US applications for jobless aid near 10 million in 2-week span

By Christopher Ruggaber
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — More than 6.6 million Americans applied for unemployment benefits last week — doubling a record set just one week earlier — a sign that layoffs are accelerating in the midst of the coronavirus.

The stunning report Thursday from the Labor Department showed mounting job cuts against the backdrop of economies in the U.S. and abroad that have almost certainly sunk into a severe recession as businesses close across the world.

Applications for unemployment benefits generally reflect the pace of layoffs. Combined with last week’s report that 3.3 million people sought unemployment aid two weeks ago, the U.S. economy has now suffered nearly 10 million layoffs in the past several weeks — far exceeding the figure for any corresponding period on record.

SEE JOBLESS ON PAGE 9

RELATED

Navy working to remove crew from USS Roosevelt
Page 8

Feds: Man wrecked train intentionally near hospital ship
Page 10

DOD is asked for 100K body bags for civilians

By Anthony Capaccio and Ari Natter
Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon is seeking to provide as many as 100,000 military-style body bags for potential civilian use as the U.S. warns that deaths could soar in the coming weeks from the coronavirus pandemic.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has requested 100,000 body bags, known as Human Remains Pouches, through an interagency group that directed it to the Defense Department.

The Defense Logistics Agency “is currently responding to FEMA’s prudent planning efforts for 100,000 pouches to address mortuary contingencies on behalf of state health agencies,” Lt. Col. Mike Andrews, a Pentagon spokesman, said in a statement Thursday confirming a Bloomberg News report.

He said “the Department of Defense and the Defense Logistics Agency have a long-standing arrangement with FEMA to procure key commodities from DLA’s industrial partners during crisis response operations.”

SEE CIVILIANS ON PAGE 10
EXCHANGE RATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Currency</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Euro</td>
<td>€1.0852/0.9215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British pound</td>
<td>$1.2369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese yen</td>
<td>105.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British pound</td>
<td>107.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese yen</td>
<td>107.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British pound</td>
<td>$1.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commercial rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euros.

INTEREST RATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prime rate</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discount rate</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-month bill</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-year bond</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

BY CAITLIN M.KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon has deployed several ships, aircraft and thousands of troops to strengthen counternarcotics operations in the Caribbean Sea and the eastern Pacific Ocean and help prevent drugs from coming into the United States, Defense Secretary Mark Esper announced Wednesday.

Esper made the announcement at the White House alongside President Donald Trump and Gen. Mark Milley, chairman the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Michael Gilday, the chief of naval operations, and Adm. Karl Schultz, the Coast Guard commandant.

The operation, which started Wednesday, is being conducted as part of the U.S. government’s efforts to stop the flow of drugs into the country, Esper said.

“Since we came upon some intelligence some time ago that the drug cartels, as a result of [the coronavirus], were going to try to take advantage of the situation and try to infiltrate additional drugs into our country,” Milley said.

Thousands of personnel from the Navy, Marines, Air Force, Army, and Coast Guard are now under the leadership of Adm. Craig Faller, the commander of U.S. Southern Command, in the operation, Milley said. Ships and aircraft involved in the operation include several Navy destroyers, littoral combat ships, Coast Guard cutters and P-8 Poseidon patrol aircraft. Some of the personnel, ships, and aircraft have already arrived in the Caribbean.

“This is the United States military. You will not penetrate this country, you will not get past Jumpp Street, you’re not going to come in here and kill additional Americans and we will marshal whatever assets are required to prevent your entry into this country to kill Americans,” Milley said.

Esper pointed to Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro’s government for using the illicit drug trade to keep hold of its power.

“These enhanced counternarcotics operations that are now underway will further disrupt the flow of illicit drugs to America, deny our adversaries the financial resources they depend on and build the capacity of our partner nations throughout the region,” he said.

The operation also involves 22 partner nations who are assisting the United States with stopping the drug cartel organizations, Esper said, without naming the countries.

Drug cartels are taking advantage of the United States’ focus on responding to the coronavirus outbreak, Trump said, and America needs to return to stopping the flow of drugs.

“I don’t think we’re losing ground, but we don’t want to lose ground. That’s why we’re doing it. I don’t want to lose ground. It’s a big fight,” Trump said.

Esper would not say how long the operation would last, only that it would be run “for some matter of months.”

The enhanced mission has been months in the making but has taken on greater urgency following last week’s indictment of Maduro, Venezuela’s embattled socialist leader, and members of his inner circle and military. They are accused of leading a narcoterrorist conspiracy responsible for smuggling up to 250 metric tons of cocaine a year into the U.S., about half of it by sea.

“If I was just indicted for drug trafficking by the United States, with a $15 million reward for my capture, having the U.S. Navy conducting anti-drug operations off my coast would be something I would worry about,” said Sen. Marco Rubio, a Florida Republican who has been among those calling for a tougher stance against Maduro.

Maduro’s communications minister, Jorge Rodriguez, called the deployment a “desperate attempt to distract attention from the tragic humanitarian crisis” in the U.S. caused by the coronavirus. In an ironic jibe, he said that for “the first time” in decades the U.S. is trying to choke off the supply of cocaine, which he noted mostly comes from Colombia, a staunch U.S. ally.

Commandant: Marines who lose jobs in force plan will have options

BY CAITLIN M.KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Tank crews, military police or bridge builders in the Marines who saw their jobs eliminated in the new 10-year plan to restructure the force will not be kicked out of the service right away, the commandant said Wednesday.

“No one’s getting a pink slip saying time to go home. And we deliberately, intentionally set a timeframe a decade out,” Gen. David Berger told reporters.

Last year, Berger initiated a review of how the Marine Corps needs to transform into a force that will be needed in 10 years. The new plan released last week lays out what Berger and naval officials and civilians concluded were the needed units and capabilities for the Marine Corps.

During the next 10 years, the force plan has the Marines getting rid of all their tanks, bridge building companies and law enforcement battalions, as well as a reduction of about 12,000 troops. Also, the number of artillery and helicopter units will be reduced.

“They can choose another military specialty to go into. They can, in some instances, make a transfer to another service. We are fielding new capabilities that we don’t have right now so we will need Marines in specialties that we … either don’t have at all or we don’t have nearly in the numbers that we’re going to need,” he said.

Berger said the cuts are designed to reduce duplication of capabilities across the military.

“Going forward, we need to do less duplication of a second sort of a land force and more provide that nation what they need,” Berger said.

In the next 10 years, the Marines will invest more in rocket artillery, unmanned systems, and more patrol boats, as well as smaller and more mobile units.

These changes stem from the Pentagon’s 2018 National Defense Strategy, which shifts the military’s focus from counterterrorism operations to “great-power competition” with China and Russia.

The economic policies of China and its militarization of the South China Sea and Russia’s efforts to undermine NATO and its nuclear arsenal are major concerns for the U.S. military, according to the National Defense Strategy.

For the Marine Corps, its primary focus within that strategy is in the Indo-Pacific region and working more closely with the Navy.

“Some have taken that to mean very myopic, narrow, only China, only the Pacific. I certainly — we don’t read it that way at all. But that’s the bar we need to measure the force against,” Berger said.

“But if somebody decides to do something today that’s going to jeopardize our national security that same force can quickly execute whatever tests are given.”

The new force plan was the first step in the process toward change, he said.

“So this isn’t the final report, the end state. I think the second part is great feedback from Marines, from writers, a lot of people that have really informed the direction we’re headed,” Berger said. “When you’re really trying to fundamentally change an organization, an open dialogue is very helpful.”

NATO says its role not diminished by coronavirus as Russia drills troops

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Wednesday that the organization’s security capabilities have not been diminished by the coronavirus, amid suspicion that Russia might try to use the impact of disease to probe the military alliance’s defenses.

NATO acknowledges that cases of the disease have surfaced among personnel deployed near Russia’s border as well as in its training operation in Afghanistan.

War games have been scaled down and the coronavirus has forced the 30-country alliance to cut staffing and meetings at its Brussels headquarters.

Russia, meanwhile, has been conducting drills that its defense ministry says are the needed units and capabilities for the nation’s security.

“We have made some adjustments to exercises. We have canceled some exercises, we have adjusted other exercises, but that doesn’t undermine our operational readiness. We continue to patrol the skies and defend our borders and continue our missions and operations,” he said.

Stoltenberg’s remarks came on the eve of a meeting of NATO foreign ministers, to be held by secure video-conference for the first time in the U.S.-led organization’s 70-year history.
Airman disputes Germany’s demands for income taxes

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — Tax authorities are demanding a Ramstein-based airman to pay thousands of euros in German income taxes because he is married to a local woman, setting up a potentially precedent-setting case that could have financial implications for scores of U.S. troops in the country.

The move against using double taxation on an airman who already pays U.S. income taxes and potentially threatens service members who marry Germans or take any number of steps to integrate into life outside the base gates.

There are now 347 tax cases involving U.S. Defense Department personnel in the greater Kaiserslautern area, home to the most U.S. troops in Germany, local tax officials told Stars and Stripes.

“It is unclear how many of those cases involve active-duty personnel, but some service members are now considered viable tax targets, tax officials said.

“The problem is that the Rheinland-Pfalz tax offices levy taxes on U.S. soldiers who are married to a German spouse but are not subject to German tax liability,” said Peter Leismann, a spokesman for the Kusel-Landstuhl finance office.

But the circumstances Germany authorities say are taxable, despite the NATO Status of Forces Agreement’s general exemptions for U.S. forces from foreign income taxes, have grown substantially in recent years.

Master Sgt. Matthew Larsen in Ramstein was informed by the Kusel-Landstuhl tax office in December that his SOFA exemption is no longer recognized.

Larsen filed taxes in the U.S. while on his job as an active-duty member.

Larsen said a worker at the Kusel-Landstuhl tax office told him his marriage to a German is an indication he is in the country for reasons other than his job and that this obligates him to pay German income tax.

“I am here on orders. I am literally ordered to be here. But they are saying that, because I am married to a German, my SOFA status is irrelevant,” said Larsen, who has been based at Ramstein since 2015. “This is discrimination. They are going to be going after a lot of other people and this has to stop.”

Larsen’s tour in Germany ends in August, after which he said he plans to retire from the Air Force and move to Florida.

That hasn’t stopped German tax authorities, who demanded Larsen provide a declaration of income for back taxation, something that he is resisting and could have to fight in court.

“We have a wave of Americans getting harassed from the side of the German IRS and it is getting worse and worse,” said Detlev Albrecht, a Kaiserslautern-based German tax attorney who is handling about 50 cases involving American military personnel locked in battles with German tax authorities.

Larsen, who is Albrecht’s only active-duty client, said he was forced to retain an attorney to avoid a 10,000 euro fine, or about $11,000, and the prospect of prison time for refusing to turn over documents. The hope is for the courts to dismiss the case, Larsen said.

Orders aren’t enough

In recent years, German tax offices have grown more aggressive in targeting U.S. Defense Department civilians, even though they too are in the country under the SOFA, which is intended to protect the rights of personnel on both sides.

“Going after active-duty troops, at least in my case, is unheard of, Albrecht said.

However, it’s possible that active-duty troops have been snared by tax authorities but haven’t sought outside help.

U.S. Army Europe, which is in charge of SOFA issues for the military in Germany, said it does not track how many troops or other personnel have been forced to pay German taxes.

USAREUR’s Office of the Judge Advocate also said the command “declines the German interpretation of the SOFA and has brought its arguments forward to the German Foreign Ministry.”

But Albrecht said the issue remains pressing for his clients.

“The reason we have this problem is the political action on the U.S. side is not strong enough,” Albrecht said.

At issue is Article 10 of the SOFA treaty, which establishes an exemption from German taxation for personnel who are in Germany “solely” for their jobs.

Historically, military orders for service members and civilians were sufficient proof for the tax exemption. But German tax authorities have begun interpreting “solely” in different ways.

Now, a key question is whether military members intend to return to the United States.

Personnel stationed in Germany for many years — there is no standard for just how many — or with significant ties such as being married to a German, owning property, sending children to German schools or even extending tours could call SOFA status into question, U.S. military officials in Europe said.

Such circumstances “may result in German authorities alleging the DoD member intends to reside in Germany permanently and therefore must pay income taxes due,” U.S. Air Forces Europe said in a statement.

Once in the German legal system, the burden of proof is on the individual claiming tax exemption, USAFE said.

The problem is connected to a 2007 revision in the U.S.-German tax treaty on double taxation, which opened the door to full taxation of U.S. government pay if German authorities decide SOFA status doesn’t apply, USAFE said.

Keeping off the radar

USAREUR is advising servicemembers to take preventive measures to stay off the radar of German tax authorities. For example, do not register for residency with a local German town hall.

“Doing so will trigger a German tax ID number,” USAREUR said in a statement.

Also, do not file a joint German tax return with a German spouse, which indicates to the German government a desire to be taxed like an ordinary resident, the Army said.

German spouses should avoid changing their tax class after getting married because it signals to tax offices that they need to probe the other spouse’s reasons for being in Germany, the Army said.

Albrecht said he has seen cases involving military civilians occur in most areas where there are bases. However, the Kusel tax office, not far from Ramstein, has proven to be the most aggressive, he said.

“If a willingness to return cannot be proven, the income of US soldiers in Germany is taxable,” Leismann, the spokesman for the Kusel-Landstuhl finance office, said in a statement.

The financial stakes for the military community can be high.

Albrecht has a civilian client who lives in the Mannheim area faced with an 80,000 euro tax bill. Part of that came from tax officials factoring in privileges like less expensive on-base gas, access to post exchanges and even cheaper cigarettes.

“The German side has the opinion this is income and therefore the tax privileges, which they say is about $15,000 per year,” Albrecht said.

In the past, German courts have on occasion ruled in favor of Americans with American income tax benefits.

In 2007, three American contractors were reimbursed hundreds of thousands of euros each in German income taxes they were forced to pay by the Kaiserslautern tax office, after a victory in Rheinland-Pfalz state finance court.

Albrecht said he is confident Larsen, the airman, also would be victorious if the case goes to court.

But Larsen says that a fight he shouldn’t be forced into, and that U.S. military leaders should take a more aggressive stance in supporting personnel being targeted.

“The stress of this is unbelievable,” Larsen said.

vandiver.john@stripes.com

Brian Ferguson/Stars and Stripes

Master Sgt. Matthew Larsen, his wife, Kathrin, and son Jayden stand in front of their house in Reichweiler, Germany, last month. German tax authorities are demanding Larsen pay German income tax, based on their interpretation of the NATO Status of Forces Agreement.

Woman sues Navy secretary over ‘unequal conditions’

BY MARCO SANTANA
Orlando Sentinel

ORLANDO, Fla. — An Orlando woman has sued a top U.S. Navy official, alleging that inaction on sexual harassment allegations fostered a workplace that “permeated with unequal conditions for women, particularly assertive women in leadership positions.”

Gloria Tuck, who filed the lawsuit in an Orlando federal court, says acting Navy Secretary Thomas B. Modly should have known about the harassment and, once discovered, should have reprimanded the accused supervisor.

Instead, she claims in the lawsuit she faced repercussions in the workplace because of Modly’s failure to address the allegations.

The investigation for the administrative complaint, which was filed in 2014, ended this past December with an undisclosed settlement with Tuck.

That ruling opened a 90-day window during which she could file a follow-up lawsuit, which she did.

Tuck, a supervisory logistics management specialist in the U.S. Navy’s Orlando field office, was the assistant program manager for logistics in the Marine Corps Systems Command.

The lawsuit claimed Daniel Torgler, who oversaw Tuck as a supervisory program manager of its civilian workforce, made repeated sexual advances toward Tuck, including unwanted physical contact while in his office and at department social functions.
Beetles threaten palms at Andersen’s golf course

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE, Guam — The way things are going, the Air Force may have to come up with a new name for its golf course at the home of the 36th Wing on Guam.

The Palm Tree Golf Course, as Andersen’s 18 holes are known, is infested with voracious coconut rhinoceros beetles, Oryctes rhinoceros, whose meals of choice are the coconut palms that the links are named for.

Course manager Steven O’Hearne can only watch from his clubhouse — formerly the base officer’s club — as the beetles gnaw their way, one-by-one, through the beautiful palm trees outside.

The damage caused by the tenacious insects is visible yards from the clubhouse door where several nearby coconut trees are on their last legs. Stripped of fronds, the diseased trees look a little like telephone poles.

The University of Guam College of Natural and Applied Science has a website devoted to waging war on the invasive beetles, which were discovered on the U.S. island territory in 2007.

“The coconut rhinoceros beetle is a major pest of coconut palm, oil palm and other palm species,” the website states. “Palms are damaged when adult beetles bore into the crowns of palms to feed on sap. Tree mortality occurs when beetles destroy the growing tip.”

Coconut palms were the second most abundant trees on Guam before the beetles attacked, wrote Aubrey Moore, an entomology professor at the university, in a recent research paper.

“During recent years, many coconuts and other palms on Guam have been severely damaged and killed by the coconut rhinoceros beetle,” he wrote. “There is no estimate for the proportion of palms killed but it is obvious to residents and visitors that the island’s palms are being killed at an alarming rate.”

The beetles have been a problem in the Pacific since they were accidentally transported to Samoa from Sri Lanka in 1909. After they showed up on Guam, they were found all over the region from Hawaii to the Solomon Islands, Moore wrote.

Authorities have tried quarantining parts of Guam and spraying trees with insecticide but, so far, their efforts haven’t stopped the beetles proliferating.

“If we do not control the current rhino beetle outbreak on Guam, it will only end when the beetles run out of food,” he wrote. “Which means most of Guam’s palm trees will be killed, as happened in Palau after [World War II].”

Workers at Andersen’s golf course have been replacing dead coconut trees with ironwood trees.

“We don’t know exactly how bad things are going to be but as we lose trees we are putting more in,” O’Hearne said. “We’ve planted about 60 [ironwoods].”

It’s possible that the beetles could consume all the palm trees at his golf course, he added.

“We could be Ironwood Golf Course if we have to keep doing this,” he said.

robson.seth@stripes.com
Twitter: @SethRobson1

No Matter Which Branch You Serve, We Serve You

Whether you say ‘oohrah’ or ‘hoorah’, whether you prefer the land, sea or air, we salute you, and we’re proud to serve you.

We’ll help you save money, make money and enjoy peace of mind and security through personalized, around-the-clock service. Our members earn and save an average of $289 more per year just by banking with us.

Insured by NCUA. Dollar value shown represents the results of the 2018 Navy Federal’s Member Giveback Study. The Member Giveback Study is an internal comparative market analysis of Navy Federal’s loan and deposit account rates as compared to the national average for similar products. Image used for representational purposes only, does not imply government endorsement. © 2019 Navy Federal NCUA18664-E (5-19)
US deploys Patriot missile batteries in Iraq

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. has deployed Patriot missile batteries in Iraq as the coalition battling Islamic State in the country began drawing down and a war of words between Washington and Tehran ramps up.

Ground-based air defenses in Iraq were being set up “to protect coalition, Iraqi, and U.S. service members from a variety of air threats,” a Pentagon official confirmed Wednesday, declining to say where or whether they were operational.

For operational security reasons, we are not providing status updates as those systems are deployed, Pentagon spokesman Cmdr. Sean Robertson said in an email.

The systems, able to track and shoot down ballistic missiles, have reportedly been deployed to bases hit by Iranian missile strikes in January that left more than 100 Americans with brain injuries.

A resident of Irbil, the capital of northern Iraq’s Kurdistan region, told Stars and Stripes he saw a missile battery at the base there this week. One has also been sent to al Asad Air Base in Anbar province, unnamed U.S. and Iraqi security officials told Agence-France Presse, and two more were expected to deploy from Kuwait.

The Iraqi government is “well aware” of the need for such air defenses, Robertson said, and U.S. officials are coordinating closely with their Iraqi counterparts.

“It is important to note that repeated attacks on Iraqi bases, which violate Iraqi sovereignty, have killed and injured Iraqi coalition, and U.S. service members,” he said.

Meanwhile, President Donald Trump accused Iran or its proxies of plotting a “sneak attack” on U.S. forces in the country, and warned Wednesday on Twitter that Iran would pay a “heavy price indeed” if it carried out the plans.

At a later White House briefing, Trump would not provide specifics, but said the U.S. had “very good information they were planning something.”

“We’re just saying, ‘Don’t do it. Don’t do it.’ It would be a very bad thing for them if they did it,” Trump said.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif responded to Trump’s warnings with one of his own. “Openly Iran starts no wars, but teaches lessons to those who do,” he tweeted.

The Shiite militia Kataebeh Hezbollah, which the U.S. struck after two rocket attacks in recent months killed and wounded coalition personnel at Iraqi bases, has threatened revenge and warned of a “painful” response to any further U.S. assaults.

The saber-rattling comes after media reports of the Patriot systems’ arrival in Iraq and a New York Times report that said the Pentagon had ordered American military leaders in the country to prepare for increased fighting and develop plans to destroy Iranian missile launch areas.

The missile systems are protected by RAMs, which can detect and shoot down incoming rocket and mortar fire, U.S. Central Command chief Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie told Pentagon reporters in March. The systems began arriving as the U.S.-led coalition was shuttering its outposts and consolidating forces on larger bases, winding down its anti-ISIS mission.

Some of the more than 5,000 U.S. troops and other allied forces have been sent out of the country after Iraq suspended military training to focus on battling the coronavirus pandemic.

Taliban ready for cease-fires in virus areas

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD — The Taliban said Wednesday the group was ready to declare a cease-fire in areas of Afghanistan under its control if they are hit by a coronavirus outbreak.

The announcement follows a U.N. Security Council statement Tuesday urging security and humanitarian assistance to prevent the spread of the new virus.

The Taliban have used their WhatsApp groups to share pictures of local health officials, school teachers and local elders from the group’s areas warning of the dangers of the virus.

Meanwhile, President Donald Trump accused Iran or its proxies of plotting a “sneak attack” on U.S. forces in the country, and warned Wednesday on Twitter that Iran would pay a “heavy price indeed” if it carried out the plans.

At a later White House briefing, Trump would not provide specifics, but said the U.S. had “very good information they were planning something.”

“We’re just saying, ‘Don’t do it. Don’t do it.’ It would be a very bad thing for them if they did it,” Trump said.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif responded to Trump’s warnings with one of his own. “Openly Iran starts no wars, but teaches lessons to those who do,” he tweeted.

The Shiite militia Kataebeh Hezbollah, which the U.S. struck after two rocket attacks in recent months killed and wounded coalition personnel at Iraqi bases, has threatened revenge and warned of a “painful” response to any further U.S. assaults.

The saber-rattling comes after media reports of the Patriot systems’ arrival in Iraq and a New York Times report that said the Pentagon had ordered American military leaders in the country to prepare for increased fighting and develop plans to destroy Iranian missile launch areas.

The missile systems are protected by RAMs, which can detect and shoot down incoming rocket and mortar fire, U.S. Central Command chief Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie told Pentagon reporters in March. The systems began arriving as the U.S.-led coalition was shuttering its outposts and consolidating forces on larger bases, winding down its anti-ISIS mission.

Some of the more than 5,000 U.S. troops and other allied forces have been sent out of the country after Iraq suspended military training to focus on battling the coronavirus pandemic.

IG: Military mismanaged building of base in Niger

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The U.S. military may have broken the law when it mismanaged funds and ineffectively planned the construction of a $1 billion drone base in Niger, the Pentagon’s Inspector General said in a report issued Thursday.

Now, the IG is calling upon the Pentagon and Air Force to launch a formal probe into how the project was handled and determine if laws and regulations were broken.

Last year, U.S. Africa Command began operating out of Air Base 201 in Agadez after years of delays due to construction problems. The IG said the reason for the delays was that the military “did not ef- fectively plan, design, and construct the base and west outside the boundaries of what Congress had approved when it excluded runway shoulders in the project scope.”

Additionally, the Air Force had not provided congressional notification when it split the construction requirement for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations into six operations and maintenance projects totaling $5.4 million, the IG said.

The Air Force, which was in charge of the project, also potentially violated the Antideficiency Act when it acquired 12 permanent guard towers using procurement funds instead of military construction funds, the IG said. Moreover, the Air Force did not construct Air Base 201 in accordance with national defense authorization requirements, the report said.

The base had been in the works for years but ran into repeated delays. During the construction project, the military blamed the desert work environment’s austerity as one of the project’s biggest factors.

But the IG said the main issue was a failure of oversight, planning and design.

The leadership at AFRICOM and U.S. Air Forces Africa both disagreed with the IG’s findings, saying that the construction effort was completed in an operationally challenging environment.

vandiver@starsandstripes.com
Twitter: @john_vandiver

USON TERRORISM
PAGE 6
Friday, April 3, 2020

Herat province March 27. The Taliban said Wednesday the group was ready to declare a cease-fire in areas of Afghanistan under its control if they are hit by a coronavirus outbreak.
VA ends use of service representatives who help vets with benefits

**By Nikki Wentling**  
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs is ending a decades-old practice of allowing veterans service representatives to review benefits decisions for accuracy before those decisions are finalized and sent to veterans.

Veterans of Foreign Wars, which employs about 300 representatives across the country, argues the change will lead to more problems — and paperwork — for veterans. Paul Lawrence, the VA undersecretary of benefits, announced the change at a meeting with veterans groups last week, said Ryan Gallucci, a director at the VFW’s office in Washington. It will take effect at the end of April.

“This is a last-chance quality review,” Gallucci said. “We raised our concerns and said we’d really appreciate the ability to demonstrate why it’s so important, but he basically said his mind was made up. This was happening, whether we agreed or not.”

As outlined in a VA manual, representatives accredited by the VA have 48 hours to review new rating decisions on behalf of their veteran clients. The decisions determine the level of compensation for service-connected injuries and illnesses.

The representatives check for inadvertent errors that could save veterans from having to file appeals or request VA reviews. VFW representatives find errors in 5% to 7% of claims, Gallucci said.

“The VA is shifting the burden to veterans to discover its errors,” he said.

VFW National Commander William Schmitz argued it was an “inconceivable” change that would erode veterans’ right to competent representation in benefits claims.

The VA decided to make the change because its online claims system made the 48-hour review process “obsolete,” said VA Press Secretary Christina Mandreucci.

In 2013, the department turned all paper claims into digital records and transitioned to an all-paper claims process. The agency created the Veterans Benefits Management System, an online database.

“Since all veteran records, documents and other materials are now scanned or transmitted electronically, Veterans Service Organizations and other accredited representatives have access to their clients’ records throughout the claims process in real time,” Mandreucci said. “This is a marked improvement over the limited, 48-hour review period under the old system.”

While it’s true that representatives can access their veterans’ files, there no longer will be a process in which they can make changes to the decisions before they’re finalized, Gallucci argued.

“It’s after-the-fact,” he said. “You’re reviewing the rating decision after it’s finalized, and at that point, we can’t fix the problem without causing further delay for the veteran.”

More troops sent to Mexican border to help amid outbreak

**By Rose L. Thayer**  
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Department of Homeland Security announced U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents are now authorized to apprehend migrants who illegally enter the United States and return them immediately to the country from which they entered, either Canada or Mexico.

The authority was granted March 21 and is in place for 90 days. Prior to the order, agents would detain people and place them in holding facilities.

“We want to make sure we are supporting that [new authority],” and approving more troops “adequately supports them and their mission to further protect our country,” Richardson said during a phone call with reporters.

Troops deployed to the southern border work alongside Border Patrol agents using mobile surveillance detection equipment, working in detention facilities, conducting administrative tasks and providing food service, transportation and medical. The additional service members will conduct similar work and allow for troops to better meet health safety guidelines that prevent the spread of coronavirus, Mitchell said.

National Guard troops were first authorized to deploy to the border in April 2018 and active-duty troops joined them about six months later. The mission is authorized to continue through fiscal year 2020, which ends Sept. 30.

Deployments initially began to support Border Patrol as apprehensions jumped to historic levels, peaking to more than 144,000 people apprehended in May 2019, according to Customs and Border Protection data. In February, that number was down to about 30,000.

---

Reading Stars and Stripes gives you a better handle on issues that affect you most.

No one covers the bases the way we do.
VIRUS OUTBREAK

Japan-based sailors told to move from barracks

By Caitlin Doornbos
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Some sailors were ordered out of their barracks and onto their assigned ships to make room for personnel coming from other countries. The scramble to quickly test those coming off the USS Theodore Roosevelt, which was docked off the coast of Guam, and test negative for the virus.

Two more cases were reported at Yokosuka on March 27, but the Navy has since declined to release the number of additional cases at specific installations.

Sailors assigned to the guided-missile cruiser USS Chancellorsville were ordered out of their barracks rooms Sunday “for [their] protection and to assist with Yokosuka preventative measures,” their commander, Capt. Marc Boran, said in a post on the ship’s official Facebook page Saturday.

Sailors assigned to warships such as cruisers and destroyers often live in barracks while those ships are in homeports.

“We are not operating business as usual, and our number one priority is to fight COVID-19 while executing our daily responsibilities,” Boran said in the post.

Additionally, some Yokosuka-based sailors undergoing restriction of movement were taken to Naval Air Facility Atsugi to wait out their 14 days of limited movement, Boran said.

Restriction of movement is an observation period that the Navy required last month for all personnel coming to Japan from other countries.

While not naming Yokosuka specifically, “Navy personnel from other bases in Japan” came to Atsugi late Tuesday to wait out their 14-day restricted movement, Atsugi commander Capt. Lloyd Mack said in a post on the base’s official Facebook page Wednesday.

“These personnel are asymptomatic and have not tested positive for COVID-19,” he said.

“There is no intent to move COVID-19 connected personnel to a base or base command without their knowledge,” Modly said.

At Yokosuka, some people may be allowed to isolate at their residence while medical experts trace personal contacts, and a team of trained personnel clean up any potential hot spots in the individual visited, Lewis said in his post.

Stars and Stripes reporter James Rücker contributed to this report.
Stars and Stripes reporter Caitlin M. Keeney contributed to this story.

Twitter: @CaitlinDoornbos

2,700 Roosevelt sailors being moved to shore as virus spreads

By Corey Dickstein
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Navy is working to remove some 2,700 sailors from the USS Theodore Roosevelt by Friday in an attempt to slow a spreading coronavirus outbreak on the aircraft carrier now docked off the coast of Guam.

Sailors aboard two ships — the Theodore Roosevelt and the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz — were first published Tuesday by the San Francisco Chronicle, which reported that 150 to 200 Roosevelt sailors had been sickened by the virus, citing unnamed senior officer aboard the ship.

“We need a lot of transparency in this process and we want information to flow up through the chain of command, and that’s what [Crozier] did,” Modly said in a news briefing from the Pentagon. “He submitted this letter to his chain of command. How it got out to the media, I don’t know. I don’t think anyone will ever know. We’d certainly prefer that it didn’t.”

The Navy is working with Guam’s governor to find additional space to place Roosevelt sailors in isolation, including hotel rooms left empty amid the pandemic. But the ship cannot be fully evacuated, Modly said, estimating that about 1,000 sailors would have to remain aboard at all times. He said that the service had yet to establish a timeline for removing as many as 4,000 sailors from ship.

“Our plan has always been to remove as much of the crew as we can while maintaining the ship’s safety,” he said. “Just because it is big and it floats and it has a lot of people on it — the comparison of the T-R to a cruise ship pretty much ends there.”

Sailors must remain aboard the aircraft carrier to secure major weapons systems and ammunition and run its nuclear power plant, Modly said. Some sailors will also stay aboard to thoroughly clean the more than 1,000-foot-long ship that hosts a crew of nearly 5,000.

Officials hope to rotate personnel back aboard the ship after they have spent two weeks in isolation on Guam and test negative for the virus.

The plan is to “take the appropriate number of people off and test, quarantine, isolate while some number is running the ship,” Adm. John Aquilino, the commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet, told reporters Tuesday during a phone conference. “Once those sailors are quarantined, isolated and retested, when they are full-up [coronavirus] free, the plan will be to rotate them back onto the ship and finish the remainder of the ship.”

Modly stressed Wednesday that none of the sailors aboard the Roosevelt had been hospitalized with coronavirus complications. Of the 93 cases, he said that 86 had experienced some form of mild symptoms.

It remains unclear where or when the outbreak started. Three sailors were flown off the Roosevelt on March 24 after testing positive for the virus. Those cases came about two weeks after the ship left a port visit in central Vietnam’s Danang.

But the Navy is not convinced that Vietnam was the outbreak’s genesis. At the time of the visit, less than 20 positive coronavirus cases had been reported in all of Vietnam — all far north of Danang in the country’s capital Hanoi.

—and sailors were screened for symptoms or potential exposures before returning to the ship, Modly said. Meanwhile, the aircraft brought personnel on board from other locations.

“Understanding exactly who patient zero is, is probably going to be an impossible task,” the admiral said.

What is clear, Modly added, is that the conditions aboard a Navy ship allow viruses to thrive as sailors live and work in very close quarters, making the implementation of the social distancing recommendations championed by health officials across the globe impractical.

“Once the virus gets on a ship like that, it’s going to spread,” he said.

None of the Navy’s other 94 deployed ships have reported positive cases of the coronavirus. Modly said that several sailors assigned to ships at homeports have tested positive, but no reported large numbers of infections.

“Eight right now, the Teddy Roosevelt being the largest by far of this battle,” with the coronavirus, Modly said. “We have to respond with skill and agility and with discipline when it comes to the American people. I’m confident that the Navy will save lives and protect this nation as it always has and always will.”

Stars and Stripes reporter Caitlin M. Keeney contributed to this story.

Twitter: @CDDicksteinDC
Democrats delay nominating convention until mid-August

By Bill Barrow
Associated Press

The Democratic National Committee is delaying its presidential nominating convention until the week of Aug. 24-27 in Charlotte, N.C. They are expressing confidence that they can pull off their convention as scheduled, but party Chairwoman Donna McDaniel is still allowing for the possibility that the pandemic could upend GOP plans.

Neither Democratic nor Republican leaders want to sacrifice the boost that can result from an enthusiastic convention gathering. President Donald Trump thrives on big rallies and has obviously missed that part of his routine amid the coronavirus outbreak, reluctantly turning the Rose Garden and the White House briefing room into substitutes. A traditional convention, with a nationally televised nomination acceptance speech, could be even more critical for Biden, who has been relegated recently to remote television interviews from his Delaware home, unable to draw the kind of spotlight that a sitting president commands.

Solomon has not publicly detailed any specifics, promising only that “we will balance protecting the health and well-being of convention attendees and our host city with our responsibility to deliver this historic and critical occasion.”

Democrats originally scheduled their convention ahead of the Summer Olympics. But the international games have been postponed until 2021, opening several weeks on the summer television calendar if they could logistically manage a delay. Tradition dictates that Democrats, as the party out of power, hold their convention first.

Biden holds a prohibitive delegate lead that makes him the prospective nominee, but Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders remains in the race and has insisted that he has a “narrow” path to the nomination. With many states pushing back their primaries, Sanders potentially could block Biden from accruing the required delegate majority until late June.

Republicans don’t face the internal party uncertainty, though they must still weigh the same public health scenarios. McDaniel said that she thinks “we should be out of this” by the end of August.

In an interview, she said that Republicans have already raised the money necessary for the convention and have the staff hired and in place.

“We’re ready to go,” she said. “This isn’t something that’s going to stop us.”

Still, she added a caveat: “Obviously, science will dictate that.”

VIRUS OUTBREAK

Jobless: US unemployment rate could hit all-time high

FROM FRONT PAGE

This kind of upending of the labor market in such a short time is unheard of,” said Heidi Shierholz, an economist at the Economic Policy Institute, a progressive think tank.

Some of last week’s jobless claims are likely delayed filings from the previous week, when state offices that handle unemployment benefits were overwhelmed by a surge of online and telephone claims. Yet many of those offices are still struggling to process all the claims they have received. As a result, applications for benefits will likely remain extraordinarily high over the coming weeks.

The magnitude of the layoffs has led many economists to envision as many as 20 million lost jobs by the end of April. That would be more than double the 8.7 million jobs lost during the Great Recession. The unemployment rate could spike to as high as 15% this month, above the previous record of 10.8% set during a deep recession in 1982.

Employers are slashing their payrolls to try to stay afloat because their revenue has collapsed, especially at restaurants, hotels, gyms, movie theaters and other venues that depend on face-to-face interaction. Auto sales have sunk, and factories have closed.

More than two-thirds of the U.S. population are under stay-at-home orders, imposed by most states. That has intensified pressure on businesses, most of which face rent, loans and other bills that must be paid.

Requests for jobless aid soared in all 50 states, showing that layoffs have spread nationwide. In California, nearly 900,000 people sought benefits last week, almost four times the previous week’s figure, and equivalent to 5% of the state’s workforce.

In Michigan, jobless claims more than doubled last week to 311,000. In Florida, filings tripled to 227,000. In South Dakota, they quadrupled to 6,645.

The White House and Congress expanded the unemployment benefits system in last week’s $2.2 trillion economic rescue package. That legislation added $600 a week in jobless aid, on top of what recipients receive from their states. This will enable many lower-income workers to replace up to 70% of their purchasing power and support the economy.

It also makes many more people eligible for jobless aid, including the self-employed, contractors and so-called “gig economy” workers such as Uber and Lyft drivers.

Kathryn Lickteig, a cook in Kansas City, signed up for unemployment compensation last week after the city shut down dine-in restaurants. She is hopeful that the extra benefits will help her ride out the shutdown instead of having to look for an interim job.

“It has eased my mind so much,” she said. “I do not have to actively go out and expose myself to the public and possibly get sick. I can stay home now and do my part in social distancing.”

The legislation will also help fund unemployment benefits for workers whose hours have been cut. That would enable these people to replace some of their lost income with unemployment aid, even as they keep their jobs.

About 26 states allow workers with reductions in hours to claim benefits. Most economists support doing so because it encourages companies to cut back on hours rather than lay off workers. Any program that encourages companies to maintain connections with their workers and helps the economy rebound faster after the virus outbreak is contained.

Typically, people who receive jobless aid are required to actively look for a new job and to document their searches. But Congress has passed other legislation that encourages states to drop that requirement, given that so many businesses are closed and most Americans have been ordered to stay mostly at home.

Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody’s Analytics, said this week that just 6% of companies surveyed by Moody’s say they’re hiring — down dramatically from 40% in the weeks preceding the coronavirus outbreak. The plunge in hiring underscores the difficulty that anyone out of work would have finding a new job.

U.S. Army
Special Operations

VISIT GOARMY.MIL OR TEXT STRIPES TO 462-769

CHOOSE YOUR PATH TO EXCELLENCE

- STARS AND STRIPES -
Engineer accused of purposely derailing train near USNS Mercy

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A train engineer intentionally drove a speeding locomotive off a train bridge at the Port of Los Angeles because he was suspicious about the presence of a Navy hospital ship docked there to help during the coronavirus crisis, federal prosecutors said Wednesday.

The locomotive crashed through a series of barriers and fences before coming to rest more than 250 yards from the U.S. Navy Hospital Ship Mercy on Tuesday, the U.S. Department of Justice said in a release.

Nelson Moreno, 44, was charged with one count of train wrecking, prosecutors said.

Moreno acknowledged in two separate interviews with law enforcement that he intentionally derailed and crashed the train near the Mercy, according to the criminal complaint.

“Only you get this chance once. The whole world is watching. I had to,” Moreno told investigators, according to the complaint.

“People don’t know what’s going on here. Now they will.”

Moreno said he was suspicious of the Mercy and believed it had an alternate purpose related to COVID-19 or a government takeover, an affidavit states.

Moreno stated that he acted alone and had not pre-planned the attempted attack.

In an interview with FBI agents, Moreno stated that “he did it out of the desire to ‘wake people up,’ ” according to an affidavit.

“Moreno stated that he thought that the USNS Mercy was suspicious and did not believe ‘the ship is what they say it’s for,’” the complaint said.

The Mercy arrived in port this week to provide a thousand hospital beds for non-coronavirus cases to take the load of regional medical centers expecting a surge of COVID-19 patients.

Cellphone video showed the locomotive upright in a patch of dirt. It apparently smashed through a concrete barrier at the end of the track, slid across pavement and hit a chain-link fence before coming to a rest.

Phillip Sanfield, spokesman for the Port of Los Angeles, said the locomotive never came close to the Mercy.

“It would have had to have gone several hundred yards through a parking lot and cross a water channel to reach the ship,” Sanfield said. “The tracks are nowhere near the Mercy.”

The engineer wasn’t a port employee but apparently was working a contractor to assess its manpower needs but FEMA hasn’t received an immediate return a phone call seeking comment.

A small fuel leak was quickly controlled and port operations weren’t seriously affected, Sanfield said.

Moreno was arrested by a California Highway Patrol officer who witnessed the crash and captured him as he fled the scene.

Civilians: As death toll rises, Pentagon to provide some body bags from its supply

From Front Page

While the Pentagon works to buy more bags, it will draw initially from a stockpile of 50,000 it maintains, according to two people familiar with the request.

The move is a somber counternote to the Pentagon’s highly praised deployment of two hospital ships to New York and Los Angeles to help alleviate pressure on regional hospitals overburdened by the pandemic.

The Department of Health and Human Services has asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to provide some body bags from its supply to several countries hit by the pandemic. Together with Cuba, they have also dispatched medical teams to help out in places such as Italy, which has the highest mortality rate from the virus, and Serbia.

The Russian supplies, which filled a cargo plane, arrived in New York amid warnings from Trump that between 100,000 and 200,000 Americans could die from the disease caused by the virus — a turnaround from a statement he made on Twitter in late February that “the coronavirus is very much under control in the USA.”

New York state had 83,712 confirmed cases of coronavirus as of Wednesday, or 40% of the national total, according to New York Magazine. More than 47,000 of the cases were in New York City.

As the pandemic surges across the U.S., there were concerns about dwindling stocks of medical supplies, such as ventilators, which are needed to treat people who come down with the severe lung disease caused by the virus. U.S. government emergency stockpiles of protective equipment like masks and gloves are also nearly depleted, a senior U.S. official told The New York Times Thursday.

Ortagus said the U.S. “cannot do it alone” and must work with other countries “to ensure that critically needed supplies get to those in need.”

Engineer accused of purposely derailing train near USNS Mercy

From Russia with price tag: Aid arrives in US

From Front Page

The pouches may be necessary to ensure that critically needed supplies get to those in need. TARS AND STRIPES

Vladimir Putin, said State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus. “By their very nature, both countries have provided humanitarian assistance to each other in times of crisis in the past and will no doubt do so again in the future,” Ortagus said Wednesday.

“This is a time to work together to overcome a common enemy that threatens the lives of all of us.”

While Ortagus said the U.S. paid for the equipment, she didn’t mention how much was spent.

On Wednesday, the Russian government was trumpeting the delivery of the medical equipment on social media, saying the aid would save American lives.

The deal has raised concerns among some U.S. critics, who say Moscow, along with China, is exaggerating the role it is playing in the global response to the coronavirus crisis.

The pouches have provided masks, ventilators and other medical equipment to several countries hit by the pandemic.

Together with Cuba, they have also dispatched medical teams to help out in places such as Italy, which has the highest mortality rate from the virus, and Serbia.

The Russian supplies, which filled a cargo plane, arrived in New York amid warnings from Trump that between 100,000 and 200,000 Americans could die from the disease caused by the virus — a turnaround from a statement he made on Twitter in late February that “the coronavirus is very much under control in the USA.”

New York state had 83,712 confirmed cases of coronavirus as of Wednesday, or 40% of the national total, according to New York Magazine. More than 47,000 of the cases were in New York City.

As the pandemic surges across the U.S., there were concerns about dwindling stocks of medical supplies, such as ventilators, which are needed to treat people who come down with the severe lung disease caused by the virus. U.S. government emergency stockpiles of protective equipment like masks and gloves are also nearly depleted, a senior U.S. official told The New York Times Thursday.

Ortagus said the U.S. “cannot do it alone” and must work with other countries “to ensure that critically needed supplies get to those in need.”

Engineer accused of purposely derailing train near USNS Mercy

From Russia with price tag: Aid arrives in US

From Front Page

While the Pentagon works to buy more bags, it will draw initially from a stockpile of 50,000 it maintains, according to two people familiar with the request.

The move is a somber counternote to the Pentagon’s highly praised deployment of two hospital ships to New York and Los Angeles to help alleviate pressure on regional hospitals overburdened by the pandemic.

The DLA’s Troop Support unit manages the Pentagon’s stockpile of the green nylon, 94-inch by 38-inch body bags that are typically distributed to war zones. The unit has been in contact with the current contractor to assess its manufacturing capabilities but hasn’t yet placed a formal order, according to one of the people familiar with the request.

As many as 240,000 Americans are projected to die in the U.S. coronavirus outbreak, a top White House official said Tuesday, even with another 30 days of the most stringent public health restrictions in place. Reviewing the projections, President Donald Trump warned Americans of a difficult period ahead.

“This is going to be a painful two weeks,” Trump said at the White House on Tuesday. “Our strength will be tested, our endurance will be tried.”

The government had not previously shared details on its projections for the spread of the virus, which has so far killed more than 5,300 people in the U.S. and infected more than 226,000.

The Defense Logistics Agency doesn’t yet have a specific delivery date request from FEMA but the agency wants them as soon as they are ready, and the Pentagon is close to an agreement with its current contractor on the numbers and timelines, one of the people said.

FEMA spokesman said the agency is making “prudent planning” for potential future needs, and that includes preparing for “mortal contingency” from U.S. states.

The pouches may be necessary for some state and local governments but FEMA hasn’t received a shipment yet, the spokesman said. The agency is working with regional and state health and emergency managers to ramp up available assets, the official said, adding that pouches will be distributed to states requesting them.

On Monday, the vice director of operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff outlined the general Pentagon-FEMA process that’s in place.

The Joint Staff is “in close partnership with them to identify what their needs are,” including “mission assignments” that came in Monday for prepackaged Meals Ready to Eat, and “other supplies,” Air Force Maj. Gen. Jeff Taliaferro said.

The Joint Staff also received a “mission assignment from FEMA for a mortuary affairs support team for New York and we’re in the process of identifying” personnel, he added.

Hospitals have been securing refrigerated trucks to help hold bodies in areas where capacity for storing them has run out.
Spanish authorities have ordered residents to stay home on weekends, putting fear in the back of the 6 million people living in the greater Tokyo area. This came after the government extended the city’s state of emergency until May 6. The government said the measures have been a success and reported that nearly all new cases of the virus have been imported from abroad.

In the Chinese city of Wuhan, where the pandemic began in December, a green symbol on their smartphones dictates the movements of residents. Green is the “health code” that says a user is symptom-free and it’s required to board a subway, check into a hotel or enter the central city of 11 million. Green is also required for residents’ and city workers’ cooperation.

When the city announced it will cancel or postpone city-run events until May 6, the city extended the local area, generally defined as the Tokyo suburbs surrounding the base, is also forbidden with some exceptions, according to Jones’ order.

Tokyo, Tokyo metropolitan government, is one of the 23 central wards, 26 cities, five towns and eight villages, including areas surrounding the Tokyo metropolitan government, is one of the 23 central wards, 26 cities, five towns and eight villages, including areas surrounding the city.

Tokyo metropolitan government, is one of the 23 central wards, 26 cities, five towns and eight villages, including areas surrounding the city, the Tokyo metropolitan government announced Wednesday.

Tokyo-run public facilities, such as Ueno Zoo, Tama Zoo and the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, were originally closed as part after China, which in January closed off an entire province of over 73 million people. The government says the measures have been a success and reports that nearly all new cases of the virus have been imported from abroad.

People in Wuhan, once the epicenter of the crisis, are starting to return to work.

Walking into a subway station Wednesday, Wu Shengchong, a manager for a clothing manufacturer, used her phone to scan a barcode on a poster that triggered her app.

A yellow code would mean she had contact with an infected person and was permitted to go outside.

If the code had been red, that would tell the guard that Wu was confirmed to be infected or had a fever or other symptoms and was awaiting a diagnosis.

In Greece, authorities placed an entire refugee camp under quarantine Thursday after discovering that a third of the 63 contacts of an infected woman tested positive for the virus — and none showed symptoms.

French authorities place all travelers in quarantine for 14 days upon arrival, take out cash and pay three or four times more for our orders, so we really have to fight,” Jean Rottner, an emergency room doctor in Mulhouse told RTL radio.

A study by researchers in Singapore on Wednesday estimated that around 10% of new infections may be sparked by people who carry the virus but have not yet suffered its flulike symptoms.

In response, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention changed how it defined the risks of infection, saying essentially that anyone may be a carrier, whether they have symptoms or not. It is yet to change its guidance.
Virtual instruction to continue in S. Korea

By Dave Ornauer
Stars and Stripes

Students at Defense Department schools in South Korea will continue virtual schooling after spring break, just like their counterparts in Japan, officials announced Thursday.

The decision was announced in a letter from Department of Defense Education Activity Korea district superintendent Jeff Arrington to students, families and staff.

“Due to the current health protection conditions, we will not be able to resume our normal operations on April 13,” Arrington’s letter said.

April 13, the scheduled day of the start of the instructional fourth quarter, will be a “professional development” workday for teachers and staff. “Virtual learning will resume on April 14,” Arrington’s letter stated.

The announcement came two days after DOD’s schools in Japan, including Okinawa, said they, too, would remain shuttered beyond spring break “until further notice.” DOD’s South Korea schools have been closed with online instruction ongoing since Feb. 26.

“The health and wellness of our school community remains my priority,” Arrington’s letter stated, adding that the district will continue working with U.S. Forces Korea leadership to determine when it may be safe to reopen schools.

gornauer.dave@stripes.com
Twitter: @DaveOrnauer

New case makes total 15 for USFK

Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — Camp Humphreys reported another coronavirus case on Thursday, raising to 15 the total number of infections for U.S. Forces Korea.

USFK, which commands some 28,500 service members, didn’t immediately provide more information.

Camp Humphreys, which is home to the U.S. military headquarters, has seen a surge in confirmed cases since an American contractor tested positive on March 24. Before that, most infections affiliated with USFK had been on bases in the southeastern city of Daegu and surrounding areas, which were at the center of South Korea’s outbreak.

Only two soldiers have been infected. The others have been military dependents, contractors and South Korean employees.

Meanwhile, South Korea on Thursday reported a slight decline in its nationwide tally, saying 89 new cases were logged the day before compared with 101 the previous day, raising its total to 9,976.

On Wednesday, South Korea began re-quiring all travelers arriving from other countries to self-quarantine for two weeks to prevent further spread of the virus.
Los Angeles mayor tells 4 million to wear masks

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The mayor of Los Angeles urged 4 million residents to wear masks to combat the coronavirus when they walk out in public, even as state health officials shied away from requiring a cover-up.

Homemade cloth masks, or even a “tucked-in, bandana,” will help reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus in the nation’s second-largest city and remind people to practice safe social distancing, Mayor Eric Garcetti said Wednesday as he donned a black cloth mask to make his point.

“I know this looks surreal,” Garcetti said. “We’re going to have to get used to seeing each other like this … This will be the new normal.”

But he urged residents against using medical-grade masks, such as N95 or surgical masks, which are in short supply and needed for health care workers and first responders. Garcetti also said that people should only use masks when they are going out to shop for food or perform other essential tasks. Otherwise, stay home, the mayor said.

Arizona

PHOENIX — Arizona’s governor on Wednesday asked President Donald Trump and White House advisors to take a step toward helping the state as it braces for a surge of coronavirus cases.

The Department of Health Services said that the move is needed to trigger higher federal aid and resources. A declaration would add funding for more mental health care, unemployment, food assistance, the tribal health response and other state efforts.

Garcetti also said the move is needed to trigger higher federal aid and resources. A declaration would add funding for more mental health care, unemployment, food assistance, the tribal health response and other state efforts.

But he urged residents against using medical-grade masks, such as N95 or surgical masks, which are in short supply and needed for health care workers and first responders. Garcetti also said that people should only use masks when they are going out to shop for food or perform other essential tasks. Otherwise, stay home, the mayor said.

Arkansas

LITTLE ROCK — A member of the Arkansas House said Wednesday that he tested positive for COVID-19, and state health officials reported two more people have died from the virus.

State Rep. Reginald Murdock said that he underwent a test at his Marianna home and doesn’t believe there was a significant risk to other legislators given the restrictions put in place. He said he’s recommended they get tested and self-isolate if they develop any symptoms.

Medical personnel look out a hospital window during an event called Headlights for Hope at Bailey Medical Center in Owasso, Okla., on Wednesday. Cars filled the parking lot, turned headlights and hazards on and honked horns to thank medical personnel for their work in the outbreak.

Kentucky

FRANKFORT — The Kentucky Supreme Court issued a new order closing judicial facilities to in-person services and postponing eviction filings.

The court said that it made sense to expand stay-home measures statewide now “even though there are exceptions to places that have very low infection rates.”

His move came the day two other Republican governors in Georgia and Tate Reeves of Mississippi, also issued stay-at-home orders after repeatedly refusing to do so.

“I am concerned about the continued spread of the virus in Kentucky, which is affecting all of our citizens,” Chief Justice John D. Minton Jr., said.

Washington

OLYMPIA — Gov. Jay Inslee said Wednesday that he is asking Washington manufacturers to start producing personal protective equipment, saying that the federal government has not been able to supply the state fast enough to meet the growing need amid the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak.

Inslee said that while more than 1 million pieces of personal protective equipment — from the federal and state supplies, hospitals and donations — have already been delivered across the state, it is not enough.

“The fact of the matter is, we need to seize our own destiny,” Inslee said at a news conference. “Now it is time for all of us to turn manufacturing the equipment we need in this fight, in this war.”

The Department of Commerce said Wednesday that approximately 350 manufacturers have already reached out, and many are already producing — including about 40 distilleries that are now making hand sanitizer, and outdoor apparel company Outdoor Research, which is now making hundreds of thousands of surgical and protective masks.

Wisconsin

MADISON — A federal judge signaled Wednesday that he won’t postpone or make any major changes to Wisconsin’s presidential primary to alleviate concerns that voters and poll workers could contract the coronavirus.

U.S. District Judge William Conley told attorneys for the Democratic National Committee and a host of liberal-leaning groups that they haven’t shown how the pandemic has truly hampered people’s voting rights. He said that infections look ready to spike in Wisconsin, and the Democratic Gov. Tony Evers and Republican legislative leaders don’t feel the crisis is severe enough to award an extension.

“Now is not the time for fines,” Sisolak said at a news conference late Wednesday at the statehouse in Carson City. “The penalties other public health officials in 12 states are already producing — including about 40 distilleries that are now making hand sanitizer, and outdoor apparel company Outdoor Research, which is now making hundreds of thousands of surgical and protective masks.

West Virginia

CHARLESTON — Gov. Jim Justice rescheduled West Virginia’s May 12 primary election to June 9 on Wednesday, citing fears about the coronavirus spreading at polling places.

Justice said medical experts told him that having the primary on its originally scheduled date would be unsafe for voters and poll workers, since health officials have warned of a surge in the coming weeks.

“There is no question moving this date is the right thing to do,” said Justice, a Republican.

Justice said that he wanted to preserve the May primary date, but he has been “bombarded” with requests to postpone the election. He said that the new June date will result in fewer people at polling places since it falls after the school year.
Double strike: Tornado, virus push Tennesseans to the limit

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — When Jose Cojom’s house collapsed around his family in a tornado that struck after midnight, he knew that his life was going to get much harder. But that was just the beginning. A few weeks later, the restaurant where he cooks closed its doors because of the coronavirus.

Now, living in a rental apartment, Cojom’s family faces an uncertain future, unsure whether to rebuild or move on.

“The tornado was a monster, almost killed us,” Cojom said. “Now, I’m off work for two weeks. It kind of hurts me because it makes me stay home and think about all the things that we went through.”

Like thousands of other Middle Tennesseans, Cojom’s life has been upended by back-to-back disasters. Putnam County residents still reeling from the tornado to preparing for the coronavirus.

The storms that tore through the region killed 25 people — 19 in Putnam County alone — and damaged or destroyed hundreds of buildings. Homes where people had been sleeping were demolished, sending families to hotels and shelters.

Electrical and construction crews mobilized, donations poured in and volunteers handed out supplies and served meals.

But the pandemic complicated the recovery efforts. The virus has sickened more than 2,600 in Tennessee and more than 30 in Putnam County, according to the state health department. Residents who had united to help tornado-stricken neighbors quickly retreated to their houses. Volunteers who came from as far as Kansas went back home.

As the virus encroaches on the county where twisted metal still hangs from mobile homes, Interstates 40, 44 and 65 are closed.

“It’s been tiring and a little stressful, but we’re working through it,” Porter said. “We live in a loving, come-together community.”

At Cookeville Regional Medical Center in the county seat, doctors and nurses have gone from treating about 80 patients injured in the tornado to preparing for the coronavirus. Visitation has been restricted and elective surgeries have been postponed. One hospital employee died and six others lost everything in the tornado, hospital CEO Paul Korth said.

Tornado damage closed a medical supplies warehouse in Mt. Juliet, and the hospital is supplementing its limited supply of ventilators and masks.

“We are trying to be very cautious about how we use these,” Korth said.

For Eric Grooms, whose family saw their home reduced to its foundation in the storms, the restrictions put in place to curb the coronavirus spread have made a reconstruction nearly impossible.

Grooms’ wife owns a salon, now temporarily closed. His industrial filter service has lost business.

Grooms said that they are lucky to have a rental house, but with shops shuttered, it’s been hard to make it feel homey. Restaurants and other distractions that initially took their minds off the destruction aren’t open.

Grooms has been told that he can’t rebuild until next year at the earliest, but he expects to stay in the neighborhood.

“The whole neighborhood is just so tight, so close that we can’t leave the place, but it’s hard to leave the people,” he said.

More than anything, though, he wants to restore some normalcy for his 6-year-old daughter.

“We can’t take her to the bounce house. You can’t do this. You can’t do that,” Grooms said. “It makes the tornado, that environment afterward, the shock, it just prolongs it.”

Report: US hostage families seek better government support

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The husband of German Sen. Kennedy, whose family was detained in Russia by $415,000 in stock in DuPont de Nemours, a chemical company that manufactures protective equipment in exceedingly high demand because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The transaction, detailed in a mandatory disclosure the Republic filed late Tuesday, comes as senators in both parties have faced questions about the stock transactions they made in the weeks before the coronavirus upended the U.S. economy, wiping out jobs and personal wealth.

Senate Intelligence Committee Chair Mark Warner said that “thousands of DuPont employees are working around the clock in all parts of the world to produce life-saving protective garments during this time of high demand.”

The couple’s new investment in DuPont drew notice from government watchdog groups, particularly because they also recently invested in a company that offers telecommuting software that could also benefit from the pandemic.

“I think it deserves an extra amount of scrutiny because when she did the first round of sales after she got nonpublic information, she also bought a stock in a telecommuting company,” said Jordan Libowitz, a spokesman for the group Committee for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, which filed a Senate ethics complaint against Loeffler and Burr last month. “This would follow that pattern, which is why it does raise an eyebrow, and it’s one of those things that even if it doesn’t go to the level of breaking the law or any rules, it looks bad.”
Gender reveal party sparks 10-acre fire
FL TITUSVILLE — A gender reveal party mixed with explosives sparked a 10-acre fire in Florida.
Brevard County has prohibited open burning because of an increase in fires, and officials are urging people to follow the rules and avoid calls that can strain medical resources during the coronavirus pandemic.

“Something as seemingly innocent as a gender reveal can turn into a large-scale disaster,” said Mark Schollmeyer, the county’s Fire Rescue Chief.

Thoroughbred retirement farm offers virtual tours
KY GEORGETOWN — A popular thoroughbred retirement farm in Kentucky is reaching out to its supporters through virtual farm tours that showcase its equine retirees.
The series is called “Monday Mornings with Michael” and is hosted by Old Friends founder Michael Blowen. Each week, he will offer short visits with a few equine residents of the Georgetown farm.
The farm says its virtual tours will be posted on Old Friends’ social media platforms Monday mornings. The tours will enable fans to continue having access to the farm’s retirees during the coronavirus outbreak.

Police: Coughing led to parking lot assault
PA JOHNSTOWN — A confrontation that apparently began over coughing in a convenience store parking lot resulted in gunfire, Johnstown Police said in court documents.
Two men were charged with aggravated assault.
The police affidavit used to support charges against Guillermo Diaz Alvarez said the other defendant, William Suaro, said he told Alvarez “to cover when he coughed because of the virus that is going around.”
Suarro told police a confrontation ensued and Alvarez fired into the front windshield and toward a tire on Suaro’s car.
But police said the store’s surveillance video showed a confrontation occurred as Alvarez walked past Suaro’s car, after which Suaro got out. Both men were seen with hands in the air, and then Suaro got back into his vehicle and drove it into Alvarez, police said.
Alvarez was then seen pulling out a concealed .45 handgun and firing it at Suaro’s vehicle, police said.
Suarro, 53, was charged with assault and reckless endangerment. Alvarez, 56, was also charged with assault and reckless endangerment, and a firearms violation.

Replica of Pilgrim tall ship sinks at dock
CA DANA POINT — A replica of the sailing vessel Pilgrim that Richard Henry Dana Jr. wrote about in “Two Years Before the Mast” sank at its dock in Dana Point where it served as a classroom for marine science and maritime history programs.
The 130-foot-long tall ship keeled over in its slip and is likely beyond repair, the Ocean Institute said in a social media post.
Work was underway to refloat the Pilgrim and determine what caused it to sink.
The ship was a recreation of the original Pilgrim, the vessel that Dana sailed on from Boston in 1834, carrying New England goods to California for sale or trade and in return carry back a load of cattle hides obtained from Spanish colonial missions and ranchos.

Making no bones about it
Belinda Brewer uses decorative skeletons to hold messages reminding the public of proper coronavirus preventive measures Wednesday outside her home in Freeport, Maine. Gov. Janet Mills announced a statewide stay-at-home order starting Thursday in an attempt to limit the spread of coronavirus in the state.

The number of stranded sea turtles that were released back into the wild in Georgia. The New England Aquarium said the animals spent four to five months at its Animal Care Center in Quincy, Mass., prior to release. The turtles needed to be treated for life-threatening conditions resulting from hypothermia and inability to feed, the aquarium said. The Georgia Sea Turtle Center on Jekyll Island cleared them for release after a brief exam by its head veterinarian and staff, it said. Turtle strandings happen in New England when waters quickly turn cold in the fall.

The census

RARE PACIFIC SNAKE EEL
OR ASTORIA — A Pacific snake eel, a species rarely seen in waters as far north as Oregon, was found in the sand near Astoria recently.
A man happened on the creature, which appeared to be in distress, The Oregonian/ OregonLive reported. He called the Seaside Aquarium to report what he thought was a sea snake. The aquarium is closed because of coronavirus social distancing protocols, but staff were there to care for the animals.

The woman suffered broken bones in the attack, KCNC-TV reported.

Two bull moose spent most of the day in a yard on Saturday. That evening, the woman tried to “guide the moose away” so other people could leave the area, investigators said.

Gorilla matriarch at zoo dies at age 50
OH CINCINNATI — A gorilla named Samantha, the oldest mammal at the Cincinnati Zoo, died at the age of 50.
Samantha, who was nicknamed “The Grand Old Lady of the Cincinnati Zoo,” was one of the first two gorillas born at the zoo. She was euthanized due to “age-related health issues” and heart problems, according to zoo officials.

Samantha celebrated her 50th birthday on Jan. 31 and exceeded her species’ life expectancy by more than 10 years. She gave birth to six offspring during her life.

Moose that trampled woman is euthanized
CO BRECKENRIDGE — A moose that trampled a woman in her yard in Breckenridge was euthanized after showing aggression, Colorado Parks and Wildlife officials said.
The woman suffered broken bones in the attack, KCNC-TV reported.

Two bull moose spent most of the day in a yard on Saturday. That evening, the woman tried to “guide the moose away” so other people could leave the area, investigators said.

A young bull moose turned on the woman and trampled her, officials said. The encounter is still being investigated and it’s not clear if the woman would be cited for approaching the animal. From wire reports.
Party with a purpose

Dua Lipa infuses ‘Future Nostalgia’ with happiness, hope

BY MESSIN FERADU
Associated Press

Put on Dua Lipa's sophomore album and you'll experience of party — a collection of upbeat, dance-flavored, power-pop gems that could brighten your day. But take a closer, deeper look, and you'll also find songs brimming with messages of hope, equality and vulnerability.

Lipa closes her 11-track “Future Nostalgia” revealing with “Boys Will Be Boys,” a breezy tune full of growing pains of life as a woman with clever, sharp lyrics like: “I'm sure if there's something that I can't find the words to say, I know that there will be a man around to save the day, and that was sarcasm, in case you needed it manspained, I should've stuck to ballet.”

“I wanted to really show another side of me,” the 24-year-old said in an interview with The Associated Press. “I always speak up about female equality and gender equality in general, and I think that’s important, but it was very important for me to put something in that’s very close to my heart, that I feel would make other women feel seen and feel heard.”

“Future Nostalgia,” released last week, comes three years after Lipa dropped her self-titled debut, which featured the Billboard Hot 100 Top 10 hit “New Rules.” Outside the U.S., she’s had even more success, clocking in countdown Top 10 hits and collaborating with powerhouses like Calvin Harris, Mark Ronson, Diplo and P!nk. She expanded her debut album to include those collaborations as well as new songs, and it has become the most-streamed album by a female act in Spotify’s history.

Lipa co-wrote every song on “Future Nostalgia,” which includes tracks like “Cool,” a breezy tune full of confidence, and the experimental dance track “Physical,” which sounds like a song Rihanna would have topped the charts with during her sophomore album phase. Close your eyes and listen to “Levitating” and the house track “Hallucinate,” and you’ll hear Katy Perry. And first single “Don’t Start Now,” which has peaked at No. 2 on the Hot 100, is a thumping, addictive song that’s hard to get out of your head.

Then there’s “Love Again,” where Lipa opens up with lines like: “I used to think it was made out of stone / I used to spend so many nights on my own.”

“I had a lot of times when I was making this album where I was very much out of my comfort zone, where I really allowed myself to be vulnerable and talk about my very personal experiences,” she said. “On a song like ‘Love Again,’ for example, it wasn’t written for anyone in particular, but it was like a manifestation of allowing love and good energy into my life because I was going through a little rough patch. It was that point where I didn’t know that I could love again.”

Lipa was born in London, where her parents fled from Kosovo as war broke out. She said she started to take music seriously after listening to music initially “didn’t think it was ever a possibility. Although my father is a musician, it was different because he was in Kosovo. Things are a lot smaller. It’s just different.”

Fast forward nearly 10 years later, and she’s on top of the world. She’s won two BRIT Awards for her work with her band Fountains of Wayne, and songwriter Adam Schlesinger, known for his work with his band Fountains of Wayne and on the TV show “Crazy Ex-Girlfriend,” died Wednesday after contracting the coronavirus.

Schlesinger died in hospital in upstate New York, his lawyer, Josh Grier, told The Associated Press. Schlesinger, a 25-year-old son of two daughters, had been sedated and on a ventilator for several days. He was also nominated for an Academy Award for the song “That Thing You Do,” written and directed by Tom Hanks. The snappy pop ditty was the fictional hit for a Beatles-esque band called the One-ders, later changed to the Wonders.


The band, known for its sunny harmonies and synthesis of pop, rock punk and comedy, had hits in 1996 with “Radiation Vibe” and 2003 with “Stacy’s Mom.” The latter was nominated for a Grammy.

Jazz great Ellis Marsalis Jr. dead at 85; fought virus

Ellis Marsalis Jr., the jazz pianist, teacher and patriarch of a New Orleans music clan, died late Wednesday after battling pneumonia brought on by the new coronavirus, leaving six sons and a deep legacy. He was 85.

Four of the jazz patriarch’s six sons are musicians, Wynton, trumpeter, is America’s most prominent jazz spokesman as artistic director of jazz at New York’s Lincoln Center. Branford, saxophonist, led The Tonight Show band and toured with Sting. Delfeayo, a trombonist, is a prominent recording producer and performer. And Jason, a percussionist, has made a name for himself with his own band and as an accompanist. Ellis III is a photographer-poet in Baltimore.

Because Marsalis opted to stay in New Orleans for most of his career, his reputation was limited until his sons became famous and brought him the spotlight.

The Marsalis “family band” seldom played together when the boys were younger but went on tour in 2003 in a spinoff of a family celebration, which became a PBS special when the elder Marsalis retired from teaching at the University of New Orleans.

Other news
- “Crazy Ex-Girlfriend” star Rachel Bloom said on Instagram that she and husband, Dan Gregor, returned home from the hospital Wednesday with their healthy newborn baby girl.
- Dav Pilkey, the million-selling author of the “Captain Underpants” and “Dog Man” series, is starting the “Cat Kid Comic Club,” Scholastic announced Thursday. The first book will be released Dec. 1.
With That Look, we wear the pandemic on our faces

By KATIE GREEN PARKER
Washington Post Writers Group

A ny many years ago when I was a young mother, my toddler son vanished from sight when I turned my back for a few seconds to water some flowers. Frantic, I ran to the street and looked in both directions, shrieking his name.

Nothing, nowhere. How could this be? A ten-year-old voice asked when a police car suddenly materialized.

“Did you lose your child?” the officer asked.

“Yes,” I nearly screamed. “Did you find him?”

“No,” he said, “but you have that look.”

Horror is an expression. This one was a near-by jogger, JC was found a block away, gleefully chasing a cat that had wandered by during that blink of an eye when mine was turned elsewhere. Happy ending. Lessons learned.

I’ve never forgotten the officer’s haunting words. How could you ever be so sure? Apparently, he had seen the expression enough times to recognize it. I’ve thought of them again recently as I’ve begun to notice “the look” we can now ascribe to the pandemic.

As I take my morning walks, I can see the faces of others. One woman’s eyebrows are deeply furrowed. They tell the story of a nation in shock, the fear and grief over the loss of the world they knew and may never know again.

The pandemic has created a new etiquette to go with The Look. It’s a mixture of politeness and pragmatism. Two strangers will smile and duck their heads almost bashfully as they attempt to dodge each other, as if to say: I’m sorry. I’m sure you’re having a very nice day, but you might also be a human droplet of viral death so, if you pardon the expression, get the hell away from me. Sorry!

Then comes worse news. MIT researcher Lydia Bourouiba has published a paper suggesting that virus-infused droplets can travel as far as 27 feet. Her critics say that if such were the case, we’d all be sick by now, which is about as consoling as hearing Nancy Pelosi say, “Testing, testing, testing.”

The silver lining? That’s easy: families are staying home, cooking and eating meals together. Then, as the daily press briefings of President Donald Trump, whose sudden flair for verbage rivals that of the late Fidel Castro, who would speak for hours and hours while his subjects probably feigned rapt attention, too, that many of Trump’s team members seem careful to preface their remarks with accolades for the White House leader.

Those remarks are the opposite of reassuring, but you also get the idea the president relishes the salutes. Recall when Trump, having witnessed North Koreans “sit up at attention” to their Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un, remarked that there’s no such thing as “a very nice person,” but you might also be a human droplet of viral death so, if you pardon the expression, get the hell away from me. Sorry!

Trump’s transformation — from first calling the virus a hoax to trying to use it as a lever to get re-elected — leaves many wondering how a country can sur vive this test when its chief executive officer so lacks the virtues of leadership?

When Trump and others refer to “the curve,” no one really knows what many are feeling. How can a country survive this test when its chief executive officer so lacks the virtues of leadership? When Trump and others refer to “the curve,” no one really knows what many are feeling. How can a country survive this test when its chief executive officer so lacks the virtues of leadership?
Trump's response is beyond just being overwhelmed

The Boston Globe

“Things fall apart; the center cannot hold,” wrote W.B. Yeats in 1919. A century later, it’s clear: the epicenter cannot hold. COVID-19 has now infected more than 900,000 people and already claimed more than 47,000 lives worldwide. Now that the number of confirmed COVID-19 diagnoses have surpassed that of any other nation, Americans are resigned for the coming weeks to watching their family members and friends, and to fearing for their own fate as they watch death toll rise.

The White House has spoken as if the virus has long since become just another in the vast catalog of illnesses. The virus, they said, was not really that big of a deal. The epicenter of America's virus response thus far was New York, a city with its world-class research institutions and hospitals, is now the hub of a global pandemic. A century ago, the New York City board of health reported on their own efforts to contain the virus which they called the “Spanish Flu.” They warned that the virus was “as hard to spot and to control as a cold.”

Trump's response is beyond just being overwhelmed. His delaying of getting equipment to where it's needed — his delay in getting help to where it's needed is deadly,” she said. “And now I think the time has come where we should be doing to stop prevent more loss of life, rather than open things up,” referring to the possibility of easing social distancing.

“I don't know what the purpose of that is,” Pelosi said. “I don’t know what the scientists are saying to him. I don’t know what the doctors said to him. When did this president know about this and what did he know? What did he know and when did he know it?” the speaker added, repeating the most famous line from the impeachment probe of Richard Nixon.

That’s for an after-action review. But as the president fiddles, people are dying. And we have to — we just have to take the information that would be available to him and make the best decision we can.

Pelosi: “Yes, I am.”

The speaker is a political professional who doesn’t drop off by accident. She clearly went into the interview with a plan to attack Trump at the start of a week when he knows that the infection and death tolls will mount.

Why go there? The cynical interpretation is that Pelosi and her allies have seen the president as a major casualty in the public approves of Trump’s handling of the pandemic. Perhaps she wants to undermine that perception. She may also be sending a message to her leftist wing that even if Trump wins re-election, she will be happy and successful if he impeaches him again for his virus response.

Whatever the reason, this was an ugly note when the public wants signs of cooperation across the government — and when Trump has been praising Democrats in Congress for helping to pass the $2.2 trillion relief bill. He also reneged last week from attacking Pelosi for delaying the relief bill to add non-virus earmarks like her $25 million for Washington’s Kennedy Center.

But Trump can never respond to an attack and on Monday, after Pelosi’s Sun- day comments, he hit back in a tweet. That perception. She may also be sending a message to her leftist wing that even if Trump wins re-election, she will be happy and successful if he impeaches him again for his virus response.

The daunting challenge of trying to get distance learning up and running comes as school districts are already struggling to feed students who rely on school breakfasts and lunches to stave off hunger. An analysis of policy statements by 46 districts that was released last Friday by the nonprofit Center on Reinventing Public Education found that districts across the country were already proposing a variety of solutions to deal with issues of technology and internet access. Only about a third of the districts said they were working to creating devices for every family. Only 5% said they were delivering mobile phones or wireless hot spots to students, while 12% were planning to sign up for internet service. Few districts had comprehensive learning plans, and most were sharing links to “optional assignments.”

The pandemic-driven changes under taken by KIPP, the nation’s largest public charter school network, give a glimpse of how schools have had to adapt and how obstacles vary by region. The network is using its buses to deliver food to committed learning.”

The so-called Homework Gap has taken on crippling dimensions now that closed schools have had to make critical errors over the past two months, choosing early on to develop its own diagnostic test, which failed, instead of adopting the World Health Organization’s test — a move that kneecapped the U.S. coronavirus response and, by most public health experts’ estimation, will cost thousands if not hundreds of thousands of American lives. Rather than making the expected federal effort to mobilize rapidly to distribute needed gloves, masks and ventilators to ill-equipped hospitals and to the doctors and nurses around the country who are left unprepared treating a burgeoning number of patients, the administration has instead been caught outbidding individual states (including Massachusetts) trying to purchase medical supplies. It has dragged its heels on invoking the Defense Production Act to get scarce, solely needed ventilators and masks into production so that they can be distributed to hospitals nationwide as they hit their breaks in the cycle of the epidemic. It has left governors and mayors in the lurch, begging for help.

It’s not too much for Americans to ask of their leaders that they be competent and informed when responding to a crisis of historic proportions. Instead, they have a White House marred by corruption and incompetence, whose mixed messages roll the markets and rock their sense of security. Instead of compassion, the administration has shown the president, in his near-daily addresses to the nation, embodies callousness, self-concern and a lack of compass. Dangling unemployment benefits before the American people, in front of the public like reality TV cliffhangers, he unsettles rather than reassures those who are hurting the most. Only about a third of the districts said they were working to create devices for every family. Only 5% said they were delivering mobile phones or wireless hot spots to students, while 12% were planning to sign up for internet service. Few districts had comprehensive learning plans, and most were sharing links to “optional assignments.”

No district examined by the center had “a clear solution for ensuring that 100 percent of students have a device and reliable, long-term access to the internet.”

This scramble is taking place in an atmosphere of uncertainty over how long the shutdown will last. Will there be a second wave? More money — and new expertise — if it turns out that a comprehensive online infrastructure is possible, he hit back in a tweet. That doesn’t help matters at this moment. But remember who cast the first coronavirus stone.

Pelosi’s calculated comments are an ugly note at a scary time

The Wall Street Journal

Nancy Pelosi wasted no time getting to her point in her interview Sunday on CNN. After some wishes about good health, host Jake Tapper asked the House speaker if she agreed with President Donald Trump’s musings that the national lockdown could extend to Easter. Pelosi might have dropped the ball on policy grounds — and later Sunday Trump extended the social distancing for another month — but instead she tore into Trump.

“What the president — his denial at the beginning was deadly. His delaying of getting equipment to where — it continues — his delay in getting help to where it’s needed is deadly,” she said. “And now I think the time has come where we should be doing to stop prevent more loss of life, rather than open things up,” referring to the possibility of easing social distancing.

“I don’t know what the purpose of that is,” she said. “I don’t know what the scientists are saying to him. I don’t know what the doctors said to him. When did this president know about this and what did he know? What did he know and when did he know it?” the speaker added, repeating the most famous line from the impeachment probe of Richard Nixon.

That’s for an after-action review. But as the president fiddles, people are dying. And we have to — we just have to take the information that would be available to him and make the best decision we can.

Pelosi: “Yes, I am.”

The speaker is a political professional who doesn’t drop off by accident. She clearly went into the interview with a plan to attack Trump at the start of a week when he knows that the infection and death tolls will mount.

Why go there? The cynical interpretation is that Pelosi and her allies have seen the president as a major casualty in the public approves of Trump’s handling of the pandemic. Perhaps she wants to undermine that perception. She may also be sending a message to her leftist wing that even if Trump wins re-election, she will be happy and successful if he impeaches him again for his virus response.

Whatever the reason, this was an ugly note when the public wants signs of cooperation across the government — and when Trump has been praising Democrats in Congress for helping to pass the $2.2 trillion relief bill. He also reneged last week from attacking Pelosi for delaying the relief bill to add non-virus earmarks like her $25 million for Washington’s Kennedy Center.

But Trump can never respond to an attack and on Monday, after Pelosi’s Sunday comments, he hit back in a tweet. That perception. She may also be sending a message to her leftist wing that even if Trump wins re-election, she will be happy and successful if he impeaches him again for his virus response.

Whatever the reason, this was an ugly note when the public wants signs of cooperation across the government — and when Trump has been praising Democrats in Congress for helping to pass the $2.2 trillion relief bill. He also reneged last week from attacking Pelosi for delaying the relief bill to add non-virus earmarks like her $25 million for Washington’s Kennedy Center.

But Trump can never respond to an attack and on Monday, after Pelosi’s Sunday comments, he hit back in a tweet. That perception. She may also be sending a message to her leftist wing that even if Trump wins re-election, she will be happy and successful if he impeaches him again for his virus response.

Whatever the reason, this was an ugly note when the public wants signs of cooperation across the government — and when Trump has been praising Democrats in Congress for helping to pass the $2.2 trillion relief bill. He also reneged last week from attacking Pelosi for delaying the relief bill to add non-virus earmarks like her $25 million for Washington’s Kennedy Center.

But Trump can never respond to an attack and on Monday, after Pelosi’s Sunday comments, he hit back in a tweet. That perception. She may also be sending a message to her leftist wing that even if Trump wins re-election, she will be happy and successful if he impeaches him again for his virus response.

Whatever the reason, this was an ugly note when the public wants signs of cooperation across the government — and when Trump has been praising Democrats in Congress for helping to pass the $2.2 trillion relief bill. He also reneged last week from attacking Pelosi for delaying the relief bill to add non-virus earmarks like her $25 million for Washington’s Kennedy Center.

But Trump can never respond to an attack and on Monday, after Pelosi’s Sunday comments, he hit back in a tweet. That perception. She may also be sending a message to her leftist wing that even if Trump wins re-election, she will be happy and successful if he impeaches him again for his virus response.

Whatever the reason, this was an ugly note when the public wants signs of cooperation across the government — and when Trump has been praising Democrats in Congress for helping to pass the $2.2 trillion relief bill. He also reneged last week from attacking Pelosi for delaying the relief bill to add non-virus earmarks like her $25 million for Washington’s Kennedy Center.

But Trump can never respond to an attack and on Monday, after Pelosi’s Sunday comments, he hit back in a tweet. That perception. She may also be sending a message to her leftist wing that even if Trump wins re-election, she will be happy and successful if he impeaches him again for his virus response.

Whatever the reason, this was an ugly note when the public wants signs of cooperation across the government — and when Trump has been praising Democrats in Congress for helping to pass the $2.2 trillion relief bill. He also reneged last week from attacking Pelosi for delaying the relief bill to add non-virus earmarks like her $25 million for Washington’s Kennedy Center.

But Trump can never respond to an attack and on Monday, after Pelosi’s Sunday comments, he hit back in a tweet. That perception. She may also be sending a message to her leftist wing that even if Trump wins re-election, she will be happy and successful if he impeaches him again for his virus response.
Every controversial topic has two sides. We look into the ones that matter to you.

New episodes available now

Available on App Store, Google Play, Spotify, SoundCloud
at Stripes.com/podcasts
NASCAR, other series have used virtual racing to drive up fans’ interest during a shutdown

Journeyman driver Timmy Hill’s iRacing victory on national television gave Hill and other drivers hope they would not be overlooked during a normal NASCAR weekend.

They need to be back at the track. All the uncertainty has teams reluctant to speak publicly. Most discussions are at the Series Owners Meetings, with drivers and team members waiting and wondering what will happen next.

Penske put IndyCar’s team owners at ease by ensuring the first three payments from the series’ bonus program will be paid. He acknowledges revenue will be down and was hopeful race teams might qualify for the $2.2 trillion coronavirus relief bill.

“We’re doing everything we can do to help (teams). They have no cost right now other than their people and whatever assets they might have,” Penske said. “But I don’t think people should think that just the people on the top are going to be fine. I mean, we all have ongoing costs. And the larger the team is, the more money you have. When the revenue begins to slow, you’ve got to make sure you make your adjustments.”

Race promoters are stuck with empty venues, reduced or nonexistent paydays, and their financial health? Of course we are,” NFL President Steve Phelps has said. “We have very few team owners like Penske or Rick Hendrick, who have other businesses larger than their racing hobby. The bulk of the sport is composed of racers.

Chip Ganassi owns race teams that supply Penske’s transportation business and other teams with personnel. There are very few team owners like Penske or Hendrick, who have other businesses larger than their racing hobby. The bulk of the sport is composed of racers.

“I don’t think the long-term financials of the sport are going to be fine. I mean, we all have ongoing costs,” Penske said. “But I don’t think people should think that just the people on the top are going to be fine. I mean, we all have ongoing costs. And the larger the team is, the more money you have. When the revenue begins to slow, you’ve got to make sure you make your adjustments.”

Race promoters are stuck with empty venues, reduced or nonexistent paydays, and their financial health? Of course we are,” NFL President Steve Phelps has said. “We have very few team owners like Penske or Hendrick, who have other businesses larger than their racing hobby. The bulk of the sport is composed of racers.

“Are we concerned about teams broadly and their financial health? Of course we are,” said NFL President Steve Phelps. “We have very few team owners like Penske or Hendrick, who have other businesses larger than their racing hobby. The bulk of the sport is composed of racers.

“F or me to actually beat these guys on a level playing field, it really feels good for my driving talents,” Hill said. “It’s neat to beat up on these guys with these big, massive, expensive setups. I think for the viewers, it’s neat for them because they can understand that they don’t have to spend that huge dollar amount to get into iRacing.

“And I tell you what … I knew a lot was on the line, a lot of people watching. The rush of emotions definitely feels just like a real race.”

NFLPA disputes Reid’s claim of a substantive CBA change

NASCAR, other series have used virtual racing to drive up fans’ interest during a shutdown

They need to be back at the track. All the uncertainty has teams reluctant to speak publicly. Most discussions are at the Series Owners Meetings, with drivers and team members waiting and wondering what will happen next.

Penske put IndyCar’s team owners at ease by ensuring the first three payments from the series’ bonus program will be paid. He acknowledges revenue will be down and was hopeful race teams might qualify for the $2.2 trillion coronavirus relief bill.

“We’re doing everything we can do to help (teams). They have no cost right now other than their people and whatever assets they might have,” Penske said. “But I don’t think people should think that just the people on the top are going to be fine. I mean, we all have ongoing costs. And the larger the team is, the more money you have. When the revenue begins to slow, you’ve got to make sure you make your adjustments.”

Race promoters are stuck with empty venues, reduced or nonexistent paydays, and their financial health? Of course we are,” NFL President Steve Phelps has said. “We have very few team owners like Penske or Hendrick, who have other businesses larger than their racing hobby. The bulk of the sport is composed of racers.

“Are we concerned about teams broadly and their financial health? Of course we are,” said NFL President Steve Phelps. “We have very few team owners like Penske or Hendrick, who have other businesses larger than their racing hobby. The bulk of the sport is composed of racers.

“F or me to actually beat these guys on a level playing field, it really feels good for my driving talents,” Hill said. “It’s neat to beat up on these guys with these big, massive, expensive setups. I think for the viewers, it’s neat for them because they can understand that they don’t have to spend that huge dollar amount to get into iRacing.

“And I tell you what … I knew a lot was on the line, a lot of people watching. The rush of emotions definitely feels just like a real race.”

NFLPA disputes Reid’s claim of a substantive CBA change

NASCAR, other series have used virtual racing to drive up fans’ interest during a shutdown

They need to be back at the track. All the uncertainty has teams reluctant to speak publicly. Most discussions are at the Series Owners Meetings, with drivers and team members waiting and wondering what will happen next.

Penske put IndyCar’s team owners at ease by ensuring the first three payments from the series’ bonus program will be paid. He acknowledges revenue will be down and was hopeful race teams might qualify for the $2.2 trillion coronavirus relief bill.

“We’re doing everything we can do to help (teams). They have no cost right now other than their people and whatever assets they might have,” Penske said. “But I don’t think people should think that just the people on the top are going to be fine. I mean, we all have ongoing costs. And the larger the team is, the more money you have. When the revenue begins to slow, you’ve got to make sure you make your adjustments.”

Race promoters are stuck with empty venues, reduced or nonexistent paydays, and their financial health? Of course we are,” NFL President Steve Phelps has said. “We have very few team owners like Penske or Hendrick, who have other businesses larger than their racing hobby. The bulk of the sport is composed of racers.

“Are we concerned about teams broadly and their financial health? Of course we are,” said NFL President Steve Phelps. “We have very few team owners like Penske or Hendrick, who have other businesses larger than their racing hobby. The bulk of the sport is composed of racers.

“F or me to actually beat these guys on a level playing field, it really feels good for my driving talents,” Hill said. “It’s neat to beat up on these guys with these big, massive, expensive setups. I think for the viewers, it’s neat for them because they can understand that they don’t have to spend that huge dollar amount to get into iRacing.

“And I tell you what … I knew a lot was on the line, a lot of people watching. The rush of emotions definitely feels just like a real race.”

NFLPA disputes Reid’s claim of a substantive CBA change

NASCAR, other series have used virtual racing to drive up fans’ interest during a shutdown

They need to be back at the track. All the uncertainty has teams reluctant to speak publicly. Most discussions are at the Series Owners Meetings, with drivers and team members waiting and wondering what will happen next.

Penske put IndyCar’s team owners at ease by ensuring the first three payments from the series’ bonus program will be paid. He acknowledges revenue will be down and was hopeful race teams might qualify for the $2.2 trillion coronavirus relief bill.

“We’re doing everything we can do to help (teams). They have no cost right now other than their people and whatever assets they might have,” Penske said. “But I don’t think people should think that just the people on the top are going to be fine. I mean, we all have ongoing costs. And the larger the team is, the more money you have. When the revenue begins to slow, you’ve got to make sure you make your adjustments.”

Race promoters are stuck with empty venues, reduced or nonexistent paydays, and their financial health? Of course we are,” NFL President Steve Phelps has said. “We have very few team owners like Penske or Hendrick, who have other businesses larger than their racing hobby. The bulk of the sport is composed of racers.

“Are we concerned about teams broadly and their financial health? Of course we are,” said NFL President Steve Phelps. “We have very few team owners like Penske or Hendrick, who have other businesses larger than their racing hobby. The bulk of the sport is composed of racers.

“F or me to actually beat these guys on a level playing field, it really feels good for my driving talents,” Hill said. “It’s neat to beat up on these guys with these big, massive, expensive setups. I think for the viewers, it’s neat for them because they can understand that they don’t have to spend that huge dollar amount to get into iRacing.

“And I tell you what … I knew a lot was on the line, a lot of people watching. The rush of emotions definitely feels just like a real race.”

NFLPA disputes Reid’s claim of a substantive CBA change

NASCAR, other series have used virtual racing to drive up fans’ interest during a shutdown

They need to be back at the track. All the uncertainty has teams reluctant to speak publicly. Most discussions are at the Series Owners Meetings, with drivers and team members waiting and wondering what will happen next.

Penske put IndyCar’s team owners at ease by ensuring the first three payments from the series’ bonus program will be paid. He acknowledges revenue will be down and was hopeful race teams might qualify for the $2.2 trillion coronavirus relief bill.

“We’re doing everything we can do to help (teams). They have no cost right now other than their people and whatever assets they might have,” Penske said. “But I don’t think people should think that just the people on the top are going to be fine. I mean, we all have ongoing costs. And the larger the team is, the more money you have. When the revenue begins to slow, you’ve got to make sure you make your adjustments.”

Race promoters are stuck with empty venues, reduced or nonexistent paydays, and their financial health? Of course we are,” NFL President Steve Phelps has said. “We have very few team owners like Penske or Hendrick, who have other businesses larger than their racing hobby. The bulk of the sport is composed of racers.

“Are we concerned about teams broadly and their financial health? Of course we are,” said NFL President Steve Phelps. “We have very few team owners like Penske or Hendrick, who have other businesses larger than their racing hobby. The bulk of the sport is composed of racers.

“F or me to actually beat these guys on a level playing field, it really feels good for my driving talents,” Hill said. “It’s neat to beat up on these guys with these big, massive, expensive setups. I think for the viewers, it’s neat for them because they can understand that they don’t have to spend that huge dollar amount to get into iRacing.

“And I tell you what … I knew a lot was on the line, a lot of people watching. The rush of emotions definitely feels just like a real race.”
With no March Madness, The Associated Press is moving stories and historical pieces to help fill some of the void in college basketball. A panel of AP sports writers voted in March on the top 10 men’s basketball games in the history of the NCAA Tournament. They are being republished because the sport has been shut down by the coronavirus pandemic. The following game story, from April 1, 1985, was voted No. 4.

**Lights out**

Villanova stuns Georgetown, missing only one second-half shot, for ’85 title

Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ky. — Underdog Villanova, shooting 79% from the field, denied Patrick Ewing and top-ranked Georgetown a second straight NCAA basketball title Monday night with a 66-64 victory.

Georgetown had won 17 straight games and completed the season with a 35-3 record and a 121-23 record in the four-year career of the 7-foot Ewing, a four-time All-American. Villanova, 25-10, was beaten twice by the Hoyas during the regular Big East season, 52-50 in overtime and 57-50, and Georgetown entered the game a nine-point favorite. “No one thought we could do it, but I did,” Villanova coach Rollie Massimino shouted afterward. And the rotund coach and his unranked crew from the Philadelphia suburbs had plenty of heroes to go around.

Dawyne McClain hit two free throws and Harold Pressley one of two to provide the margin of victory, with Georgetown’s Michael Jackson completing the scoring with a field goal with four seconds remaining.

McClain, hitting five of seven field goals, paced Villanova with 17 points and 6-foot-9 Ed Pinckney, who battled Ewing in the pivot all night, scored 16.

The Wildcats also hit 22 of 27 free throws and matched the Hoyas on the boards with 17 rebounds. And they limited Ewing, the Hoyas’ All-American, to 14 points.

Georgetown was trying to become only the seventh team and the first since UCLA in 1973 to repeat as NCAA champions. They were being rated among the greatest teams of all time, after breathing through the last part of their schedule and looking stronger with each game.

But Villanova, which finished in a third-place tie in the Big East Conference with Syracuse, began a six-game winning streak in the tournament, knocking off other ranked teams such as No. 2 Michigan and No. 5 Memphis State in Saturday’s semifinal.

Their upset victory was akin to that of North Carolina State, which won the NCAA title two years ago as an overwhelming underdog. But that N.C. State team finished with one more victory against its 10 losses, and the 16th ranking in the final pre-tournament poll. All Villanova had to show was hope as it entered its sixth consecutive NCAA tournament, a competition they had never won.

The Wildcats pulled ahead 29-28 at halftime and after Ewing hit an opening jumper in the second half, they went up 36-30 with Horace Broadnax’s basket, a three-point play by Pinckney and a jumper by Gary McLain.

McClain’s three-point play kept them up 41-36, but Georgetown came back and went ahead on David Wingate’s jumper 42-41 with 9:49 remaining.

The lead changed hands five times, the last on a jumper by Pinckney, who was named the tournament’s Most Valuable Player. McLain hit two free throws for a 49-46 lead.

Again the Wildcats went ahead by five on a Pinckney jumper but Georgetown came back with six straight points. Wingate’s drive put the Hoyas ahead 54-53.

Pinckney then lost the ball trying to drive against Ewing and the Hoyas went into a spread offense. But Horace Broadnax, attempting to pass to Bill Martin, threw the ball off a Villanova player and it bounced off Broadnax’s feet.

Villanova then scored six straight points, with Jensen hitting a jumper, Pinckney two free throws and Jensen two more free throws for a 59-54 advantage with 1:24 remaining.

Broadnax then made a basket but Jensen, a reserve sophomore guard who played most of the game, connected for two more free throws.

McClain then missed a free throw, snapping his string of 20 consecutive foul shot tosses in the tournament, and Jensen also missed the front end of a one-and-one.

Ewing’s jam brought Georgetown within 61-58 with 41 seconds left but McClain then came through with two more free throws. A Wingate field goal pulled the Hoyas within three but McClain then hit another one-and-one with 18 seconds left for a 65-60 edge.

Michael Jackson scored for Georgetown before Pressley went to the line for two free throws and made only one.

Ewing, the AP Player of the Year, hit seven of 13 shots from the field but grabbed only five rebounds. Wingate had 16 points, hitting 8 of 14 from the field.
UFC lightweight champion Khabib Nurmagomedov, right, says he won’t leave quarantine in Russia to fight, dealing another blow to UFC President Dana White’s determination to hold UFC 249 in two weeks amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Nurmagomedov calls off title defense: ‘Take care of yourself and put yourself in my shoes’

Associated Press

UFC lightweight champion Khabib Nurmagomedov says he won’t leave quarantine in Russia to fight, dealing another blow to UFC President Dana White’s determination to hold UFC 249 in two weeks amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Nurmagomedov made his announcement Wednesday on Instagram, telling the mixed martial arts community to “take care of yourself and put yourself in my shoes.”

Nurmagomedov (28-0) was scheduled to fight top contender Tony Ferguson (25-3) in the main event of UFC 249 in two weeks. The show was initially slated for Barclays Center in Brooklyn before the pandemic threw the UFC’s schedule into upheaval.

Nurmagomedov is in his native Dagestan, and his Instagram post made it clear he isn’t leaving for the fight even if White is able to find a location to stage it. Nurmagomedov left California to return home when the UFC had tentative plans to stage UFC 249 in the United Arab Emirates, but the champion first revealed Monday that he probably wouldn’t be allowed to leave the country again due to travel restrictions.

“I understand everything and I’m definitely more upset than you to cancel the fight,” Nurmagomedov said. “Probably like all others, I had many plans after the fight, but I can’t control it all.”

White and the UFC didn’t immediately comment on Nurmagomedov’s decision, which had been expected for several days since the MMA world learned Nurmagomedov was in Dagestan instead of California, where he typically finishes his training for his fights.

Nurmagomedov also expressed anger at forces attempting to compel him to fight, although he didn’t make it clear whether he was referring to fans or to White.

“It turned out that the whole world should be in quarantine,” Nurmagomedov said. “Governments of all countries, famous people around the world urge people to follow all safety requirements in order to limit the spread of the disease, to save people, and Khabib is the only one relieved of all obligations and must demonstrate free will and train flying around the world, for the sake of fight!”

Ferguson still wants to fight on April 18, and he called on the UFC to strip Nurmagomedov of his lightweight title in an interview with ESPN, the UFC’s broadcast partner.

“He obviously knew what he could do to help save this card,” said Ferguson, who hasn’t lost a fight since 2012. “He didn’t want to take any of those chances. Everybody is taking risks trying to do it. He bailed out, man.”

White has repeatedly vowed to find a safe way to hold UFC 249, the biggest pay-per-view event on the promotion’s spring calendar. White has claimed to have a venue selected where he will hold the show without fans, although he hadn’t disclosed the location.

One of the most dominant performances in college basketball history in the championship game against Iowa. Officially, he had 26 points and a still-Final Four-record 27 rebounds in the 83-71 win. Media reports also credited him with between 12 and 20 blocks.

The 83-71 victory gave the Dons their second straight national title and extended their winning streak to 55 games.

Christian Laettner, Duke (1992): No NCAA Tournament is complete without revisiting Christian Laettner catching that long inbounds pass, turning, dribbling once and swishing his shot from just behind the free-throw line to beat Kentucky in overtime and send Duke to the Final Four.

It was a fitting end to a 31-point performance in which Laettner made all 10 of his shots from the field and all 10 of his free throws.

Scorers: Carr’s output would be greater today

FROM BACK PAGE

Notre Dame’s Austin Carr scores against UCLA’s Steve Patterson, left, on Jan. 23, 1971, in South Bend, Ind. Carr had 46 points in that 89-82 victory, playing when prolific scorers dominated college basketball. He averaged 41.3 points over seven NCAA tournament games from 1968-71, with games of 52, 52, 47 and 45 points.

Bill Walton, UCLA (1973): The Bruins won a seventh straight national title behind Walton’s 44 points against Memphis State — still the most in a championship game. Walton made 21 of 22 shots from the field, and that didn’t include four baskets that didn’t count because of the era’s non-dunking rule. The 87-66 victory was UCLA’s 75th win in a row.

Christian Laettner, Duke (1992): No NCAA Tournament is complete without revisiting Christian Laettner catching that long inbounds pass, turning, dribbling once and swishing his shot from just behind the free-throw line to beat Kentucky in overtime and send Duke to the Final Four.

Bill Russell, San Francisco (1956): Russell turned in one of the most dominant performances in college basketball history in the championship game against Iowa. Officially, he had 26 points and a still-Final Four-record 27 rebounds in the 83-71 win. Media reports also credited him with between 12 and 20 blocks.

The 83-71 victory gave the Dons their second straight national title and extended their winning streak to 55 games.

Oscar Robertson, Cincinnati (1958-60): The “Big O” was the king of the triple-double, and you need to look no further than the NCAA Tournament record book for proof. The triple-double was an “unofficial” statistic until the 1980s, but many box scores before that included categories such as assists, blocks and steals.

Four of the top five tournament triple-doubles pre-1986 belong to Robertson, none more impressive than his 39 points, 17 rebounds and 10 assists against Louisville in the 1959 third-place game. The year before he scored 56 points against Arkansas. His 32.4-point average over 10 tournament games ranks third all-time.

Bill Walton, UCLA (1973): The Bruins won a seventh straight national title behind Walton’s 44 points against Memphis State — still the most in a championship game. Walton made 21 of 22 shots from the field, and that didn’t include four baskets that didn’t count because of the era’s non-dunking rule. The 87-66 victory was UCLA’s 75th win in a row.

Christian Laettner, Duke (1992): No NCAA Tournament is complete without revisiting Christian Laettner catching that long inbounds pass, turning, dribbling once and swishing his shot from just behind the free-throw line to beat Kentucky in overtime and send Duke to the Final Four.

It was a fitting end to a 31-point performance in which Laettner made all 10 of his shots from the field and all 10 of his free throws.

Scorers: Carr’s output would be greater today
In era of prolific collegiate scorers, Irish’s Austin Carr was among the best

Austin Carr played for Notre Dame in an era when prolific scorers dominated college basketball. LSU’s Pete Maravich was scoring 40 a night and still No. 1 on the points list. Niagara’s Calvin Murphy, Purdue’s Rick Mount and St. Bonaventure’s Bob Lanier, along with Carr, were others putting up eye-popping numbers.

“At the time, it gave me a different status in the basketball world.”

Notre Dame guard, on his 61-point performance in the 1970 NCAA Tournament

It wasn’t until Carr scored a still-standing NCAA Tournament-record 61 points against Ohio in the first round in 1970 that, in his mind, he started to separate himself.

“At the time, it gave me a different status in the basketball world.”

Notre Dame’s Austin Carr, above, averaged 34.6 points over 74 college games, a figure that still ranks No. 2 behind ‘Pistol’ Pete Maravich’s 44.4 with LSU.

By Eric Olson
Associated Press

Khabib taps out
Citing Russian quarantine, lightweight champ pulls out of fight

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.