms, drawing on the Roosevelt experience, which initially tested only those with symptoms, not realizing that asymptomatic people can be

transmitters of the virus. Kaplan had the asymptomatic cases isolated on board.

"We didn't know how long it would take to get back on land, and we wanted to do everything we could to try to minimize the spread on the ship," Kaplan said.

As of Thursday, 78 members of the Kidd's crew had tested positive. None is hospitalized.

Not all aspects of the medical and operational response taken aboard the Roosevelt are known publicly, and that entire episode is now under investigation, including questions about how the virus got aboard in the first place. Just over 1,100 members of the Roosevelt crew have tested positive, and one died of complications from the disease. The Roosevelt's skipper, Capt. Brett E. Crozier, was fired for distributing a letter pleading for faster Navy action to protect his crew, and the official who ordered his removal from command, Thomas Modly, resigned a few days later as the acting Navy secretary.

At the outset of the Roosevelt's problem, senior Navy officials appeared to underestimate their ability to contain it and keep the warship from being sidelined.

Touting the Navy's response, Modly told reporters on March 24, two days after the first case was confirmed. "This is an example of our ability to keep our ships deployed at sea, underway even

with active COVID-19 cases."

In contrast, the Kidd ended its Central America mission shortly after getting its first coronavirus case, based on a plan made in advance by the U.S. Navy 4th Fleet organizers of the counterdrug operation. Once a ship had a certain number of symptomatic sailors, it was to head for the nearest appropriate U.S. port. Wernett declined to be more specific than to say the triggering number was less than 10.

The Kidd headed for San Diego, where it arrived Tuesday and moved most of the crew ashore to off-base housing.

The paths of the Kidd and the Roosevelt diverged in a more literal sense. They initially deployed together on Jan. 17 after the Kidd, home ported at Everett, Wash., joined up with the Roosevelt and the rest of its strike group in San Diego. But the Kidd made it more further than Hawaii, ordered to break off from the strike group and head east again to participate in the Central America counterdrug operation. The Roosevelt and the rest of its strike group, meanwhile, headed to East Asia.

VIRUS OUTBREAK

Army stands by cadet ceremony at West Point

By LOLITA C. BALDOR
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Army's top leaders on Thursday defended their decision to bring 1,000 cadets back to the Military Academy at West Point for graduation, where President Donald Trump is slated to speak, saying that despite the coronavirus risk students would have had to return anyway to prepare for their next duty assignment.

The announcement has been criticized as a political move to get Trump on stage at the academy, where he hasn't yet given a graduation address. But Army officials said the students must return for final medical checks, equipment and training.

"We can't telecommute to combat," Gen. James McConville, the chief of staff of the Army, told Pentagon reporters when asked about the decision, which forces cadets spread out across the U.S. to travel, risking exposure on public transportation, and then land in New York, a coronavirus hot spot.

Cadets have been home since spring break in March, with their return to school delayed because of the outbreak. Only the seniors will return, and the graduation is set for June 13.

Lt. Gen. Darryl Williams, academy superintendent, said the students must return for medical and other required tasks that can only be done at the academy before they can be turned over as new officers to the Army.

He said the school will create a "safty bubble" around the cadets

and build a staging base where they will arrive. All cadets will be screened and tested for the virus at the staging area and then separated into five groups that will eat and live separately. They will be quarantined for 14 days.

Williams said Keller Army Community Hospital at the base now has all the needed testing equipment and was converted to be able to handle and quarantine virus patients.

Asked if cadets will face discipline if they can't or don't want to come back because of the virus, he said commanders will decide on a case-by-case basis.

U.S. Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., a member of West Point's Board of Visitors, said she expressed her concerns about the decision to Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy in a call this week.

"Trump's reckless decision to gather 1,000 Cadets at West Point for a speech puts our future military leaders at increased risk — all to stroke his own ego," said Duckworth, a retired Army helicopter pilot.

McCarthy told reporters the Army wants to have a "small, safe graduation ceremony" for the cadets to celebrate.

In contrast, the U.S. Naval Academy has announced it will hold a virtual graduation and postpone other traditional milestone events until large-scale gatherings are allowed. The academy's superintendent, Vice Adm. Sean Buck, called it a difficult decision but necessary "to safeguard the health and welfare of the entire Naval Academy family and local community."

USAA to return additional \$280M to auto policy holders

By JAMES BOLINGER
Stars and Stripes

An additional \$280 million will be returned to USAA auto policy holders amid continued coronavirus lockdowns, the company announced late Thursday afternoon.

This brings the company's total rebates since the start of the pandemic to \$800 million.

The financial services and insurance company, which provides insurance and banking services to more than 13 million active-duty military members, veterans and their families, returned \$580 million in auto policy rebates in April, totaling 20% of members' monthly premiums.

The most recent rebate reflects

an additional 20% discount on a third month's worth of premiums, according to a statement emailed Thursday to Stars and Stripes. The newly announced rebates apply to policies in effect as of April 1.

The company said its members continue to drive less due to shelter-in-place procedures enacted to combat the virus.

Policyholders should see the rebates on their next billing statement, which will be available at the end of May.

Members do not need to call, and no further action is required to receive the dividend, the statement said.

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PHOTOS BY AYA ICHIHASHI/Stars and Stripes

Col. Vincent Ciucoli, commander of Camps Foster and Lester on Okinawa, purchases groceries at the Foster commissary for people who requested items through Fidelis Rides' new U-Shop service, Tuesday.

Marine volunteers offer free grocery shopping on Okinawa

By AYA ICHIHASHI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Fidelis Rides, a volunteer program on Okinawa that provides service members with free rides after a night on the town, now offers a curbside grocery-delivery service called U-Shop.

Fidelis Rides was created in March 2019 by Marine 1st Sgt. Jacob Karl to help Marines without cars or a lot of spending money. Volunteers provide free lifts on Friday and Saturday nights to any service members who request them.

So far, the program has given rides to over 4,500 people, according to volunteer Cpl. Christopher Madero of Headquarters & Support Battalion, Marine Corps Installations Pacific.

Fidelis Rides started up its U-Shop program after a weeklong pause of its ride service April 1 due to coronavirus concerns.

"At first, we thought we should focus on single-parent households, dual military service member families or families with immune disorders," said Col. Vincent Ciucoli, commander of Camp Foster and Camp Lester, who has been leading the group.

"Then we realized that we should extend the service to help anyone who needs our help to shop."

On Wednesday evening, Ciucoli and Madero waited in front of the Camp Foster commissary. With them were three more volunteers: group coordinator Cpl. Derrick Ngeudeu Tailla of 3rd Marine Division, Camp Foster; Gunnery Sgt. Michael Diggs of Headquarters & Support Battalion, Camp Foster; and Lance



Fidelis Rides volunteers Gunnery Sgt. Michael Diggs and Lance Cpl. Luis Flores Gonzalez check a shopping list from someone who used the group's new U-Shop service at the Camp Foster.

Cpl. Luis Flores Gonzalez of the Provost Marshal Office at Camp Butler.

"I always wanted to volunteer and now I have so much time. I wanted to help others rather than wasting it," Flores Gonzalez said.

Anyone older than 16 with commissary privileges can volunteer for the U-Shop program, Ciucoli said, adding "we see some high school volunteers now."

He explained how the operation works. First, the person who wants their grocery shopping done contacts U-Shop via Messenger on Fidelis Rides' Facebook page.

"Then they will need to send us a shopping list with their name and phone number. We connect our volunteer and the requestee," Ciucoli said. "Our volunteers

will be their personal shopper."

The volunteers stay in contact with the client via text messages to make sure they pick up the correct items, he said.

Fidelis Rides has its own check-out line, No. 8, at the commissary. Customers pay at the register over a phone provided by the volunteer.

"This way, we don't have to get involved in the money transaction," Ciucoli said. "As Fidelis Rides, we do not touch cash, so implementing the payment system was the most challenging part of this program, but we were thrilled to have [the commissary agency's] full support on this."

Shawn Bullman, commissary officer for Camp Foster, on Wednesday said the store is the first in the region to implement the volunteer shopping system.

"Kadena was the second commissary, now Camp Courtney, and Kinser is a work in progress," he said. "We are happy to work with Fidelis Rides to support our military families." Delivery is also available anywhere within 15 minutes of Camp Foster, including Camp Lester, Plaza Housing, Marine Corps Air Station Futenma and off-base homes.

People can use the free service as often as needed; however, the group will monitor for abuse of the system. Forty items per request is the current limit with up to a 30-minute shopping time.

Fidelis Rides plans to keep the U-Shop program until coronavirus restrictions end on Okinawa, but it may become a permanent service.

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VIRUS OUTBREAK

Jobless Americans fret as rent comes due

BY ANITA SNOW
Associated Press

PHOENIX — Rent and mortgage payments are due again for more than 30 million people around the U.S. who have filed for unemployment benefits after losing work in the coronavirus pandemic.

Jason W. Still has been waiting six weeks for his first unemployment check since losing his job as a cook at an upscale restaurant in Spokane, Washington. Out-of-work bartender Luke Blaine in Phoenix got his first check three weeks ago, but now has to pay his landlord again.

And Eli Oderberg in Denver has his mortgage due after being swept up in a later wave of layoffs as the pandemic's effects spread from restaurants to corners of the economy, like the oil company where he had worked on apps to track spills and leaks.

Federal data released this week show the U.S. economy contracted at a 4.8% annual rate last quarter as the pandemic put the nation into a recession. Economists expect January-March to be just a taste of the widespread pain being recorded for April-June. And while a record number of people have applied for unemployment insurance payments, there are many other out-of-work people who don't qualify or couldn't get through the states' overwhelmed systems.

More than three dozen cities and states, including San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York state, have put in place their own policies to halt evictions, foreclosures and utility shutoffs out of concern that the economic fallout from massive job losses will push many people to the brink of homelessness at a time when they need to stay in their houses and apartments.

But all this really means is that deputies won't be knocking at their doors. The money is still due, and delaying the payments just puts off the pain.

Still said he's filed for unemployment every week, with nothing yet to show for it, since he was first interviewed by The Associated Press a month ago, just before he paid April rent. His wife still



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP

Eli Oderberg, center, sits with Katie Evers, left, their 4-year-old daughter, Everlee, and the couple's golden retriever outside their home in southeast Denver on Thursday. Oderberg, like 30 million people around the United States who have filed for unemployment benefits after losing their jobs during the coronavirus pandemic, is facing the specter of paying the monthly rent with the flip of the calendar.

‘From my job, I’m accustomed to planning everything six months in advance. So we’re going to be OK, for now at least.’

Eli Oderberg
Denver resident

has her job in the legal marijuana industry, and his \$1,200 stimulus check helped pay an assortment of bills. “But I’m about to hit my savings and I really don’t want to do that,” he said.

“I’ve made about 900 calls over the last month trying to find out what’s going on,” Still said. On April 24, he finally got into an

on-hold queue behind 83 other callers to Washington state’s unemployment office, and after hours of waiting, he was transferred to a claims specialist, but then the call was dropped.

It took him until this week to reach a human, who said there seemed to be a minor glitch in his file that needs to be worked out.

“It seems to be getting closer, but it’s not clear to me what’s going on at that end,” said Still. “I think I’m the last person who was laid off at my restaurant who hasn’t gotten an unemployment payment yet.”

The restaurant, Clover, remains in limbo. Washington Gov. Jay Inslee this week announced a partial opening May 5 of some recreational offerings like state parks, fishing and golf courses, but restaurant dining rooms and most other businesses will remain closed for now.

Blaine counts himself lucky: He started receiving unemployment checks three weeks after being laid off on March 17. Sev-

eral coworkers are still waiting for their money after losing their jobs at Fez, a popular restaurant in Phoenix.

“I feel very fortunate based on what I’ve heard from my friends here and around the country,” said Blaine, who also was interviewed by the AP a month ago. His boyfriend, Kyle Schomer, still has his job in the tech industry and is working from their home in a trendy neighborhood of adobe homes. They have a huge vegetable and flower garden out back.

Blaine also said that he and everyone else he knows have received their stimulus money. With that and the unemployment checks, which through July include an additional \$600 per payment, Blaine has made ends meet, for now.

“We will be back,” Fez management promised on the restaurant’s Facebook page. “We hope sooner rather than later.”

Anything but an opening soon is unlikely to resolve the anxieties of people whose savings are running out as the initial wave of service-industry layoffs sweeps up other hard-hit sectors, like energy.

Oderberg lost his job in Denver on April 19, as global oil futures plunged into negative territory following the shutdowns of air travel, factories and commuting around the world.

He said his wife got her first unemployment check after losing her job in retail, but he’s still waiting for his. The Colorado website for benefits has confirmed he is eligible, “but I haven’t been able to get through to talk to anyone after making about 100 calls each time,” he said.

In the meantime, Oderberg has been lining up job interviews in information technology, including at least four this week, and hopes to land something quickly, before he has to scramble for their next mortgage payment for the house he shares with his wife, who is pregnant, and their 4-year-old daughter.

“From my job, I’m accustomed to planning everything six months in advance,” said Oderberg. “So we’re going to be OK, for now at least.”

DEA agent accused of stealing protective gear from agency

BY JOSHUA GOODMAN
AND JIM MUSTIAN
Associated Press

MIAMI — A U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agent and a telecommunications specialist are accused of stealing personal protective equipment, toilet paper and other supplies from an agency warehouse in South Florida amid shortages caused by the coronavirus pandemic, law enforcement officials told The Associated Press.

The officials, who were not authorized to discuss the case and

spoke to AP on condition of anonymity, say it was not clear exactly how much of the supplies the men took or what they intended to do with them but the matter was serious enough that both were suspended and the agent was asked to hand over his gun pending an internal review.

Special Agent Javier Hernandez and the telecommunications specialist whose name was not disclosed are just the latest employees of the DEA’s high-profile Miami field division to be accused of misconduct.

Hernandez is suspected of

swiping an array of items including PPE, toilet paper and batteries from storage in the early weeks of the pandemic, the officials said, and the telecommunications specialist also took materials from the warehouse but returned them after a supervisor confronted him about a missing supply of toilet paper. It’s not clear whether the men are accused of acting together. The incident raises questions about security measures at the DEA facility in Weston, about 20 miles west of Fort Lauderdale, and how the case was handled. The Bro-

ward County Sheriff’s Office said it had no record of the allegations, which federal authorities instead referred to the DEA’s Office of Professional Responsibility for an internal investigation.

The DEA declined to comment on the allegations. Asked about the case in a recent interview, Acting DEA Administrator Uttam Dhillon told the AP he couldn’t talk about “specific situations” but that the “DEA has the highest standards for its personnel and we intend to maintain those standards.”

Hernandez declined to com-

ment. His attorney, Louis Robbio, said it’s possible Hernandez had been retaliated against for filing an Equal Employment Opportunity complaint involving his earlier transfer from Puerto Rico to the DEA’s tech division in Miami.

“Mr. Hernandez emphatically denies any wrongdoing at any time in his entire career with DEA or as an officer in the Army,” Robbio said in a statement. “Any allegations you may have been told about are rumors and innuendo and not based on facts.”

VIRUS OUTBREAK

May Day labor protests unfold amid lockdowns

Associated Press

ATHENS — No job at all, or a job without enough virus protections — millions of workers around the world are marking international labor day trapped between hunger and fear, as more countries and states reopen for business even though the pandemic is far from vanquished.

Beijing's Forbidden City cracked open its doors and shopping malls from Texas to Indiana were set to do the same Friday, as world leaders try to find a way to salvage virus-battered economies without unleashing new waves of infections.

With traditional May Day marches curtailed by confinement, Turkish protesters tried a wildcat protest, California activists planned strikes, Czechs honked car horns and French workers sung from balconies to plead their causes: workplace masks, health insurance or more government aid for the jobless.

It's a melancholy May Day for millions of garment industry workers across southeast Asia like Wirogono, father of two in Indonesia's capital who was laid off last month as retailers slashed orders. His side gig delivering coffee dried up, too, amid the virus lockdown. So he set up a clothing repair business to make ends meet.

"I don't earn as much as I got from the clothing factory. But I have to feed my wife and kids every day," said Wirogono, who goes by only one name.

In Bangladesh, production is



KIN CHEUNG/AP

Riot police enter a shopping mall to disperse pro-democracy protesters during on Labor Day in Hong Kong, Friday amid the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic.

starting back up even though the number of new confirmed cases of a virus that has infected more than 3.2 million and killed at least 230,000 is continuing to rise.

Lockdowns couldn't extinguish the May Day protest spirit in Greece, where demonstrators lined up two meters apart in careful rows in Athens' Syntagma Square.

May Day labor protests started in the 19th century in the U.S., where the number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits surpassed a staggering 30 million this week. Economists say joblessness in April may have reached numbers not seen since the Great

Depression of the 1930s.

Essential workers participated in strikes around the U.S. on Friday to demand safer conditions during the coronavirus outbreak, while other groups planned rallies against tight stay-at-home orders they are crippling the U.S. economy.

May Day is a state holiday in many countries, and lockdowns mean this is the first time that Russia — whose prime minister has the virus — will not hold big demonstrations on Red Square.

In Turkey, police and demonstrators wearing masks and face guards faced off in Istanbul, and 15 people were detained for try-

ing to march to a symbolic square in defiance of a lockdown.

A special "noisy protest" was planned in the Czech Republic, where people were to honk horns, play drums or shout at midday to express anger at the government's handling of the crisis. And hundreds of Czechs who commute to work in Germany and Austria planned to block a border crossing to protest restrictions imposed on them amid the pandemic.

A holiday atmosphere enlivened South Africa's streets Friday, as the May Day holiday was also when the country began easing its strict lockdown. People

were permitted to walk outside for exercise, and some began returning to work in small batches.

China's ancient, majestic Forbidden City reopened on Friday with all tickets for the May 1-5 holiday sold out, and a limit of 5,000 visitors a day, down from the earlier maximum of 80,000. The Chinese capital reopened its parks and museums, with controlled entries, about three months after hundreds of millions of people were ordered into a near lockdown as the coronavirus outbreak erupted in the central city of Wuhan.

Malaysia will allow most business activities to resume Monday but keep schools and houses of worship shut. Thailand was preparing to reopen parks and some retailers, hair salons and restaurants, while keeping a nighttime curfew and a ban on alcohol sales.

In the U.S., Louisiana restaurants were allowed Friday to add outdoor tables, without wait staff, though hard-hit New Orleans will remain shut.

The biggest U.S. mall operator, Simon Property Group Inc., planned to open 49 shopping centers Friday across 10 states, with mask-wearing workers and a limited number of shoppers.

President Donald Trump chose not to extend the White House's social-distancing guidelines past their expiration Thursday.

The virus has killed over 230,000 worldwide, including more than 61,000 in the U.S., according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

Trump speculates that China released virus in laboratory

By ZEKE MILLER

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump has speculated that China could have unleashed the coronavirus on the world due to some kind of horrible "mistake," and his intelligence agencies said they are still examining a notion put forward by the president and aides that the pandemic may have resulted from an accident at a Chinese lab. Trump even suggested Thursday that the release could have been intentional.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the clearinghouse for the web of U.S. spy agencies, said it had ruled out the virus being man-made but was still investigating the precise source of the global pandemic.

Though scientists suggest the likeliest origin of the pandemic remains natural, that it spread from an infected animal to a human, Trump claimed to have seen evidence to support the theory that the origin was an infectious disease lab in Wuhan, the epicenter of the Chinese outbreak.

He said the U.S. now "is finding how it came out."

"It's a terrible thing that hap-

pened," the president said. "Whether they made a mistake or whether it started off as a mistake and then they made another one, or did somebody do something on purpose."

The intel statement said the federal agencies concur "with the wide scientific consensus that the COVID-19 virus was not man-made or genetically modified."

"The IC will continue to rigorously examine emerging information and intelligence to determine whether the outbreak began through contact with infected animals or if it was the result of an accident at a laboratory in Wuhan," the statement said.

In recent days the Trump administration has sharpened its rhetoric on China, accusing the geopolitical foe and vital trading partner of failing to act swiftly enough to sound the alarm about the outbreak or to stop the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. U.S. officials have said the Chinese government should "pay a price" for its handling of the pandemic. This all comes as the pace of Trump's own original response continues to come under scrutiny.

Earlier Thursday, before Trump's comments, the Chinese

government said that any claims that the coronavirus was released from a laboratory are "unfounded" and "purely fabricated out of nothing."

Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang cited the institute's director, Yuan Zhiming, as saying the lab strictly implements biosecurity procedures that would prevent the release of any pathogen.

"I would like to point out again that the origin of the virus is a complex scientific issue, and it should be studied by scientists and professionals," Geng said. He also criticized those in the U.S. who say China should be held accountable for the global pandemic, saying they should spend their time on "better controlling the epidemic situation at home."

At the White House, Trump repeatedly criticized China for restricting domestic travel to slow the virus but not international travel to keep it from spreading abroad.

"Certainly it could have been stopped," Trump said during an event in the East Room on his administration's efforts to aid seniors during the outbreak. "They either couldn't do it from a competence standpoint, or they let it spread."

Scientists say the virus arose naturally in bats. Even so, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and others have pointed fingers at an institute that is run by the Chinese Academy of Sciences. It has done groundbreaking research tracing the likely origins of the SARS virus, finding new bat viruses and discovering how they could jump to people.

"We know that there is the Wuhan Institute of Virology just a handful of miles away from where the wet market was," Pompeo said two weeks ago. The institute has an address 8 miles from the market that is considered a possible source.

Scientists studying the virus for months have made clear they believe it wasn't man-made but are still working to determine a point at which it may have jumped from animals to humans.

Early attention focused on the live-animal market in Wuhan where the first cases were reported in December. But the first person identified with the disease had no known connection to that market.

Kristian Andersen, who studies the virus at Scripps Research in La Jolla, California, puts the odds of it being accidentally released

by the Wuhan lab at "a million to one," far less likely than an infection in nature. But virus expert David O'Connor of the University of Wisconsin-Madison said he thinks that little is known to rule out any source, except the idea the virus was man-made. Finding the source is important, he said, because it may harbor the next pandemic virus.

The U.S. was providing funding to the Wuhan lab for its research on coronaviruses, Michael Morell, former acting director and director of the CIA, said Thursday.

He said State Department cables indicate that there have been concerns in past years among U.S. officials about the safety protocols at that lab. If the virus did escape from a Chinese lab, it not only reflects negatively on China but also on the United States for providing research funding to a lab that has safety concerns, Morell said during an online forum hosted by the Michael V. Hayden Center for Intelligence, Policy and International Security at George Mason University.

"So if it did escape, we're all in this together," Morell said. "This is not a gotcha for China. This is a gotcha for both of us."

VIRUS OUTBREAK

GOP lawmakers reject call to extend Michigan order

Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. — The Republican-led Michigan Legislature refused Thursday to extend the state's coronavirus emergency declaration and voted to authorize a lawsuit challenging Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's authority and actions to combat the pandemic.

The governor, unfazed, responded with orders stating under one law that an emergency still exists while declaring a new 28-day state of emergency under another law.

The declarations are important because they are the foundation for Whitmer's stay-at-home measure, which will remain in effect through May 15, and other directives aimed at slowing the spread of the coronavirus. The virus that causes COVID-19 has infected more than 41,000 Michigan residents and contributed to the deaths of 3,789, many in the Detroit area.

Whitmer accused GOP lawmakers of "putting their heads in the sand and putting more lives and livelihoods at risk. I'm not going to let that happen."

The legislative pushback came as hundreds of conservative activists, including some who were openly carrying assault rifles, traveled to the Capitol to denounce her stay-home order.

Whitmer wanted legislators to extend the emergency before it was to expire late Thursday. But at the same time, she believes she has other powers to respond to the crisis and does not need a legislatively-approved extension — which Republicans dispute and appeared poised to challenge in court.

Alabama

MONTGOMERY — Alabamians filed onto beaches and into previously shuttered retail stores Thursday evening as a state stay-home order expired, although salons, on-site restaurant dining and other places remained closed under a new state health order.

A state stay-home order expired at 5 p.m. and retail stores and beaches could open with occupancy limits. Beach clubs showed people strolling along the sand in Gulf Shores under the late afternoon sun as beaches opened for the first time in a month. Elective and non-emergency medical procedures are also being allowed to resume.

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey on Tuesday announced that some restrictions were being lifted, but many would remain in place.

Salons, barbershops, gyms, tattoo parlors, bars and on-site restaurant dining will remain closed until the evening of May 15, under the newest "safer at home" state health order.

Arizona

PHOENIX — Arizona's three universities plan to hold classes on campus this fall with precau-

tions to limit the spread of the coronavirus, the presidents said Thursday.

Michael Crow of Arizona State University, Robert Robbins of University of Arizona and Rita Cheng of Northern Arizona University said they would follow recommendations from state and local health authorities when their classes resume in August.

Cheng said the campus reopening plan will include testing for COVID-19 and tracing the contacts of people who test positive. The Flagstaff university will create social distancing policies in public areas and classrooms, and will implement safety and health measures in residential and dining facilities, she said.

Crow and Robbins did not detail the changes they are considering, nor did they say whether students would be invited to live on campus.

California

SACRAMENTO — After state officials signaled an intention to close all California beaches, Gov. Gavin Newsom on Thursday chose instead to shutter only Orange County's coastline, a clumsy rollout that left local officials livid and had Republicans claiming politics was at play.

Newsom has engendered strong bipartisan support for most of his actions during the virus outbreak. But more recently, some of the more rural and GOP-leaning areas of the state have begun chafing against what they see as an overly cautious move toward reopening California.

The divisions were laid bare by the beach announcement.

The California Republican Party accused Newsom of backpedaling. The Orange County GOP, desperate to regain ground lost to Democrats in what was once a Republican stronghold, accused him of "targeted harassment" and "petty politics."

Newsom, a Democrat, said he was only reinforcing his vow to make sure California doesn't backslide on its progress against the virus by allowing crowds to gather on beaches as they did during the weekend in Orange County.

Georgia

ATLANTA — More than a million voters have requested a mail-in ballot to vote in Georgia's primary elections in June, an enormous increase driven by the coronavirus outbreak.

When he postponed the primary elections because of the virus outbreak, Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger encouraged people to vote by mail. Election officials said they mailed a form that can be used to request an absentee ballot to all 6.9 million active registered voters.

"Now we can see that effort is exceeding far past our own aspirations," Raffensperger said at a news conference Thursday.



MATTHEW DAI SMITH, LANSING STATE JOURNAL/AP

Stacy Eddy, of Lapeer, third from left, and her children came to Lansing, Mich., on Thursday, to join in the protest against Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's stay-at-home order due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"Today, we are passing the 1 million mark in absentee ballot requests. This is unprecedented."

Raffensperger's office says 700,000 ballots have already been mailed to voters. People will still be able to vote in person as well, both during early voting and on election day June 9.

Illinois

SPRINGFIELD — Illinois has spent tens of millions of dollars building makeshift field hospitals to prepare for an anticipated flood of coronavirus cases, but so far hasn't had to use the thousands of extra beds. That was exactly the plan.

The state government says prevention strategies such as social distancing and a statewide stay-at-home order have worked so well that a small city of beds proposed for McCormick Place in Chicago — the nation's largest convention center — has been dramatically reduced. Beds hastily installed at three closed hospitals in suburban Chicago remain on standby, while the renovation of a former hospital in Springfield has yet to begin.

"We've talked a lot about standing down," Gov. J.B. Pritzker said this week. "I don't want to speak too soon because all of these identified alternate care facilities need to be in a state of some kind of readiness in the event that there's a surge, either because, God forbid, we reopen too fast or because there's a surge that people expect in the fall."

Louisiana

NEW ORLEANS — A couple of Louisiana parishes are bucking the governor's continued coronavirus order by letting churches and other establishments open their doors to more people Friday.

LaSalle Parish in central Louisiana and East Feliciana Parish near Baton Rouge both said churches and businesses may open Friday at 25% of occupancy limits — a change Gov. John Bel Edwards has said he hopes to

make in mid-May. East Feliciana Parish also is reopening libraries and some other establishments.

Local officials may set restrictions tougher than the state's but cannot be less restrictive, Edwards said at his daily news briefing Thursday.

"I assure you, the proclamation was based on sound science," he said.

Edwards said he has extended his COVID-19 stay-home order through May 15, rejecting Republican calls to consider parish-by-parish or regional reopening. He said indoor worship services remain limited to 10 people but properly distanced larger congregations can attend services outdoors or under a tent "with its sides up" for free air flow.

New York

NEW YORK — Tensions between police and members of New York City's Hasidic Jewish community flared again Thursday as officers interrupted a crowded funeral procession to crack down on social distancing violators.

Video posted on social media showed officers in protective masks chasing a minivan through Brooklyn's Borough Park neighborhood as it carried the body of a deceased rabbi. The officers can be heard shouting at dozens of people marching behind the van to get out of the street and onto the sidewalk.

A 17-year-old boy was taken into custody and issued a summons for disorderly conduct after he was accused of pushing a police officer, according to a police spokeswoman. Sgt. Mary Frances O'Donnell.

New York has banned any gatherings, of any size, for any purpose as the coronavirus has been linked to at least 18,000 deaths in the city in just a few weeks.

De Blasio called the large gathering "absolutely unacceptable" in one tweet and wrote in another: "my message to the Jewish community, and all communities, is this simple: the time for warnings has passed."

Texas

AUSTIN — Texas' coronavirus death toll hit a single-day high of 50 on Thursday, just as the state was preparing for a slow reboot of one of the world's largest economies by reopening retail, restaurants, malls and movies to limited numbers of customers.

Republican Gov. Greg Abbott's stay-at-home order expires Friday. The state-reported death toll of 119 over the past three days marks the deadliest stretch since Texas' first fatality in the pandemic was recorded March 17. Thursday's 1,033 new cases is the first time the state has been over 1,000 since April 10.

The number of infections is thought to be far higher because many people have not been tested and studies suggest people can be infected without feeling sick.

Abbott has pushed for the reopening to rescue a state economy wallowed by staggering unemployment. Labor advocates have criticized the plan as short on safety for workers, and questioned by some Democrats, notably the leadership of the state's largest cities, as too soon.

Washington

WALLA WALLA — A Tyson Fresh Meats beef plant near the Tri-Cities will remain closed for a while longer as county health officials await test results on all the approximately 1,400 workers.

Walla Walla County health officials reported Wednesday afternoon the coronavirus test results are still pending.

"Once the test results are received, positive cases will be handled by the county in which the employee resides," said the agency, according to the Tri-City Herald.

As of Wednesday, 130 people — both employees and others linked to the plant outbreak — have tested positive.

One Tyson worker, a 60-year-old butcher who lived in the Tri-Cities, has died.

NATION

Biden goes on TV to deny woman's assault allegation

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Joe Biden denied a former Senate staffer's allegation of sexual assault on Friday, saying the accusation is "not true."

"This never happened," Biden said in a statement.

It's Biden's first public comment on an accusation of sexual assault by his former Senate staffer, Tara Reade. He later appeared on MSNBC's "Morning Joe" to discuss the allegation for the first time on television.

Biden said he will also ask the National Archives to determine whether there is any record of such a complaint claiming that he assaulted Reade in the basement of a Capitol Hill office building in the 1990s. His campaign issued a statement in early April denying the allegation, and a number of former Biden staffers have defended their boss in interviews.

The accusation, took on fresh attention this week, however, after two of Reade's associates said she previously told them about elements of her allegations.

Republicans worried about President Donald Trump's increasingly precarious political standing are seizing on the allegation to portray Democrats as hypocrites who only defend women who allege wrongdoing against conservatives. They are digging in despite the fact that it could renew attention on the multiple sexual assault allegations lodged against Trump.

Democrats, meanwhile, are in an awkward position of vigorously validating women who come forward with their stories while defending the man who will be their standard-bearer in what many in the party consider the most important election of their lifetimes.

The November contest between Biden and Trump will be the first presidential race of the #MeToo era, which has led numerous women to come forward with allegations of sexual assault. Trump has been accused of assault and unwanted touching by numerous women, allegations he denies.

Women are a core constituency for Democrats, and Biden has a mixed history.

While he wrote the Violence Against Women Act as a senator, he also came under heavy criticism for his handling of Anita Hill's Senate testimony in the 1990s. Just before he launched his 2020 campaign, several women accused him of unwanted touching, behavior for which he apologized.

Biden has pledged to pick a

woman as a running mate, and the allegation has left those thought to be in contention in a tough spot.

Stacey Abrams, the former Georgia Democratic governor candidate, said, "I believe Joe Biden," citing a New York Times investigation that she said exonerated him.

"Women deserve to be heard," she said, "but I also believe that those allegations have to be investigated by credible sources."

That echoed talking points issued by the Biden campaign to surrogates last week that were obtained by The Associated Press. They pointed to investigations by The New York Times, The Washington Post and the AP that found no other allegation of sexual assault and no pattern of sexual misconduct.

On Thursday, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi also defended Biden. Speaking on CNN, she said she was "satisfied with how he has responded," even as she acknowledged "it's a matter that he has to deal with."

Some Democratic donors and fundraisers say the issue has not come up in calls with party financiers. Others worry that it could be used against Biden, much as Hillary Clinton's private email server and the activities of the Clinton Foundation were wielded against her by Trump.

Some, most notably women, say they are paying close attention to the allegations, which gave them pause.

Alex Sink, a donor and former Democratic nominee for governor of Florida, said she was "not happy" to read about the allegations against Biden.

While she still plans to vote for him, she worried his campaign was too quick to categorically deny Reade's story.

"They put themselves immediately out on a limb by saying, 'It didn't happen, we categorically deny it, it's not true,'" Sink said.

Some female Democratic operatives expressed concerns the allegation is particularly damaging because it's an indictment of Biden's central campaign rationale: that he provides a moral counter to Trump and that the election is a "battle for the soul of America."

"It stakes could not be higher for defeating Donald Trump—but at the same time, I think we have to apply a consistent standard for how we treat allegations of sexual assault, and also be clear-eyed about how Donald Trump will use these allegations in the general election campaign," said Claire Sandberg, who worked as Bernie Sanders' organizing director.



The Kentucky Turtle Derby, which airs Saturday at 7 p.m. on YouTube, is promoted in an ad.

Turtles to race on traditional Kentucky Derby date in May

By DAN GELSTON
Associated Press

Losing the Kentucky Derby has left race fans shell-shocked.

The first Saturday in May has yielded to the legs of a bunch of sloppokes: Seattle Slow headlines a field of turtles — yes, turtles — that will race in the Kentucky Turtle Derby.

Call it the slowest eight minutes in sports.

The race is more methodical marathon than mad dash to the finish — though the victor can win at the line by a turtleneck rather than a nose — and is just one more offbeat sport that has had a moment during the corona-

virus pandemic.

The Derby, America's longest continuously held sports event, had been scheduled for May 2. It will now be run Sept. 5, kicking off Labor Day weekend. It's the first time the Derby won't be held on its traditional first Saturday in May since 1945, when it was run June 9. The federal government suspended horse racing nationwide for most of the first half of the year before World War II ended in early May, but not in time to hold the first leg of the Triple Crown that month. Looking for a slower substitute, the first Kentucky Turtle Derby was hatched.

The sounds may be familiar for Derby fans: Triple Crown announcer Larry Collmus is calling the race and bugler Steve Bettleman will serenade viewers prior to the turtles taking off.

The turtle race will actually be pre-taped in Chicago with the likes of Sir-Hides-A-Bunch, American Toruga and Galapago! in the field.

"It is weird, but there's been a lot of weird going on the last couple of months in this country," Collmus said. "It will be like the Derby broadcast. Just turtles instead."

And one big shell-abrader at the end.

Hearings for 'Remain in Mexico' asylum seekers delayed until June 1

By ELLIOT SPAGAT
Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — The Trump administration on Thursday suspended immigration court hearings for asylum-seekers waiting in Mexico through June 1, bowing to public health concerns while extending a state of limbo to those locked down in Mexican migrant shelters.

With an order suspending hearings through Friday set to expire, the Homeland Security and Justice departments said that asylum-seekers with hearings through June 1 should appear at a border crossing when instructed, to get new dates. They said in a joint statement that authorities will review conditions related to the coronavirus and proceed "as expeditiously as possible," raising the prospect of additional delays.

While it is difficult to know precisely, the Justice Department estimated in late February that there were 25,000 people waiting in Mexico for hearings in U.S. court.

A woman who fled Nicaragua with her 9-year-old son said Thursday that the delays mean more time locked down in a Tijuana shelter, which, like many in the Mexican border city, stopped accepting new migrants and won't let anyone already there leave to work or shop to prevent the virus from spreading. She moved to the shelter in March after a family that subsidized her rent ended their support due to a job loss.

Mileidy, the woman's middle name, said she showed up at a San Diego crossing for her fifth hearing under heavy rain at 3 a.m. on April 7, an hour ahead of the appointed time. She said she was unable to reach U.S. officials for a new date but learned online that her next hearing was May 7.

About a week ago, Mileidy's attorney got notice that her hearing was delayed again, this time to June 16. She spoke on condition that her full name not be published due to fears for her personal safety.

"All of this time in Mexico is

nerve-wracking," said Mileidy, who ran out of epilepsy medicine for her son and has been unable to get a new supply.

More than 60,000 asylum-seekers have been returned to Mexico to wait for hearings in U.S. court since January 2019, when the U.S. introduced its "Migrant Protection Protocols" policy, known informally as "Remain in Mexico." It became a key pillar of the administration's response to an unprecedented surge of asylum-seeking families at the border, drawing criticism for having people wait in highly dangerous Mexican cities.

The future of "Remain in Mexico" has become less certain after the administration temporarily suspended immigration laws using a 1944 public-health law, whisking Mexicans and Central Americans to the nearest border to be returned to Mexico without a chance to seek asylum. Nearly 10,000 people were "expelled" in less than three weeks after it took effect March 21.

VIDEO GAMES



Wastlanders takes place one year after Fallout 76 and breathes new life into the game with a new story quest and unique companions.

New signs of life

Wastlanders propels Fallout 76 with addition of NPCs, more activities

By BRIAN BOWERS
Stars and Stripes

With the advent of COVID-19, the postapocalyptic world of Fallout 76 seems much less alien. As I don a hazmat suit to wander the depopulated landscape of West Virginia to search for essential supplies and deal with unexpected creatures, I get a feeling of déjà vu. Only a day before, I was wearing a face mask while scouring the depopulated shopping centers of Northern Virginia for toilet paper and removing a snake from our front steps. The only differences: Fallout features more gunplay—and more available toilet paper.

When Bethesda Softworks released Fallout 76 about a year and a half ago, it featured a world where all the game's humans were the avatars of other players. There were robots, mutants and ghouls shriveled by radiation, but no "living" humans other than other players. Since interaction with nonplayer characters was one of the vital elements in previous Fallout games, Fallout 76 seemed somewhat hollow.

That changed in mid-April with the release of the massive update Fallout 76: Wastlanders. Bethesda dropped hundreds of new characters into the hills of West Virginia and breathed new life into the game.

Fallout 76 is set in the early 2100s, three decades after nuclear war has devastated America. As the game opens, you climb out of your protective vault to rebuild America—or at least Appalachia. You quickly discover that a plague has decimated West Virginia's survivors, killing most and turning the rest into zombie-like creatures known as the scorched. The only humans around are your fellow vault-dwellers—who are

controlled by other players.

Wastlanders is set about a year later. By that time, you have found an inoculation for the plague, which makes the area safe for new settlers. But resettlement is actually propelled by rumors of an immense treasure hidden beneath the Appalachian hills. As a result, the area is crawling with prospectors, farmers, merchants, raiders and weird cultists who worship Mothman.

Wastlanders offers two primary storylines. One appears to be aimed at new players. It's relatively brief and involves simple missions originating in a tavern near your home vault. It also

offers only a few hints about the mysterious treasure. The real search unfolds in the second storyline.

Among the area's new residents are two opposing groups that can be of assistance in finding the treasure. One is a hardy band of settlers who are building a town on a hill in the southern end of the game's sprawling map. The other is a rapacious gang of raiders who have commandeered a crashed space station far to the north.

For a while, you can work with both groups, performing missions and gaining status with each. However, you'll eventually need to choose a side. I joined the settlers, but I'm sure both tracks lead in the same general direction. My allies offered advice and assistance as I assembled a crew and gathered the equipment needed to accomplish the ultimate mission.

This storyline wasn't particularly long

Overall grade: **A-**

either, but it was fun and opened a new door to trade and upgrades.

Wastlanders also introduces nonplayer companions to Fallout 76. Traditionally, Fallout companions are at your side to deliver additional quests, provide extra firepower, carry extra gear and—perhaps—offer the chance at romance. Things are a bit different this time around. They simply hang around at your homestead and wave goodbye as you tackle the missions they assign. I was very disappointed when I finished the former astronaut's quests and she didn't lead to my side to face the mutants and marauders. I guess Bethesda figures that's the job of other Fallout 76 companions refused to join the action again.

As I returned to the Appalachian action, I noticed that the game has improved in many ways over the past year. There are more activities, better options for building your homestead, fewer visual glitches and greater stability for the servers.

The game is rated M for violence—except to see heads and arms laying around after a nasty firefight.

Wastlanders marks a major step forward for Fallout 76. However, it does more to whet the appetite than to satisfy it. I'm eager to see a more robust set of missions and characters—most like those offered in Bethesda's other online adventure, Elder Scrolls Online.

Bottom line: A-
Platforms: PlayStation 4, Xbox One, PC
Online: fallout.bethesda.net

Switch consoles in high demand, shorter supply

By AUSTIN CARR
Bloomberg

I was late to the whole Animal Crossing thing, but a few days ago I, too, decamped for a virtual island utopia, where I can breathe fresh digital air, chase butterflies, plant bright tulips and fish for sea bass (so many sea bass). Thanks to best-selling (and surprisingly therapeutic) games like Animal Crossing: New Horizons, the Nintendo Switch has become a massive hit during the pandemic. There's just one problem for Nintendo: It can't make them fast enough.

The inventory crunch serves as a reminder of how crucial supply chain management is in the COVID-19 era. From PCs and smartphones to tablets and wearables, the current batch of winners and losers of the hardware market will likely be decided by which companies can build enough products to meet demand.

Nintendo was unprepared for the sales surge and is now said to be scrambling to ramp up production and procure key electronic parts. The big question: Will the Japanese company be able to fix its supply chain woes before demand wanes?

In February, as the coronavirus was spreading around the globe, Nintendo started to see early indications of supply constraints. Component shortages in China were reportedly affecting factory output in Vietnam. Switch shipments to Nintendo's home country of Japan were delayed due to supplier bottlenecks, an alarming prospect for the hits-driven business, which had potential blockbuster games like Animal Crossing and Minecraft Dungeons coming out in the spring.

By the following month, the hardware shortages followed the virus' spread around the world. The Switch was nowhere to be found in North America at Amazon, Best Buy, Target or Walmart.

Nintendo is now purportedly aiming to boost its production to 22 million units this fiscal year, a remarkable feat considering the Switch is already three years old. That's more than Nintendo sold in the U.S., its biggest market, from the console's debut in 2017 to last year. However, one analyst suggested retail stock might catch up to demand until June.

While sold-out inventory is a good problem for Nintendo to have, it could fail to fully capitalize on the moment. Many people bored at home may opt instead to purchase a PlayStation from Sony or Xbox from Microsoft, which said it has managed to resolve its supply chain challenges.

Meanwhile, I'll be living a sun-kissed life in Animal Crossing, where, incidentally, I was just gifted a virtual Nintendo Switch. Apparently, it's far easier to get one on my digital island paradise than it is in real life.

MOVIES



A24 Films

John Magaro appears with the title character in Kelly Reichardt's "First Cow."

Oscars interrupted

A critic's guide to the next awards show if movie theaters don't reopen this year

By JUSTIN CHANG
Los Angeles Times

Six weeks and an eternity ago, when movie theaters were about to shut down due to the coronavirus outbreak, a few industry observers quipped that Elisabeth Moss was clearly now a shoe-in to win the Academy Award for lead actress. It wasn't an entirely facetious suggestion: Moss is unsurprisingly superb in "The Invisible Man," an above-average studio genre film that, in a more straightforward year, might be a long shot for awards consideration.

But in a moviegoing season that was cut abruptly short in March, the joke goes, "The Invisible Man" is suddenly not a long shot but a potential front-runner. Not just one of the year's early critical and commercial standouts, it may also be one of the only ones.

That assumed two unfortunate outcomes: First, that movie theaters don't reopen this year at all. Second, that the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences, which requires features to play in theaters to qualify for Oscar consideration, wouldn't adjust its rules, dates and deadlines accordingly. On this latter front, the academy has shown flexibility: On Tuesday, the group's 54-member board of governors voted on a series of rule changes in response to the global pandemic that will temporarily relax the normally strict requirements for Oscar consideration, including the requirement for a theatrical release.

What will this year in film look like, with major studio titles pushed back to fall and winter release dates (for now), major festivals like Cannes eyeing postponement or cancellation, and innumerable independent films in even worse danger than usual of not



Bleecker Street

Julia Garner stars in "The Assistant," inspired by the Harvey Weinstein scandal.

finding their audiences?

I haven't a clue, and I suspect that anyone who claims they do is being either naive or disingenuous. The old industry maxim beloved by the late screenwriter William Goldman — "Nobody knows anything" — has rarely seemed more apropos.

One thing I do know: You could, in theory, hold the Oscars (on Zoom) next month, restricting voters only to movies newly released in U.S. theaters in the first three months of 2020, and still emerge with a solid, even commendable, slate of nominees. The primary reason for this is that the Hollywood studios have never cornered the market on cinematic quality, and well before the awards-season grind kicks in, every month brings brilliant work from filmmakers who rarely land on the academy's radar — and are less deserving of attention for it.

Yes, you have to look harder for these movies, using a finer-toothed comb than you might in November or December. You have to put anti-genre snobbery aside and be comfortable with subtitles (horror!) and actors with unfamiliar names and faces. It takes discernment to find worthwhile achievements, to look beyond the scope of the obvious and the over-hyped. And discernment too often goes missing when the industry's annual gala-hopping, screener-cramming popularity contest gets underway.

I have my own means of combating the Hollywood bias that often sets in during those fall months. Every January, I start a fresh list of every good and great new movie I see, logging performances, screenplays and directorial achievements that I think may be worth remembering at year's end. I do this not because I want to think about awards season year-round, but because I don't want anything to slip through the cracks when it finally arrives.

So, let's take a look at my 2020 list as it currently stands.

Note that while the New York/Vulture writer Nate Jones recently conducted his own thought experiment in this vein — a smart, amusingly exhaustive speculation on how the 2020-21 awards season would play out if no more theatrical releases were to emerge for the rest of the year — my version of this exercise has zero predictive value. It's simply what I would personally single out in the top eight feature categories: best picture, directing, acting and writing. It is also my early memo to myself and others: No matter what the future holds, these films and performances will still be

worth seeing and remembering.

One ground rule: I am excluding 2019 movies that were re-released earlier this year.

Best picture

Under the circumstances, it wouldn't be unreasonable to cap this category at five, going back to decades of historic academy practice. But why impose limits when the year has already given us more than five terrific movies? In keeping with the academy's preferred number of late, let's go with eight.

"The Assistant," Kitty Green's riveting sidelong view of sexual abuse in the entertainment industry, is as essential a #MeToo movie as Leigh Whannell's expertly crafted thriller "The Invisible Man"; in both movies, the bullying enemy is both unseen and inescapable.

"Bacurau," Kleber Mendonça Filho and Juliano Dornelles' rich, strange genre mashup set in a futuristic Brazilian backwater, deservedly won a major prize at Cannes last year, as did "Beano, a" a shattering drama of postwar reckoning from the scarily gifted 28-year-old Russian director Kantemir Balogov.

If forced to pick a winner at this point, I'd have a hard time choosing between two new American indie classics: "First Cow," Kelly Reichardt's tale of two friends on a mission in 19th-century Oregon, and "Never Rarely Sometimes Always," Eliza Hittman's tale of two friends on a mission in contemporary Pennsylvania and New York.

And finally, two masterly meditations on grief from Europe: "I Was at Home, But ..." from German director Angela Schanelec, and "Vitalina Varela," from Portuguese auteur Pedro Costa.

Director

The academy didn't nominate any women for best director in its most recent edition, despite having no shortage of opportunities to do so. This year, even with a tight three-month window, it could make considerable amends by nominating an established American master like Kelly Reichardt ("First Cow"); an out-of-the-box talent like Angela Schanelec ("I Was at Home, But ..."), who hails from the rigorous Berlin School; and gifted up-and-comers like Kitty Green ("The Assistant") and Eliza Hittman ("Never Rarely Sometimes Always").

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MOVIES



Kino Lorber

Two young women (Vasilisa Perylygina, left, and Viktoria Miroshnichenko) search for meaning and hope in "Beantpole."



Columbia Pictures

Will Smith and Martin Lawrence in "Bad Boys for Life."

FROM PAGE 12

That leaves one final slot, and while Kantemir Balagov ("Beantpole") and Pedro Costa ("Vitalina Varela") both beckon, I'd give that spot to Leigh Whannell for making the most of what could have been a routine Hollywood reboot in "The Invisible Man." (Between Whannell and Green, it's been quite a year for Australian talent already.)

Lead actress

If there's something all five of my choices here excel at, it's the ability to hold a close-up. That's true of the remarkable newcomer Sidney Flanigan, whose every downward glance is a quiet revelation in "Never Rarely Sometimes Always," as well as Julia Garner, an "Ozark" Emmy winner who gives an exquisite silent scream of a performance as the title character in "The Assistant."

And speaking of silent screams: The very first shot of "Beantpole" is a slow zoom-out from the face of Russian actress Viktoria Miroshnichenko, stunning as a woman who embodies the shellshock of a war-torn nation. Vitalina Varela won the actress prize at last year's Locarno International Film Festival for enacting a version of her own life story in the aptly titled "Vitalina Varela," her every close-up is a tour de force of expressive stillness.

And of course, Moss is as marvelous in "The Invisible Man" as she was in 2019's "Her Smell" (a movie that also came out early in the year).

That still barely scratches the surface of this astonishingly rich field. Eliminate these five and you're still left with the

ferocious action showcases of Betty Gilpin ("The Hunt") and Blake Lively ("The Rhythm Section"); Miroshnichenko's "Beantpole" co-star, Vasilisa Perylygina; Maren Eggert's ferocious depiction of grief in "I Was at Home, But..."; and Lesley Manville's affecting exploration of a woman's battle with cancer in the British-Irish drama "Ordinary Love."

Lead actor

I recently caught up with Ben Affleck's bruising turn as a high school basketball coach battling grief and alcoholism in "The Way Back" and have nothing to add to the general praise; it stands alongside his career-best performances in "Gone Girl" and "Hollywoodland." He's easily the biggest star name here, followed by Lakeith Stanfield, as effortlessly charming a romantic lead in "The Photograph" as you always suspected he'd be.

John Magaro is wonderful in "First Cow" as an Oregon Trail chef trying to get by the only way he can (because bakers can't be choosers). And finally, two terrific actors from overseas: Pierfrancesco Favino for his gripping performance as the Sicilian mobster turned whistleblower Tommaso Buscetta in "The Traitor," and Levan Gelbakhiani, as a Georgian dancer who falls for a member of his troupe in the gay romance "And Then We Danced."

Right behind them all: Kris Hitchen, persuasively burning the candle at both ends in Ken Loach's bleak drama "Sorry We Missed You," and Garrett Hedlund, breathing unexpected fury and pathos into the cliché of the reformed Klansman in "Burden."

Supporting actress

All hail the Brazilian legend Sonia Braga and her fierce turn as a small town's mean, boozy conscience in "Bacurau." Andrea Riseborough, one of the medium's great chameleons, brings her signature ferocity to bear on her role as a woman rejecting a community's racism in "Burden," while Talia Ryder, using just a few words and a lot of expressive silence, etches an indelible portrait of a friend indeed out of a few words and silent gestures in "Never Rarely Sometimes Always."

I was equally impressed with Mia Goth's exquisite vulnerability and Miranda Hart's delightful comic dithering in "Emma," in which both actresses remind us that Jane Austen's characters are at once familiar and inexhaustible.

Supporting actor

I didn't much care for "The Gentlemen," but I loved Colin Farrell's performance (a shade more than Hugh Grant's) as one of the many men caught up in Guy Ritchie's warmed-over Cockney caper. I also loved Josh O'Connor's hilarious work in "Emma" — he's like Gummy in a priest's collar — and Udo Kier doing what only Udo Kier can as a gunman with the small town of "Bacurau" in his sights.

As the willier, more calculating of two friends seeking their fortune in the Old West, Orion Lee complements Magaro beautifully in "First Cow," to the point where he almost qualifies as a lead. I suppose you could say the same thing of Martin Lawrence reprising a decades-old

role in "Bad Boys for Life," but the joy of his performance this time is that he fully embraces his second-banana role — and steals the movie.

Original screenplay

The gonzo B-movie bravura of Mendonça Filho and Dornelles' screenplay for "Bacurau" deserves recognition here, as does the spare, incisive, observational storytelling in Green's "The Assistant" and Hittman's "Never Rarely Sometimes Always." This would also be a welcome opportunity to salute the playful, inventive play with genres and languages in Corneliu Porumboiu's heist thriller "The Whistlers," as well as the hyper-eloquent, mile-a-minute dialogue of James Sweeney's winsome romantic comedy "Straight Up."

Adapted screenplay

Here's where my experiment admittedly crashes to earth. The year has already given us three solid possibilities in Eleanor Catton's sparkling adaptation of "Emma"; Kelly Reichardt and Jon Raymond's "First Cow," based on Raymond's novel "The Half Life"; and Leigh Whannell's extensive reimagining of "The Invisible Man" from H.G. Wells' science-fiction classic. Not a bad start, but the pickings are otherwise slim. I'll leave the other two slots blank for now, in symbolic recognition that — as much fun as it's been to speculate about an alternates-Oscars — we can't wait for theaters to reopen, and for the movies to return with a vengeance.



Focus Features

Sidney Flanigan in "Never Rarely Sometimes Always."



Focus Features

Anya Taylor-Joy and Johnny Flynn in a scene in "Emma."



Universal Pictures

Betty Gilpin leads the cast of "The Hunt."

MOVIES



Teeming with violence

'Extraction' belongs, in many ways, to another world

By JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

Extraction is set in the Bangladesh capital of Dhaka, one of the most densely populated cities in the world. It's in this urban sea of people and traffic that Chris Hemsworth's battle-scarred mercenary engages in a torrent of gun fights, car chases and hand-to-hand combat.

Produced with the Marvel-trained muscle of Joe and Anthony Russo ("Avengers Endgame," "Captain America"), "Extraction" wasn't shot in Dhaka but in Thailand and Ahmedabad, India. In India, it was one of the largest Hollywood productions to set down on the subcontinent. The throngs there doubled for Dhaka and populated "Extraction," a teeming movie made very obviously before the pandemic era of social distancing.

"There were thousands of people watching each day and erupting at the end of each take. It was like being in the Colosseum," Hemsworth said in an interview by video conference from his home in Australia. "It's interesting now to go: Would you be able to pull that off post-this? It would be very different."

"Extraction," which is currently streaming on Netflix, is the directorial debut of Sam Hargrave, the stunt coordinator on "Endgame" and other films and the former stunt double of Chris Evans' Captain America. It's a familiar kind of kinetic action movie featuring lengthy takes and violent choreography,

but it benefits greatly from the atmosphere of an exotic, lesser seen and overwhelming locale. And, right now, "Extraction" is easily the biggest new spectacle arriving on any screen anytime soon.

The film re-teams Hemsworth with the Russos, a year after "Endgame," in a script penned by Joe Russo a decade ago. He adapted it from the graphic novel "Ciudad," which is set in Paraguay's Ciudad del Este. But a couple of years ago, when the Russos tapped Hargrave to direct, they went looking for a new city.

"There were a few projects that were circling Ciudad del Este as a location, one in particular at Netflix. When we came up with the idea to flip it to Sam, we started looking for another, fresh location," said Joe Russo. "We had spent some time in Mumbai on a promotional tour, and that's where we got the idea to do it in Bangladesh."

Hargrave first scouted Dhaka in 2017, in between the shoots for "Infinity War" and "Endgame."

"It's very densely populated but it has an energy and vibrancy that's unique," said Hargrave. "You couldn't look in any direction that's not unique to the Western eye."

Films set in far-flung locations with a white protagonist have sometimes been criticized for relying on "white savior" tropes, a charge that has been lobbed by some at "Extraction." Hemsworth plays Tyler Rake, a mercenary hired to rescue the son of an Indian drug lord. He soon finds himself double-crossed and fighting legions to shield a boy (Rudhraksh



“It’s [Dhaka] very densely populated but it has an energy and vibrancy that’s unique. You couldn’t look in any direction that’s not unique to the Western eye.”

Sam Hargrave
director, "Extraction"

Jaiswal) for reasons he's not even himself sure of.

The cast is an exceedingly international one, including the Bollywood stars Randeep Hooda and Manoj Bajpayee. Since launching in India in 2016, Netflix has increasingly prioritized reaching the subcontinent's 1.3 billion people. Reed Hastings, Netflix's chief executive, has previously forecast that the company's next 100 million subscribers will come from India, and it has poured some \$400 million over 2019 and 2020 into expanding India-specific content. (Netflix declined to say how much "Extraction" cost to make.)

For the Russos, they see "Extraction" as an extension of the globe-spanning scale of Marvel, brought to a different genre and a smaller-screen platform.

"Joe and I got to see not just the fandom but the filmmaking community around the world," said Anthony Russo. "Having opportunities to tie into talented filmmakers from every corner of the globe is very exciting to us."

The Russo brothers are currently editing their next film, the crime drama "Cherry," remotely. They say they are, like much of the industry, trying to conceive and plan for how productions of any kind — let alone huge, rough-and-tumble films like "Extraction" — can resume in the months ahead. The Directors Guild recently formed a committee led by Steven Soderbergh to examine possible on-set solutions.

That makes the visceral, peopled realm of "Extraction" a vision of a recent but, at least temporarily, vanished movie world. To Hemsworth, it was a thrilling one.

"It ratcheted up the pressure of shooting within those places being so densely populated," said the actor, recalling elaborate action scenes with hundreds of people. "Sam threw us in a location that added to it tenfold."

The action-thriller "Extraction," starring Chris Hemsworth, left, is now streaming on Netflix.

NETFLIX/AP

MOVIES

Hemsworth finds a worthy action pic in 'Extraction'

By LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

Tyler Rake sounds like a Mad-Libs action hero name. When you add to the mix that this character actually, literally kills someone with a rake, it starts to veer into parody territory. That's why it's somewhat surprising that the film built around that wonderfully silly name, "Extraction," is entirely sincere and also pretty fun.

"Extraction" is a straightforward shoot-'em-up about a jaded mercenary, Mr. Rake, played by Chris Hemsworth, who's hired to save the 14-year-old son of a drug lord from another drug lord in Bangladesh. It doesn't do anything to push the genre forward, but it's better than you might think, existing comfortably somewhere on the action flick spectrum between Tony Scott and Peter Berg.

Much of that rests on Hemsworth's (very large) shoulders. The Australian actor hasn't had the easiest job finding solid roles outside of Thor. He's always good even when the movie isn't, and obviously has some tricks up his sleeves that belie his ac-

tion-hero physique. But many of his leading man roles that don't have anything to do with the God of Thunder have come and gone without much fanfare. So it makes a certain amount of sense that "Extraction" is Marvel-adjacent. It's written by Joe Russo (one half of the Russo brothers who have directed a handful of Marvel movies, including "Avengers: Endgame"), directed by Marvel stunt coordinator Sam Hargrave and based on a graphic novel ("Ciudad").

The graphic novel origins help explain "Tyler Rake," but that name is about the extent of the comic book elements in the actual film. And, to be fair, "Extraction" even knows it's ridiculous, hence the rake and the fact that the 14-year-old asset Ovi (Rudhraksh Jaiswal) walks up to the line of making fun of it at one point.

The film begins at the end, showing Tyler Rake (it just feels more right to say his full name) bloodied, battered and near-death on a bridge, having blurry flashbacks to some feet in the sand before cutting to two days earlier in Mumbai. (Don't hate "Extraction" for its clichés;



NETFLIX/AP

A hardened mercenary's mission becomes a soul-searching race to survive when he's sent to Bangladesh to rescue a drug lord's kidnapped son in "Extraction," with Chris Hemsworth, left, and Rudhraksh Jaiswal.

they're just part of the fun).

It won't shock you to learn that Tyler Rake is a bit of a loner who keeps his living quarters in shambles, but you get the sense that he always knows where the bottle of Oxy is. A woman (Golshifteh Farahani) comes to him with the job to save the kid, whose father is in prison, and Tyler Rake sets off to Dhaka to track him down. There, the criminal underworld plays out in broad daylight, with crime bosses, child soldiers, corrupt

police and an overall vibe of instability populating the streets. Tyler Rake finds the kid easily enough, but then things start to get more complicated when he discovers that he's not the only one looking for Ovi (and ready to kill to get him).

But don't despair; Tyler Rake has about two hours of nonstop fight in him before he gets to that bridge and the blurry flashbacks. He'll fight, and win, against anyone who comes in his way — even a group of kids. He doesn't

kill any of them, though. He just kind of injures and disables the "Goonies from hell."

The word "distraction" has started to lose all meaning this deep into our home lockdowns, but there is a certain comfort in curling up with a big, silly action pic like "Extraction." It reminds you of something you might have spent money on to see in an ice-cold theater on a hot summer day.

"Extraction" is rated R for strong bloody violence throughout, language and brief drug use. Running time: 118 minutes.

Stuntmen are increasingly Hollywood's go-to action directors

By JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

Some of today's top action directors were first doubles for Brad Pitt, Neo and Wolverine.

Increasingly, filmmakers are coming from the ranks of stuntmen and stunt coordinators, whose years of accomplishing complicated shots, managing the risks of cast and crew and working intimately with stars have given them a foundation for the task of directing — especially in action movies.

"Extraction" is the directorial debut of Sam Hargrave. Before Hargrave got behind the camera, he doubled for Chris Evans on "Captain America" and Hugh Jackman on "Wolverine," and coordinated stunts on blockbusters like "Avengers: Endgame" and the "Hunger Games: Mockingjay" movies.

Hargrave is the latest in a lineage of stuntmen who have gone from stepping in for actors directing them. It's a fairly recent career pathway thanks largely to the success of Chad Stahelski ("John Wick") and David Leitch ("Atomic Blonde").

A brief history of notable stuntmen turned directors:

Hal Needham: A trailblazer for stuntmen-filmmakers, Needham performed stunts on films including "The French Connection" and "How the West Was Won" before he penned the script to



NETFLIX/AP

Actors David Harbour, left, and Chris Hemsworth being directed by Sam Hargrave, center, for a scene in "Extraction." Hargrave is the latest in a lineage of stuntmen who have gone from stepping in for actors to directing them.

"Smokey and the Bandit." He convinced Burt Reynolds, for whom he had doubled, to let him direct. They remained a regular team, with Needham directing Reynolds in "Hooper," "The Cannonball Run" and "Stroker Ace." Needham has been quoted

as saying: "Screw the dialogue; let's wreck some cars."

Ric Roman Vaughn: The son of stuntman Fred Vaughn, one of the founding members of Stunts Unlimited, Vaughn performed stunt work in "The Last of

the Mohicans," "The Crow" and "Lethal Weapon 2." He transitioned to directing in 2001's "In the Shadows," and followed that up with "Snitch," with Dwayne Johnson, and last year's "Angel Has Fallen."

Chad Stahelski and David Leitch: A chiseled duo with martial arts skills and stunt expertise, Stahelski and Leitch have done more than anyone else to raise the profile of stunt coordinators. They've been leaders in the field since founding the action design company 87Eleven in 1997. Leitch was Pitt's stunt double in "Fight Club" and doubled for Keanu Reeves in "The Matrix." Stahelski choreographed fights in "300" and coordinated stunts in "The Expendables."

They stepped into filmmaking with the slickly stylized and hyper-violent "John Wick" franchise (Stahelski directed, Leitch produced). Leitch, himself, helmed "Atomic Blonde," with Charlize Theron, and "Deadpool 2."

Nash Edgerton: The brother of actor Joel Edgerton, Nash has been a longtime stuntman, doubling for Ewan McGregor's Obi-Wan Kenobi, and doing stunt work in "The Thin Red Line," "Superman Returns" and "Zero Dark Thirty." But Edgerton also continually made short films, some with his brother, and eventually made his feature directing debut with the 2008 neo-noir "The Square." In 2018, he directed the comedy "Gringo," with David Oyelowo and Theron.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police: Kids stole \$1M in cars from dealerships

NC WINSTON-SALEM — Police in North Carolina have accused a group of teenagers and children as young as 9 of stealing more than \$1.1 million in vehicles from car dealerships.

Investigators think 19 suspects ranging in age from 9 to 16 were responsible for taking nearly 50 cars from auto sellers in Winston-Salem and Kernersville during a monthlong string of break-ins, Winston-Salem police told news outlets.

Some of the children accused of involvement had stolen multiple cars before, The Winston-Salem Journal quoted Lt. Amy Gaudin as saying. Police alleged the suspects stole the keys of new cars or vehicles being serviced at the dealerships and took them on joy rides.

Police: Woman drove car with child on hood

SC ROCK HILL — A woman who allegedly recorded a video of herself driving a car while her 5-year-old child was sitting on the hood of the vehicle was arrested in South Carolina.

Thrista Miquisha Johnson turned herself in Tuesday after Rock Hill police learned about the video and issued a warrant for her arrest, news outlets reported. Lt. Michael Chavis told the Rock Hill Herald the video was taken near an apartment building in the city just two days earlier.

Chavis said police don't know how fast the car was moving in the video, but noted the child was not injured.

Man admits fatally shooting therapy dog

NJ MAPLE SHADE — A man who fatally shot his neighbor's therapy dog last year has pleaded guilty to animal cruelty, authorities said.

William Stroemel, 64, of Maple Shade, also pleaded guilty Wednesday to a weapons possession count as part of a plea deal with Burlington County prosecutors. They will recommend that he receive a five-year state prison term when he's sentenced July 29.

Stroemel used an air rifle to shoot Toby, a 9-year-old Pomeranian-poodle mix, after the dog escaped from his owner's home Sept. 17. The dog's owner is a Vietnam War veteran, and family members have said the animal helped relieve his post-traumatic stress disorder.

The dog, who was shot in the head, had to be euthanized a day after the shooting.

Deputies: Middle school fire caused by arson

WA PORT ORCHARD — A teenager was taken into custody after a fire damaged property at a middle school in Kitsap County, deputies said. Kitsap County sheriff's deputies believe a 15-year-old boy



CHRIS PIZZELLO/AP

On with the show

Artist Dania Strong adjusts prints of larger works on her front-yard fence as her dog Theo looks on Wednesday in the Koreatown section of Los Angeles. "Road Through Life," marks the second show that Strong has mounted on her fence since mid-April, as galleries and museums remain closed due to California's coronavirus-related stay-at-home orders.

allegedly broke into the school Wednesday and set it on fire, KCPQ-TV reported.

Deputies responded to calls of an alarm activation at Marcus Whitman Middle School. No one was injured.

South Kitsap Fire and Rescue, the Bremerton Fire Department and others helped put out the fire, authorities said.

The fire caused "substantial damage" and the Port Orchard teenager is being interviewed at a juvenile detention center, deputies said. The boy faces first-degree arson and second-degree burglary charges, authorities said.

Chain reaction crash on I-44 leaves 1 dead

MO ST. CLAIR — A chain reaction crash on Interstate 44 in eastern Missouri left one man dead, authorities said.

The crash happened Wednesday morning near St. Clair, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported. The Missouri Highway Patrol said the crash occurred around 10 a.m. when a sport utility vehicle driven by Kevin Broschous, 67, of Sullivan, lost control, hit a guardrail and veered back into the interstate's westbound lanes. Broschous' SUV was then hit by a semitrailer, which jackknifed across the westbound lanes, causing two more semitrailers to crash into it.

Broschous died at the scene. The patrol said no one else involved in the crash was hurt.

THE CENSUS

2 The number of times a Florida man has been arrested in a week for driving under the influence of alcohol, arrest reports show. The Florida Highway Patrol arrested Henry Francis Davis, 23, on April 22, after he got into a fight with another driver in Clearwater. Six days later, he was arrested again when officers saw him driving into oncoming traffic, an arrest report said. Davis has a third DUI arrest in his past from about five years ago in California, according to affidavits.

City councilman is accused of beef theft

GA FRANKLIN — A Georgia city councilman was charged after he allegedly stole a beef tenderloin from a grocery store.

Georgia Bureau of Investigation spokeswoman Nelly Miles told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution Clifford Henry Jiles was accused of swapping the price tag of a beef tenderloin with a cheaper pork tenderloin at a Piggly Wiggly grocery store in Franklin on Sunday. Miles said the beef retailed for over \$83, while the pork was about \$12.

The case was given to the bureau by Franklin police after police learned about the alleged swapping on Monday.

Gardens struck by thefts amid shutdown

CA RIVERSIDE — The University of California, Riverside, Botanic Gardens have been struck by plant thefts during the lengthening coronavirus shutdown.

About 30 large potted plants and additional smaller ones have been taken, gardens director Jodie Holt told The Press-Enterprise.

About a third of the stolen plants were part of the gardens' collection and the remainder would have been sold.

The gardens closed in mid-March due to the pandemic and the thefts were first noticed around April 16-17.

The thief or thieves cut through chain-link fencing that surrounds the 40-acre gardens and an adjoining 3-acre orchard on the UC Riverside campus and even used the facility's wheelbarrows to carry the loot.

Police: Buggy accident kills 4 Amish children

KY BATH COUNTY — Authorities in Kentucky said four children died and one is missing after a buggy carrying an Amish family was swept away in the current while trying to cross a low-water bridge.

Six people were in the horse and buggy that overturned on Wednesday in Bath County, Kentucky State Police said in a state-

ment. The adult in the buggy made it to the bank of the stream and called for help, police said.

The four siblings were found and pronounced dead by a corner's office on Wednesday. Kentucky State Police Trooper Scott Ferrell said authorities from various agencies were continuing to search Thursday for the last missing child.

Reward offered after pets, wildlife poisoned

WI CRANDON — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is offering a \$1,000 reward for information that leads to the arrest of someone who is poisoning pets and wildlife in northern Wisconsin.

Four dogs have died in the past month in Forest County. Testing on two of the pets, a 4-year-old yellow Labrador retriever that died April 24 and a 3-year-old German shepherd that died April 1, confirmed that they died from poisoning. Tests are pending after two more dogs died last weekend.

Officials believe the deaths are related to the ongoing poisonings in Florence, Forest and Marinette counties that have been investigated for about a year, WLUK-TV reported. So far, seven pet dogs have died.

Investigators also found dead coyotes, weasels and wolves, and lab tests confirmed the animals were also poisoned, WSAW-TV reported.

From wire reports

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OPINION

Coronavirus is the great unequalizer

By DOYLE MCMAUS

Los Angeles Times

We live in an unequal society, and the coronavirus is making it worse.

The pandemic has struck disproportionately at poor people in cities, almost as if it were deliberately targeting minorities. In New York, the death rate among African Americans and Latinos has been roughly twice as high as among white people.

The economic impact has been unequal too. A survey released Tuesday by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation reported that more than half of the workers who have lost income because of the pandemic were already below the federal poverty line. Higher-income workers, by contrast, have mostly kept their jobs.

Now add a third, cruel form of inequality: unequal risk.

Knowledge workers who can work at home are riding out the pandemic in relative safety. First responders, health care workers, bus drivers, grocery store clerks and delivery workers don't have that luxury.

To keep their paychecks coming, they have to go out in public and risk infection — even though they generally aren't as well paid as the managers (and journalists) who work at home.

Those are the new facts of American inequality. They'll persist as long as the coronavirus is at large. The economic impact is likely to continue even longer.

"We had a lot of inequality before the pandemic, and we're going to have a lot more before it's over," Isabel V. Sawhill of the Brookings Institution, a leading source on poverty and class, told me. "It's quite scary to think about what will be come of the country when the effects are so uneven."

The question is: What do we do about it?

Will this be a moment for Americans to take a searching look at our society's inequalities, and decide to raise the incomes of the working poor? Or will we choose to muddle through the Pandemic Recession and try to forget everything we're suddenly seeing in stark relief?

So far, federal and state governments have been in crisis mode, scrambling to quell the pandemic and halt the economy's free fall. Congress has passed four economic relief bills with more than \$3 trillion in emergency spending, an emergency effort of unprecedented size.

But the measures have been short term and top-down. They began with bailouts for airlines and other big businesses, then added a massive program of loans for small businesses, direct payments to taxpayers and expanded unemployment benefits.

Meanwhile, the Federal Reserve has buoyed the stock markets by lending trillions to banks, businesses, states and counties.

The rollout has been plagued with more than its share of problems. The small-business loan program started in chaos, and funneled much of its money to big businesses instead. The second round, which began Monday, led to widespread frustration as the Small Business Administration's website repeatedly crashed and bankers couldn't file applications for clients.

States have been swamped by applications for unemployment insurance; Florida reported last week that it had managed to approve only 20% of incoming requests.

President Donald Trump hopes for a sharp economic recovery before the November election. But the International Monetary Fund warns the recession could last more than a year. The bounce-back could stall if the pandemic recurs or if wary consumers stay away from public places and continue to trim their spending.

So we need to plan for a longer ordeal.

Small-business loan program really is working

By ANDY PUZZER

Special to The Washington Post

Media coverage of the federal government's efforts to help small businesses has focused lately on big companies' grabbing loans that were meant to help smaller ones weather the new coronavirus economic shutdown. But the numbers from the Cares Act's Paycheck Protection Program are coming in, and they're impressive.

On April 3, the Small Business Administration launched the PPP with \$349 billion. The SBA's most recent report says that through April 16, the agency approved nearly 1.7 million loans through 4,975 lenders, depleting the entire fund. According to SBA Administrator Jovita Carranza, the agency "processed more than 14 years' worth of loans in less than 14 days." By any measure, that's lightning speed. And now a new tranche of money is in the pipeline.

It turns out that just 1.6% of total PPP loans were for \$2 million or more, coming to a total of about \$95 billion, according to the SBA — some of those loans presumably going to large firms that weren't the legislation's intended beneficiaries. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has announced that the government will perform a full audit of any company with a loan of \$2 million or more, and companies that took loans they didn't need could be "subject to criminal liability." A number of companies already have repaid their loans.

For the most part, these PPP loans appear to be actually reaching the small

businesses as intended. Loans for less than \$150,000 account for 74% of total loans — and 96% were for less than \$1 million. The average loan was \$206,000.

But is the money helping? As the former chief executive of CKE Restaurants, with about 200 franchisees, and a former director of the International Franchise Association, I've been hearing from a lot of nervous small-business owners since the beginning of the economic shutdown.

While the Cares Act was pending in Congress, most were concerned about whether their business would qualify for the loans. Once it passed, covering a broad swath of small businesses, you could almost hear the collective sigh of relief. But something else to panic set in when many businesses were unable to find a lender willing to make a PPP loan. It seemed that the bigger the bank, the more difficult the process. This concern also passed fairly rapidly when community banks — and some larger banks — stepped up and started making the loans.

Unfortunately, not all small businesses received loans before the program ran out of funds. A James Beard Foundation survey of more than 1,800 predominantly small and independent restaurant owners found that while 41% of the respondents had been approved for a loan, nearly half (45%) of those approved had not received funding. After an inexcusable delay by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., the Trump administration and Congress added \$33 billion to the PPP to address the demand.

Sawhill says that means more spending on the Paycheck Protection Program, which is intended to help small businesses, but it also means unemployment insurance plus more help for state and local governments.

But the relief packages need several new elements to soften the pandemic's impact on the no-longer-working poor.

Sawhill recommends expanding the low-income safety net with emergency funding for food stamps and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, two programs that got similar boosts during the Great Recession a decade ago.

But Congress needs to put automatic triggers on all these programs, so that funding rises along with job losses. That way, the newly unemployed won't have to depend on Congress voting for round after round of new funding amid the polarized debates of an election year.

Want to think bigger? Gene Sperling, a former economic adviser to Bill Clinton, is proposing a \$20 "living wage" package that would raise the federal minimum wage and add child care subsidies and tax credits. Other Democrats hope this will be the moment when voters coalesce around their demands for universal health insurance, so workers don't lose access to medical care if they lose their jobs.

Those proposals will remain stretch goals. Democrats won't have a landslide in November.

But we ought to reach a bipartisan consensus that the "essential workers" we claim to admire as heroic — including grocery store clerks, delivery service drivers and meat packers — deserve a living wage. They're risking their lives on our behalf. Failing that, it would be a terrible thing to let this crisis go to waste.

Doyle McMaus is a Washington columnist for the Los Angeles Times and director of the journalism program at Georgetown University.

One looming problem: the lack of certainty about how businesses can qualify for loan forgiveness. For example, how much of the loan proceeds must employers spend on payroll, and over what period of time? But there is a sense that the Trump administration recognizes the problem and will soon issue regulatory guidance to clarify the requirements.

With the PPP loans made so far, and with more money being disbursed, thousands of small businesses that would otherwise have closed permanently will remain open, their employees either still at work or more readily rehired when their employer will be in business and rehiring once the crisis abates. According to Mnuchin, the PPP has already benefited 30 million workers, and the administration expects "it will be another 30 million workers by the time we get done with this, so close to 50% of the private payroll." Having these businesses and jobs intact will help smooth the country's economic recovery.

In the long term, government intervention is no substitute for the economy. The best way to speed the recovery would be a return to policies that encourage private-sector investment, growth and work. The Cares Act was designed to make a short-term economic stop sustainable and a soft landing possible, but the permanent change the way the United States does business. The good news is that it does appear to be working.

Andy Puzzer is the former chief executive of CKE Restaurants, a senior fellow at Pepperdine University's School of Public Policy and the author of "Getting America Back to Work."

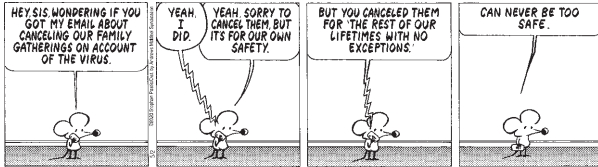
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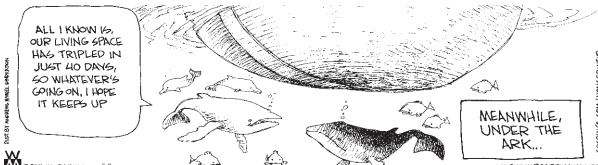
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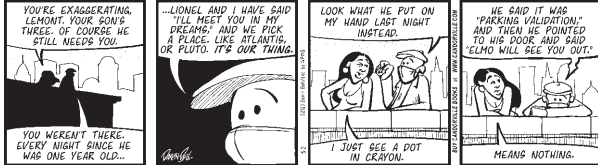
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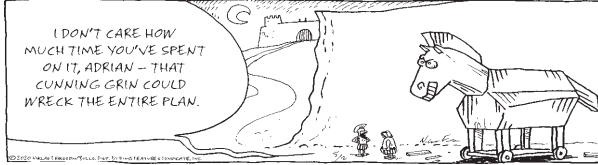
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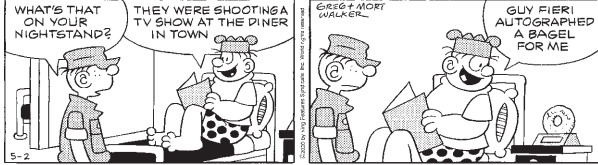
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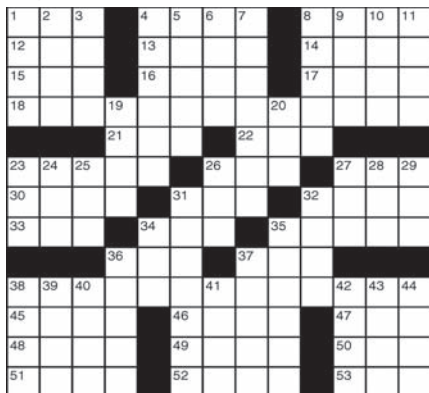
Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

- 1 Used a chair
- 4 Atkins diet no-no
- 8 Molt
- 12 "Gross!"
- 13 "Would — to you?"
- 14 Jeans maker
- 15 Arthur of "Maude"
- 16 Travel permit
- 17 Skip
- 18 "Let's Get Loud" singer who performed at the 2020 Super Bowl
- 21 Revue segment
- 22 Trendy
- 23 Outscores
- 26 Shack
- 27 — de mer
- 30 Bakery buys
- 31 Towboat
- 32 Indonesian island
- 33 Weep
- 34 Future flower
- 35 Razzle-dazzle
- 36 Feedbag bit
- 37 Pair
- 38 Former Yankee with 696 home runs
- 45 Creche trio
- 46 Cheer (for)
- 47 Monk's title
- 48 Goad
- 49 Sicilian peak
- 50 "Alley —"
- 51 RSVP enclosure

DOWN

- 52 Antelope's playmate
- 53 Snake's warning
- 24 Continent north of Afr.
- 25 Whatever
- 26 Paul Newman film
- 27 Avril follower
- 28 PC key
- 29 Actress Taylor
- 31 Instructed privately
- 32 Online journal
- 34 Rail
- 35 B.B. King's instrument
- 36 Rust, for one
- 37 Unmanned plane
- 38 Band boosters
- 39 News reporter
- 40 Swelled heads
- 41 Lavish affection (on)
- 42 Sci-fi fleet
- 43 Love god
- 44 Microwaves

Answer to Previous Puzzle



5-2

CRYPTOQUIP

X J G B O Q C T O Q E I U
G N C T E G N B N X I W Y J G I S N
H J X W I G T H I E J X J Y O Y O W I
M E G O I N W S E M : M O G Y J G
I S N H J G W O E G .

Yesterday's Cryptquip: WHAT RECIPE INGREDIENTS WOULD BE VERY SUITABLE TO ADD PUNGENCY TO IRISH DISHES? GAELIC CLOVES.
Today's Cryptquip Clue: Q equals L

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myafn.net

Deals

Thursday's transactions

FOOTBALL
National Football League
ARIZONA CARDINALS — Released LB Keith Shaw and DL Lyndon Johnson.
BALTIMORE RAVENS — Signed C Trysten Collins-Castillo, QB Tyler Huntley and K Nick Vogel.
CINCINNATI BENGALS — Released QB Andy Dalton.
LAS VEGAS RAIDERS — Re-signed WR De'Mornay Pierson-El.
MIA DOLPHINS — Released DE Taco Charlton.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS — Signed free agents DL Beau Allen, WR's Damiere Byrd and Marquise Lee, LB Brandon Copeland, DB's Cody Davis and Adrian Phillips, QB Brian Hoyer and FB Dan Vitale.

NEW YORK GIANTS — Signed undrafted free agents; TE Ryan John and DE Doran Lewis. Released DE Kevin Wilkins.

TENNESSEE TITANS — Agreed to terms with RB Senorise Perry on a one-year contract.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League
NEW YORK ISLANDERS — Agreed to terms with G Samuel Bolduc on a three-year entry-level contract.

Major League Soccer
TORONTO FC — Agreed to terms with M. Marky Delgado on a long-term contract.

COLLEGE
CREIGHTON — Signed men's basketball F Mattias Kancierski.
NEW MEXICO — Announced football DE Jake Saltonstall has transferred from Football JC.

SETON HALL — Announced women's basketball G Moya Bembry has transferred from Penn State and G Curtessa Dean has transferred from Trinity Valley JC.

WAKE FOREST — Named Steve Forbes men's head basketball coach.

Pro basketball

NBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE			
Atlantic Division			
Toronto	46	18	719
Boston	43	21	600
Philadelphia	39	26	600
Brooklyn	33	32	587
New York	21	45	318
Southeast Division			
Miami	42	24	631
Orlando	30	35	462
Washington	24	42	375
Charlotte	23	42	354
Atlanta	20	47	299
Central Division			
Milwaukee	35	28	615
Indiana	39	26	600
Chicago	32	33	548
Detroit	20	46	303
Cleveland	18	48	292
WESTERN CONFERENCE			
Southwest Division			
Houston	40	24	625
Dallas	37	27	597
Memphis	32	33	492
Sacramento	26	39	436
San Antonio	27	36	429
Northwest Division			
Denver	32	28	662
Portland	29	31	625
Oklahoma City	40	24	625
Portland	29	37	439
Minnesota	27	39	429
Pacific Division			
L.A. Lakers	44	20	688
L.A. Clippers	38	26	648
Phoenix	26	39	400
Golden State	15	50	231

AP spotlight

May 2
1904 — Mrs. Charles Durnell becomes the first woman to win a national title by starter and winner when long shot Elwood wins the 30th Run for the Roses. **1905** — It's the first Derby winner to be bred by a woman, Mrs. J.B. Prather. **1967** — Fred Tony of the Cincinnati Reds and James "Hippo" Vaughn of the Chicago Cubs pitch a double no-hitter for nine innings, but the Reds win 1-0 with two hits in the 10th. **1987** — Lou Gehrig of the New York Yankees does not play against the Detroit Tigers at Briggs Stadium, ending his streak of 2,130 consecutive games played. **1997** — The Toronto Maple Leafs beat the Montreal Canadiens 3-1 to win the Stanley Cup in six games.

Briefly

NFL planning to play full season

Associated Press

The NFL is planning to play a full season though it's uncertain what that will look like.

League spokesman Brian McCarthy said Thursday that since January the 2020 schedule was intended for release after the draft. It is planned for release by the end of next week, with the date for the kickoff game Thursday, Sept. 10, concluding with the Super Bowl on Feb. 7 in Tampa.

But the league is planning several contingencies because of the coronavirus pandemic that could lead to everything from a delayed start to a late-winter Super Bowl.

"The schedule will come out soon, but we're doing reasonable and responsible planning as we always do, inside of game operations," league executive Troy Vincent told The Associated Press on Thursday. "Based off of what we are learning from the medical community and how people are handling this domestically and abroad, we are being deliberate with reasonable and responsible planning about what can work in our environment and what we can incorporate to protect the health and safety of all involved."

Empty stadiums, neutral sites and no bye weeks are among several alternatives being discussed. "We have to look at it in the current environment based off what we're learning through the science and through the medical community," said Vincent, who oversees football operations for the NFL.

If the season needs to be pushed back or the regular season has to be adjusted, the NFL players' union would have to approve. The league and the players' association reached a new labor



DAVID J. PHILLIP/AP

United States sprinter Deajah Stevens was suspended Friday for repeatedly being unavailable for doping tests.

agreement in March that carries through the 2030 season.

In other NFL news:
■ Former first-round draft

pick Charles Harris was traded Friday after three unproductive seasons by the Miami Dolphins to the Atlanta Falcons for a seventh-

round choice in 2021.

A defensive end from Missouri, Harris was the 22nd overall pick in 2017, but he totaled only 3½ sacks with Miami. That included half a sack last year, even though he started a career-high five games for rookie coach Brian Flores.

US sprinter Stevens provisionally suspended

MONACO — American sprinter Deajah Stevens was provisionally suspended Friday for repeatedly being unavailable for doping tests.

The Athletics Integrity Unit said Stevens amassed three whereabouts violations in a year.

Athletes are required to provide regular updates on their whereabouts to make it possible for anti-doping authorities to carry out surprise testing outside of competition. A violation means an athlete either did not fill out forms telling authorities where they could be found, or that they weren't where they said they would be when testers arrived.

Stevens won the U.S. national title in the 200 meters in 2017 and was a finalist in the 200 at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics.

The AIU said similar suspensions were imposed on American sprinter Gabrielle Thomas and Kenyan distance runner Alex Korio Olotiipit. It didn't specify when or where the violations occurred.

World champion sprinter Christian Coleman was cleared of a whereabouts charge last year. One of the American's alleged violations was backdated, putting it outside of the required 12-month window for three strikes.

Banks agree to pay fines in FIFA scandal

By RONALD BLUM

Associated Press

NEW YORK — An Israeli bank and its Swiss subsidiary agreed to pay over \$30 million for their role in conspiring to launder more than \$20 million in kickbacks to soccer officials, becoming the first financial institution implicated in the FIFA scandal to reach a resolution with U.S. prosecutors.

Bank Hapoalim BM in Israel and its wholly owned Swiss company Hapoalim Ltd. agreed to forfeit \$20.73 million and pay a fine of \$9.33 million as part of a non-prosecution agreement, the U.S. attorney's office in Brooklyn said Thursday. The scheme took place through the banks' Miami branch from 2010-15, with many of the payments tied to marketing rights for the Copa America.

Eugenio Figueredo, a former president of the South American governing body CONMEBOL and

Uruguay's federation, was among those accused of receiving the bribes, along with Luis Bedyoya, a former president of Colombia's federation and like Figueredo a longtime member of FIFA's executive committee.

Former federation presidents Sergio Jaudue of Chile and Rafael Esquivel of Venezuela also were implicated by the U.S. Justice Department, along with Jose Luis Chiriboga, whose father, Luis, was president of Ecuador's federation.

Bank Hapoalim (BHBM) and Hapoalim Ltd. (BHIS) reached a deal with the Justice Department and the U.S. attorney's office in which they and BHBM subsidiary Hapoalim (Latin America) SA will not be subject to prosecution for any of the crimes admitted in the deal, except for criminal tax violations. No bank employees involved in the illegal activities were identified by name.

"This announcement illustrates another aspect in the spider web of bribery, corruption and back-room deals going on behind the scenes as soccer games were played on the field," William F. Sweeney, assistant director in charge of the FBI's New York field office, said in a statement. "Bank Hapoalim admits executives looked the other way, and allowed illicit activity to continue even when employees discovered the scheme and reported it."

In a weave of bribes that included details from wiretaps and unidentified individuals referred to as Relationship Manager 1, Compliance Employees 1 and 2 and Co-Consultants 1 and 2, prosecutors detailed the actions by Full Play Group, the Argentine company that won rights to sell media and marketing for the 2015, 2016, 2019 and 2023 Copa Americas. South America's national team championship.

Traffic Sports, a Brazilian company, held the rights from 1987-2011. Traffic Sports and Traffic Sports USA reached guilty pleas and were fined a total of \$1 million last year.

Full Play is controlled by Hugo Jinkins and son Mariano, who were first indicted in 2015 and have been charged with racketeering conspiracy, wire fraud, wire fraud conspiracy and money laundering conspiracy.

Full Play had accounts at the banks in the names of subsidiaries Bayan Group, Cross Trading and Yorkfields, and the two Jinkins used those accounts to make at least 53 bribe payments totaling more than \$14.02 million from 2010-14 to Bedyoya, Chiriboga, Esquivel and Figueredo as part of Full Play's deal to acquire marketing rights to the 2015, 2016, 2019 and 2023 Copa Americas. Prosecutors said in a statement of facts.

GOLF/BOXING



PHILAN M. ERENHACK/AP

Harris English started the season with conditional status from finishing between Nos. 126 and 150 on the PGA Tour the previous season. The PGA Tour said players exempt for this season will keep the same status for the 2020-21 season that is scheduled to start in September unless they earn a higher ranking after this shortened season. That could help someone like English, who has posted five top 10s and is No. 24 in the FedEx Cup, making his a lock to have a full card for next season.

No one loses tour card in shorter PGA season

By DOUG FERGUSON

Associated Press

A shorter season brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic means no one will lose a PGA Tour card this year and the Korn Ferry Tour players will have to wait a year before fully joining the big leagues.

A memo sent to players Thursday to outline the changes was another step in the tour trying to figure out what's equitable in a season that will be without 13 previously scheduled events.

The tour said players exempt for this season will keep the same status for the 2020-21 season that is scheduled to start in September unless they earn a higher ranking after this shortened season.

That could help someone like Harris English, who started the season with conditional status from finishing between Nos. 126 and 150 the previous season. He has posted five top 10s and is No. 24 in the FedEx Cup, making him a lock to have a full card for next season.

As for the developmental Korn Ferry Tour, no one will graduate to the PGA Tour after the season. The tour was working on rewarding the top 10 players, such as allowing them in opposite-field events for next season.

All of this is contingent on golf resuming June 11-14 at Colonial, the restart of a season that would include only one major championship. The PGA Championship is tentatively set for Aug. 9-12 in San Francisco. The U.S. Open was pushed back to September, the Masters was moved to No-

Scott halves 'Nine holes with a mate'

MALENY, Australia — Adam Scott's "Nine holes with a mate" was authentic, if nothing else.

With the PGA Tour suspended and sports generally shuttered globally because of the coronavirus pandemic, Scott is back in Australia and looking for ways to keep golf fans engaged.



Scott

The 2013 Masters Champion live streamed nine holes of match play against Australian PGA professional Wayne Perske on Instagram, commenting on

each shot, exchanging banter, telling stories and giving tips and advice as they covered the Maleny Golf Club on Australia's Sunshine Coast hinterland on Friday morning.

Scott was one down going into the last, and Perske missed a putt that would have given him bragging rights over one of the world's top 10 players.

The ever-polite Scott summed up the result at the end of the live stream: "We've halved the match. Sorry for the no result." The conditions were rugged and breezy, with the wind playing havoc with the audio. But considering other live sports options — almost zero — it was a hit with the fans.

Scott grew up north of Brisbane on the Sunshine Coast, where the Maleny club is located.

— Associated Press

member and the British Open was canceled.

That means six majors will be played next season.

This season still offers a \$15 million prize to the winner of the FedEx Cup. The two playoff events outside Boston and Chicago would award triple points instead of quadruple points.

In other changes:

■ The field for the Sentry Tournament of Champions at Kapalua will include everyone who wins a PGA Tour event in 2020, along with players who reach the Tour Championship. That means

whoever finished in the top 30 in the FedEx Cup gets into at least three majors in 2021, along with a trip to Maui.

■ The tournament in the Dominican Republic originally was canceled and then moved to September, the same week as the Ryder Cup. Because it is not opposite a World Golf Championship, the winner will receive full FedEx Cup points and a trip to the 2021 Masters.

■ For the rest of this season, Monday qualifiers that can be held will only provide two spots instead of four.

Joshua's first title defense may take place without fans

By STEVE DOUGLAS

Associated Press

Anthony Joshua's first fight as the restored world heavyweight champion could take place in front of no spectators.

British boxing's governing body told promoters on Thursday it hopes to be able to have shows back from July after months of inactivity because of the coronavirus outbreak.

Initially, though, bouts are expected to be held without fans, meaning Joshua's fight against Kubrat Pulev — the first since the Briton regained his WBA, IBF and WBO belts by beating Andy Ruiz Jr. in December — would surely be switched from its planned venue, the stadium of English soccer club Tottenham which can hold more than 60,000 spectators.

The Joshua-Pulev fight had been scheduled for June 20 before being pushed back to an as-yet-unconfirmed date because of the pandemic. A rearranged date of July 25 has been touted.

Joshua wanted the first defense of his belts to take place in London.

Eddie Hearn, Joshua's promoter, said his Matchroom Boxing organization was planning to stage "two or three" Saturday

fight nights in July before returning with a bigger show, provided boxing and other sports get the go-ahead to return from the British government.

Hearn said he wouldn't want to stage a fight in an enclosed location like a TV studio because he doesn't see how it "does anything for the sport."

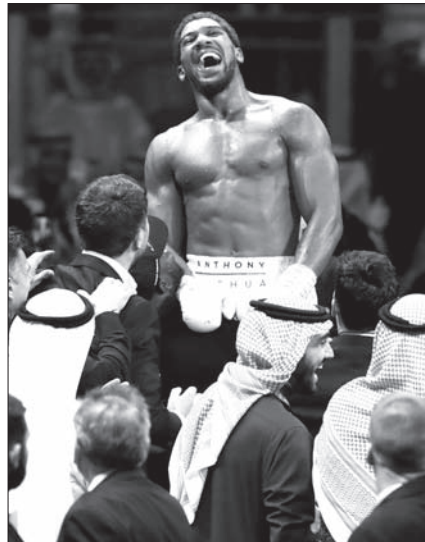
"I want to build a fight camp, a different kind of environment, more dramatic," Hearn said in an interview with the BBC. "It will look spectacular on TV. We need to dramatize it."

"It's about taking over a hotel, testing all the teams, creating a sterile fight camp where no one goes in until we know they've had a negative test. It's about creating changing room areas, ring walks. It will add to the story."

The British Boxing Board of Control said if boxing was to return in July, there would be an emphasis on "minimal numbers" of officials and broadcast personnel. Medical staff were required at ringside, too.

Anyone at the events would have to have been in pre-fight quarantine and had tests for COVID-19. There will initially be a maximum of five fights in a show.

The BBBofC said it continues to follow advice from government and medical authorities.



HASSAN AMMAR/AP

Britain's Anthony Joshua celebrates after beating Andy Ruiz Jr. to win their World Heavyweight Championship bout on Dec. 8 at the Diriyah Arena in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Joshua's first fight as the restored champion could take place in front of no fans.

COLLEGE SPORTS

NCAA board: Delay transfer rule change

By RALPH D. RUSSO
Associated Press

The NCAA Board of Governors has recommended delaying a change to the transfer waiver process that would permit all athletes to switch schools once without sitting out a season.

Now it is likely the NCAA will examine loosening restrictions on transfers through legislation.

The NCAA announced the board's recommendation Thursday after several days of meetings, but added the Division I council could still a vote on making the waiver change in May.

The board did agree to lift a moratorium on legislative changes to the transfer rules, allowing NCAA member schools to consider proposals in January for a one-time exception for all transferring Division I athletes.

Mid-American Conference Commissioner Jon Steinbrecher said a more comprehensive approach to implementing a one-time exception for all transfers is needed.

"That will allow us to better address the issues that are all around this," said Steinbrecher, who was leading the transfer waiver working group.

Steinbrecher said those issues include:

- How transfers count toward a team's Academic Progress Ratio. Teams can face NCAA sanctions if they fall short of APR targets.

- Notification dates for athletes who want to use a one-time exception. Those would likely need to be sports specific.

- Tampering. "You hear people complain about it but at the end of the day, very little is done," Steinbrecher said. "Coaches aren't willing necessarily to point the finger at each other. OK, what do you want to do?"

- Graduate transfers. Rules already allow athletes who have graduated to transfer without sitting out. Would that stay the same?

- Football teams can sign no more than 25 players in a year, including recruits and transfers. Could that be tweaked to allow teams the ability to replace outgoing transfers, opening up more spots for players looking for new schools?

Currently, NCAA rules require football, baseball, men's hockey and men's and women's basketball players to sit out a season after transferring. Athletes in all other sports are allowed by rule a one-time exception so they can play right away after switching schools.

A change to the waiver was recommended by a working group in February that would mirror the one-time exception, and go into effect this year. That was before college sports were shut down and thrown into disarray by the coronavirus pandemic.



KEITH SRAKOIC/AP

The NCAA announced recommendations Thursday from its Board of Governors to delay a change to the transfer waiver process that would permit athletes to switch schools once without sitting out a season.

NCAA faces lawsuit over violence against women

By NOAH TRISTER
Associated Press

The NCAA is facing a federal lawsuit accusing the organization of failing to address gender-based violence by male athletes against female students at colleges and universities.

Plaintiffs in the suit, filed this week in U.S. District Court in Michigan, include women who have been athletes at Michigan State, Nebraska and an unidentified America East school. Other plaintiffs have been students at Michigan State or Nebraska.

"Defendants routinely issue harsh punishments against student-athletes who accept payments in exchange for use of their likenesses, or who accept free meals, but they have no specific penalty for student-athletes who commit sexual assault," the suit says. "Defendants have repeatedly and persistently failed to take any meaningful action to mitigate the severe issue of sexual misconduct perpetrated by male student-athletes against women at their member institutions."

A Nebraska spokeswoman said Thursday the school received a copy of the lawsuit against the NCAA and cannot comment on pending litigation. A message



DAVID J. PHILLIP/AP

NCAA President Mark Emmert speaks during a news conference in San Antonio. A federal lawsuit has been filed against the NCAA accusing the organization of failing to address sexual violence by male athletes against female students at colleges and universities.

was left with the NCAA seeking comment.

A former track athlete at Michigan State, a former volleyball player at Nebraska and a swimmer at an America East school are among the plaintiffs.

The lawsuit accuses the defendants of negligence, intentional infliction of emotional distress, negligent infliction of emotional

distress, negligent supervision, fraud, breach of contract with student-athletes and breach of contract with non-student athletes.

The suit accuses a men's track athlete at Michigan State of rape in 2017, and it accuses football players at Nebraska of rape in 2018 and 2019 and of nonconsensual groping in 2019. It also accuses a Nebraska athlete of rape

in 2015, and a men's basketball player at the America East school of rape in 2019. The suit includes allegations of rape against three Michigan State basketball players in 2015. The woman who made those allegations spoke about them last year and filed a lawsuit in 2018.

The lawsuit against the NCAA alleges that after the female track athlete at Michigan State was raped by a member of the men's team, she reported the rape to an assistant coach, who told her "if she pursued any claims against (the man), no one would like her, and that because (she) is 'pretty,' she would become a 'distraction.'"

The suit says members of the men's track team threatened her if she pursued charges. The suit says the woman was removed from the sprint squad so she would not be around the man she said raped her.

The female track athlete also filed her own suit against Michigan State. The school would not comment on the suit against the NCAA, while spokeswoman Emily Guerrant said it would be inappropriate to comment about the suit against MSU.

"That said, we take allegations of sexual misconduct and retaliation very seriously, and our Office of Institutional Equity reviews all allegations it receives," she said. "In the last several years, MSU has taken significant steps to increase resources for survivors, to revise and to educate the campus community on our policies, as well as to further its prevention efforts."

The lawsuit against the NCAA says the swimmer at an America East school was raped by a basketball player last year, and that the swimmer's mother was told by an athletics employee that a formal Title IX investigation would result in an immediate suspension of the basketball player, pending the outcome of the investigation.

According to the complaint, the employee said an informal Title IX resolution process could not result in the player being suspended "because it 'wouldn't be fair to other players' and it 'would have a negative impact on the community' who attended games expecting to see (him) play."

The woman did not want to initiate the formal Title IX investigation because she feared retaliation, the suit says. In January, she learned the school was going to be running an ad featuring the basketball player to promote the athletic department.

VIRUS OUTBREAK

Year: 'Reason for optimism' that regular season could still go on

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the 75th playing of the tournament, that milestone has been pushed back to 2022.

"Let me tell folks in all those communities and all the sites where we have regional qualifying tournaments how disappointed we are to have to do this, but it was inevitable," Keener said. "It would be irresponsible and impossible to bring teams and thousands of people from all over the world into the community of Williamsport as well as those six other communities that have been such great friends and supporters of ours over the years."

He added that travel restrictions would make it equally impossible to hold qualifying tournaments for international teams and to bring those teams safely to the United States.

Little League has not, however, called off the 2020 regular season. Keener said there was reason for optimism that teams could play this spring and summer, depending on restrictions in states and localities.

The annual major league game in Williamsport, which this year was to feature the Boston Red Sox and Baltimore Orioles on Aug. 23, has been canceled, MLB said.

"While the cancellation of the 2020 Little League World Series is extremely disappointing, the health and safety of all of the people involved must be the paramount consideration. We look forward to our return to Williamsport for the 2021 MLB Little League Classic," baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred said in a statement.

Little League announced in March that the season was on hold until at least May 11 because of guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention against gatherings of 50 people or more.

After that date, Keener said, districts and leagues should look to states and localities for guidance on when or if the season can resume. He also urged districts to hold all-star tournaments to give kids at least a taste of the competition they'll be missing with World Series qualifying scrapped.

"We will be very amenable to (changing) eligibility requirements and be very flexible to allow as many kids the opportunity to play as possible for whatever can remain of the 2020 Little League season," he said.

Along with the Little League World Series, which is held in South Williamsport, the other events canceled were the World Series of Little League Softball in Greenville, N.C.; Junior League Baseball in Taylor, Mich.; Junior League Softball in Kirkland, Wash.; Senior League Baseball in Easley, S.C.; and Senior League Softball in Sussex County, Del.



A track marshal waves a yellow caution flag during a race in Watkins Glen, N.Y., in 2016.

MEL EVANS/AP

NASCAR to race — under caution

Season resumes with seven fan-free events in 10 days

By JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — NASCAR plans to restart its engines with a flurry of races at two historic tracks.

NASCAR said Thursday it is set to return — without spectators — on May 17 with an elite Cup Series race at Darlington Raceway in South Carolina, the first of seven events in an 11-day stretch across the top three series.

There will be no practice, no qualifying and drivers will jump into their cars for the first time since March 8 and attempt to tackle "The Track Too Tough To Tame."

"Events are going to look different than they have in the past," said John Bobo, NASCAR vice president of racing operations.

NASCAR has set guidelines to safely hold the events using CDC guidelines on social distancing and personal protective equipment. The entire venue will be used to maintain distancing in garage stalls and where the haulers are parked, while drivers will have to self-isolate in their motorhomes as they prepare to compete.

"Our priority right now is to try and get back racing in a safe way," said Steve O'Donnell, chief racing development officer.

NASCAR follows the UFC as the first major sports organizations to get back to work since the coronavirus pandemic shut down U.S. sports in mid-March. The Professional Bull Racing Series resumed competition last weekend and there has been some horse racing.

NASCAR's revised schedule goes only through May and has a pair of Wednesday Cup races, fulfilling fans' longtime plea for midweek events. The first of those races will be at Darlington, three days after the return race at the 70-year-old, egg-shaped oval.

Charlotte Motor Speedway will then host the Coca-Cola 600 on May 24 to mark 60 consecutive years the longest race on the NASCAR schedule will be held on Memorial Day weekend. The track in Concord, outside NASCAR's home base of Charlotte, will then host



MIKE MCCANN/AP

Kevin Harvick (4) and Joey Logano (22) race on April 12, 2014, during a NASCAR race in Darlington, S.C. NASCAR will get its season back on track May 17 at Darlington Raceway without spectators, with plans to race four times in 10 days at a pair of iconic tracks.

a Wednesday race three days later.

There also will be lower-tier Xfinity and Truck series races at the two tracks. The North Carolina governor has said the Charlotte races can be held as long as health conditions in the area do not deteriorate.

"This has been a proactive effort to put our motorsports industry back to work and boost the morale of sports fans around the world," said Marcus Smith, president and CEO of Speedway Motorsports. He said "sports fans around the world need this, a return to some sense of normalcy with live sports on TV, and NASCAR is uniquely positioned to deliver it from a competition standpoint."

NASCAR suspended its season March 13 with only four of its 36 scheduled races completed. The stock car series, heavily reliant on television money and sponsor payments, has vowed to complete its full schedule. The revised schedule for now starts at tracks within driving distance of Charlotte-based race teams and in states that have started reopening.

O'Donnell said NASCAR wanted to get seven events completed within driving distance of North Carolina before it resumes competition in states that require air travel and hotels.

NASCAR has completed a fully revised schedule but would not reveal it Thursday as so much relies on the pandemic and guidelines in different states.

Darlington will now have three coveted Cup races for the first time in track history. It is also scheduled to open the playoffs with the Southern 500 on Sept. 6. Because the track now has two additional dates, NASCAR will lose two Cup races from its other properties. The same goes for Speedway Motorsports, which gained one additional race so far and will have to forfeit one at another facility.

"For the couple tracks where we need to move an event, we want to do that in the right way," O'Donnell said. "We just want to take a little time here before we're able to announce that."

Almost all teams began returning to their shops this week with either a reduced initial workforce or in split shifts. Now that NASCAR has told the teams where it will be racing this month, they can start preparing cars suitable for the two tracks.

Although Florida and Texas invited NASCAR to compete in those states without spectators, the sanctioning body is holding off on announcing races in those states because of the travel required.

SPORTS



Start your engines
NASCAR to resume season
without spectators » **Page 23**

VIRUS OUTBREAK

Not this year

Little League World Series canceled for first time

Associated Press

This year's Little League World Series and the championship tournaments in six other Little League divisions have been canceled be-

cause of the coronavirus pandemic.

Little League President Stephen Keener announced the cancellations in a Facebook Live broadcast Thursday afternoon from league headquarters in Williamsport, Penn., saying it would be "impossible" to hold the

events amid ongoing restrictions on large gatherings and travel.

The Little League World Series has been held every August since 1947 and had never been canceled before. Next year was to be

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'It would be irresponsible and impossible to bring teams and thousands of people from all over the world into the community of Williamsport.'

Stephen Keener

Little League President, in a Facebook Live broadcast Thursday

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.