**ISIS claims responsibility for deadly attack in Kabul**

**By Phillip Walter Wellman**
Stars and Stripes

Gunfire killed dozens of people at a memorial in Kabul attended by senior Afghan government officials Friday. Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement on its website. At least 32 people were killed and more than 50 others were injured in the violence that started at about 11:30 a.m., Afghanistan’s Health Ministry and security officials said Friday. The Afghan Interior Ministry said over 80 people were injured and some are in critical condition. All of those killed or injured were civilians, Interior Ministry spokesman Nasrat Rahimi said.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani called the attack “a crime against humanity and against the national unity of Afghanistan,” in a Twitter statement.

The ceremony in the city’s west, relatively far from most U.S. forces in the city, marked the 1995 death of Afghan Shiite leader Abdul Ali Mazari.

SEE KABUL ON PAGE 4

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New special ops network will serve as security backbone ahead of US pullout

**By Dan Lamothe**
The Washington Post

KABUL, Afghanistan — A new network of special operations forces will serve as the backbone of a smaller U.S. military mission in Afghanistan, hunting Islamic State fighters as the U.S. withdraws and providing firepower against the Taliban if a peace agreement with the group crumbles, military officials said.

The network was established as Army Gen. Scott Miller, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, prepared to shrink the number of U.S. service members this summer while the Trump administration negotiated a U.S. troop withdrawal deal with the Taliban.

The idea was to improve coordination between coalition and Afghan forces, relying on WhatsApp to share information, in a way that would still be possible if the number of U.S. service members shrinks.

The force is designed to “withstand any change in policy, whatever that may be, or a change in any conditions on the ground,” said a senior U.S. military official, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the operations. The force will work with coalition partners, “but the core of it will obviously be U.S.,” the official said.

SEE SECURITY ON PAGE 4
Mortgages at record low due to virus

Associated Press

Long-term U.S. mortgage rates have sunk to a record low, giving many homeowners an opening to refinance their loans to free up money to spend or save.

The average rate on a 30-year fixed mortgage hit a record low of 3.29% this week from 3.45% last week, mortgage buyer Freddie Mac said Thursday. The decline is being driven by investors shifting money out of the stock market and into the safety of U.S. Treasurys as the coronavirus outbreak has deepened. Long-term mortgage rates tend to track the yields on the 10-year Treasury note, so they typically fall in tandem.

The new 3.29% average rate is the lowest for a 30-year fixed mortgage since Freddie Mac started tracking such rates in 1971. On Thursday Freddie Mac’s survey of loan rates also showed the average rate on a 15-year fixed mortgage sliding this week to 2.79% from 2.95% last week.

A steady decline of mortgage rates has created a potential boon for would-be home buyers as well as for homeowners who can refinance into lower-rate loans. Refinancings can lower monthly payments and in some cases allow homeowners to tap additional cash from the equity in their home.

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate ................................. 4.25
Discount rate ......................... 1.75
Federal Funds market rate .... 1.09
3-month bill .......................... 0.65
10-year bond ......................... 1.57

WEATHER OUTLOOK

The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.
BY NIKKI WENTLING  
Stars and Stripes
WASHINGTON — Two Republican senators introduced legislation Thursday that would restrict some veterans from obtaining firearms and establish a more thorough vetting process for the students before they are allowed access to U.S. military bases.

The Secure U.S. Bases Act aims to improve security following a deadly shooting Dec. 6 at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Fla., where a Saudi officer who was training to be a military pilot shot sailors and injured eight other people. The bill was introduced by Sens. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, and Rick Scott, R-Fla., who heard from Pentagon officials this week about security weaknesses that led to the Pensacola attack.

Garry Reid, director for defense intelligence, told senators Thursday that Pentagon procedures meant to detect and prevent threats at U.S. military bases did not work for nonimmigrant military students. Further, the Pentagon is “overly reliant” on the State Department’s vetting procedures for these students, the military services fail to share information, he said. There are also loopholes that allow foreign military students to purchase firearms, despite restrictions for nonimmigrant visa holders.

“The tragic events at Pensacola underscore the unacceptable shortfalls in our security standards and procedures,” Ernst said in a statement. “We must do more to protect our military bases and ensure the security of our facilities.”

The Secure U.S. Bases Act would create a new visa category for foreign military students that would prohibit them from possessing or acquiring a firearm except for specific use in their training programs. The shooter in the Pensacola attack, Mohammed Alshamrani, a second lieutenant in the Royal Saudi Air Force, was able to buy a semiautomatic handgun with a hunting license.

The bill would also require members of foreign military students to get an official endorsement letter from the chief of intelligence of their countries when applying for U.S. military training. Students would also have to be fingerprinted and undergo an in-person interview and extensive background check that would include a review of their social media activity. The U.S. director of national intelligence would have to make the final decision on whether to admit students into the program.

The thoroughness of the vetting process came into question during the investigation of the Pensacola shooting, which was deemed an act of terrorism. Alshamrani was motivated by “jihadist ideology” and had posted anti-American messages on social media, Attorney General William Barr said.

During the FBI’s investigation into the attack, 21 Saudi students were expelled from the United States for having “derogatory material” on their computers and phones, Barr said.

Finally, the act would order the defense secretary to develop risk profiles for each country that participates in the training program. Those risk profiles would be used when deciding whether to admit students.

“This terrorist should never have been allowed in our country, let alone on an American military base with easy access to American military men and women,” Scott said of Alshamrani.

More vetting of foreign military students sought

Report: VA unlawfully denies health care access for vets with ‘bad paper’

BY NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes
WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs has unlawfully turned away veterans with other-than-honorable discharges for decades because of flawed training and guidance that created a “cycle of misinformation,” a report released Thursday found.

VA staff often reject such veterans on the spot rather than telling them to fill out applications for health care, sending a written denial and informing them about their options to appeal, the report says. While other-than-honorable discharges, commonly known as “bad paper,” can preclude veterans from some VA services, that’s not always the case — particularly with mental health care.

The gay veterans group OUTVETS, along with the Veterans Legal Clinic at Harvard Law School, authored the report. They based findings on interviews with veterans, evidence from veterans advocates and legal aid attorneys, and documents obtained from the VA and Defense Department.

Dana Montalto, an instructor at the Veterans Legal Clinic, said veterans are being denied due process.

“The VA did not maintain records of veterans with bad paper who were rejected on the spot, but the report’s authors estimated numbers in the tens of thousands since 1989. There are about 400,000 veterans who are at risk of being denied care today, they wrote.

“By its very nature, the turn-away problem is one in which usually no record is created, and as a result no VA documentation of the interview or the advice that the veteran was denied care, where they are located, and when it occurred,” the report said.

The office of the VA’s Inspector General found definitively how many veterans were wrongly denied care, where they are located, and when it occurred, a VA spokesperson said.

Denial of care to veterans with bad paper is national, persistent, and systemic, with the office of the VA’s Inspector General estimating the denial of care to veterans with bad paper is national, persistent, and systemic, with the office of the VA’s Inspector General estimating that a ‘viable’ veteran can be harmful or even deadly.”

Veterans receive other-than-honorable discharges for a host of reasons, including serious crimes. However, service members with bad paper were, in many cases, unjustly released from the military because of infractions that stemmed from mental health issues.

The Government Accountability Office found that tens of thousands of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who were separated from the military for misconduct had suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury or another mental health disorder.
The network, which has not previously been disclosed to the public, was detailed to The Washington Post by military officials seeking to reassure U.S. and Afghan citizens that the U.S. can still provide security in coming months.

The initial version is expected to withstand any cuts as the U.S. military presence shrinks from about 12,000 service members to 8,600 over the span of 135 days under the terms of a deal reached with the Taliban on Feb. 29. U.S. officials did not reveal how many people the network includes, but the senior military official said it is built to function with a few thousand U.S. troops in Afghanistan or less.

The deal, negotiated for more than a year, calls for the U.S. to withdraw all of its service members within 14 months if the Taliban meets certain requirements, including beginning negotiations with the Afghan government to end the war and ensuring that Afghan soil is not used to plot or carry out attacks against the U.S. or its allies.

But U.S. officials have described the timeline as “aspirational,” citing concerns about whether the Taliban will follow through on its obligations. The U.S. withdrawal will be “conditions-based,” the officials have said, repeatedly declining to offer specifics.

On Wednesday, the uncertainty was underscored by 43 Taliban attacks and a U.S. airstrike targeting the group in Helmand province, said Army Col. Sonny Leggett, a U.S. military spokesman. The U.S. strike, the first in 11 days anywhere in the country, was carried out in defense of Afghan forces, Leggett said.

Army Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, downplayed the recent attacks in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Wednesday, saying they occurred at “small, little outposts,” and that cities have not been hit.

Leggett’s statement caused concern that Iran not obtain nuclear material or conduct activities without declaring them to international observers. The Associated Press saw the report to member countries. The other report said Iran nearly tripled its stockpile of enriched uranium since November, violating a deal that U.S. forces had killed 18 ISIS fighters in Konar province in recent days.

As the U.S. has explored whether its relationship with the Taliban can evolve, it has continued to carry out strikes against ISIS. Leggett tweeted Tuesday that U.S. forces had killed 18 ISIS fighters in Konar province in recent days.

“‘We had tight security for this event today,'” Rahimi said, in light of last year’s violence. An investigation to determine what went wrong is underway, he said. Afghan special police forces arrived at the scene shortly after the attack began, Kabul police spokesman Ferdous Farzam said.

The Taliban, who have been criticized by U.S. and Afghan officials for increasing violence across the country after last weekend’s peace deal with the U.S., quickly denied involvement in the attack.

Army Gen. Mark Milley, the senior military official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of his role, said Afghanistan typically work 24 hours as a member of the CSAR, and then go home to their families. Most live within driving distance — a major reason the operations center was moved in the past few months from 45 miles north at Bagram Airfield.

“We chose the best officers,” said the Afghan officer directing the CSAR. “Most of them are Western-educated.”

The network first provided major assistance in June, when it helped stave off Taliban attacks on Afghan forces after Ramadan, the senior U.S. military official said. In the following months, the U.S. military boosted airstrikes, reaching a crescendo of 918 in September, according to Air Force statistics.

The strikes occurred as the network assisted Afghan forces in taking back swaths of northern Afghanistan in Badghis, Baghlan, Takhar and Jowzjan provinces, the senior military official said. The majority of the strikes occurred as Afghan forces maneuvering down a road as airstrikes killed a few dozen Taliban fighters ahead of them.

“I’d not rocket science,” the official said. “It just works.”

US Iran representative says Tehran must let inspectors into nuke site

Associated Press

PARIS — The U.S. special representative for Iran said Thursday the Islamic Republic must “immediately” ensure that inspectors have access to sites that harbor traces of nuclear material or activity.

The finding was made public in a report this week by the international nuclear watchdog, which said Iran is denying access.

In one of two confidential reports, the International Atomic Energy Agency identified three locations where Iran possibly stored undeclared nuclear material or conducted activities without declaring them to international observers. The Associated Press saw the report to member countries. The other report said Iran nearly tripled its stockpile of enriched uranium since November, violating a deal that allows it to carry out the 135-day negotiations.

The IAEA said its request for access to two of the sites was denied, although the nuclear-related activities are thought to date from the early 2000s.

For Iran’s nuclear agency, Behrouz Kamalvandi, responded Wednesday that requests for access must have a legal basis, according to Iran’s semi-official ISNA news agency.

The U.S. official, Brian Hook, said the access is required under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to which Iran is a signatory, meaning it must provide access “immediately.”

Hook was in Paris to meet his French, German and British counterparts, signatories of the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran that the Trump administration pulled out of in 2019. The U.S. wants a more inclusive deal that addresses ballistic missiles and Iran’s regional ambitions in Syria and elsewhere. Instead, Washington has levied punishing economic sanctions on Iran as part of its “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran.

While noting the three European nations have “tactical disagreements” with the United States, he stressed their common concern that Iran not obtain nuclear arms.

China and Russia also are signatories to the deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which promised Iran economic incentives in return for curbs on its nuclear activity. But those other signatories have failed to materialize, along with European efforts to create a mechanism allowing Iran to get around U.S. sanctions. The U.S. has yet to get off the ground. Iran, in turn, has incrementally violated the deal’s restrictions with measures the United States repeatedly has called “reversals.”
No positive cases at Aviano but 134 people in isolation

By Kent Harris
Stars and Stripes

AVIANO AIR BASE, Italy — The 31st Fighter Wing has 134 people in isolation or self-quarantine and has instructed everyone to keep their distance from others in public amid coronavirus concerns, officials said during a virtual town hall meeting.

Medical workers have screened many people and told them to remain in their homes or barracks as a precaution, officials said Thursday during the meeting, streamed on Facebook Live.

There are no confirmed cases of the new coronavirus among the base population. However, it wasn't clear whether any personnel have been tested, and base officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The base does not have the ability to test for the virus but could have personnel tested at the Italian hospital in Udine or Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, said Lt. Col. Mark Dudley, commander of the 31st Aerospace Medical Squadron.

The people in self-quarantine more than likely have the flu, “however, we cannot disassociate or tell the difference” because of the lack of coronavirus testing at Aviano, Dudley said.

Officials also directed everyone to maintain at least 1 meter of distance from each other, on or off base. That directive, which follows the lead of Italy’s guidelines, will last until at least April 3, said Lt. Col. Matthew Lund, the wing’s staff judge advocate.

No one in Pordenone, the province where Aviano is located, has tested positive for the virus, The Associated Press reported.

The government of the greater Friuli Venezia Giulia region in northeast Italy, which includes Aviano, reported Thursday that 22 people had tested positive for the virus. All the cases were in the cities of Udine, Trieste or Gorizia.

Italy called for all of its public schools in the country to close through March 15, and both Aviano and U.S. Army Garrison Italy are doing the same. In the south, schools on Navy bases in Naples and Sigonella remained open as of Thursday.

Students are continuing their studies via online learning, school officials at Aviano said. Most of the courses have been reviews of already acquired learning, but new subject matter will be introduced if schools remain shuttered. Aviano Middle/High School Principal Ken Harvey said.

Brig. Gen. Daniel T. Lasica, the wing commander, said he knows that many are concerned about the virus, and some are struggling to take care of children on their own, or pay for child care. He urged airmen to talk to their leaders if they needed help.

“We need to have those conversations,” Lasica said.

There are currently no restrictions on moves to or from new duty stations, Aviano officials said. However, Army officials at Vicenza, about 90 minutes south of Aviano, said Wednesday they’ve received reports of some troops being quarantined upon arrival in the United States.

The Army is developing a policy to deal with the “literally tens of thousands” of soldiers and civilians who travel to bases worldwide, Maj. Gen. Roger Cloutier said Friday at a virtual town hall meeting.

This is a big Army problem,” he said. “The policy is going to apply Army-wide and affect a huge number of families.

Quarantines would not count against annual or sick leave, and those placed in quarantine would be housed at no expense to themselves, said Cloutier, commander of U.S. Army Africa.

Aviano officials said personnel are expected to follow State Department and Italian travel restrictions unless they have official approval, which effectively cuts off Friuli Venezia Giulia from the rest of Italy.

Meanwhile, the base exchange is rationing a few products, including hand sanitizers, and has rearranged the food court and checkout counters to meet the 1-meter guidelines. But new shipments continue to come in as scheduled.

Also, the base theater will be closed through April 3 as part of guidance to avoid large crowds, officials said. Some classes offered through the community center will continue.

By Kim Gamel
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — A South Korean woman who works at Camp Humphreys has tested positive for COVID-19, officials said Friday, the first confirmed case linked to the U.S. military outside the hard-hit area of Daegu.

The announcement raised to seven the number of people affiliated with U.S. Forces Korea who have been infected, including a soldier and his wife.

However, the other six were connected to bases in the southeastern area of Daegu, which is the epicenter of the outbreak that began in mid-February and has led to more than 6,000 infections nationwide.

The latest employee “is currently in isolation at her off-base residence in Cheonan,” an area near Camp Humphreys, as directed by the Korea Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, USFK said in a press release.

Humphreys Garrison commander Col. Michael Tremblay said she took the COVID-19 test on Thursday, and the results came back positive earlier Friday.

“This is the first positive case on Camp Humphreys,” Tremblay said in a Facebook live update for the community.

Officials tracking her movements using closed-circuit TV and electronic records have determined that she visited Starbucks and the post exchange in the main shopping area on post on Feb. 26, Tremblay said.

She also went to an office on Thursday, he added, without identifying the building or her job. She had taken leave in-between those dates.

Tremblay said the people who had come in close contact with her have been self-quarantined, and the areas she visited have been cleaned.

“We believe we have significantly mitigated that risk,” he said.

The garrison, which is home to USFK headquarters and has a population of more than 37,000, also reimposed ID checks at the entrances of its post exchange facilities and the commissary to ensure only authorized buyers can enter.

“This is strictly a precautionary measure and not meant to be an enduring thing,” Tremblay said. “It’s meant as a control measure in response to COVID-19.”

USFK, which commands some 28,500 American troops on the divided peninsula, has restricted access to Camp Humphreys and other installations, barred service members from nonessential outside activities and implemented health checks at entry gates to contain the virus.

USFK’s public affairs office said Friday it has decided to announce total numbers, status of isolation, location and contact tracing going forward.

“My assessment is this is the new ‘normal’ where we have COVID-19 cases weekly if not daily,” Col. Lee Peters USFK spokesman said in an email, adding that it’s a matter of “when and where,” not “if” COVID-19 happens.

U.S. and South Korean health professionals are actively conducting contact tracing to determine whether anyone else may have been exposed, USFK said.

The command has announced six other cases, including a soldier and his wife, the spouse of an active-duty service member, the spouse of a civilian Defense Department employee, the widow of a military retiree and another South Korean employee.

Previous cases were all in the southeastern city of Daegu or surrounding areas, which has been hardest hit by the respiratory virus as South Korea’s overall toll increased to 6,284, with 42 deaths.

Officials have said the previous infections occurred off post, but they were waiting for the contact trace investigation to be completed in the recent case.

USFK said it remains at risk level “high” peninsula-wide and is implementing all appropriate control measures to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Most of the South Korean cases have been in Daegu and surrounding areas.

The pneumonia-like disease has symptoms that are similar to the flu or a common cold and can be spread to be spread through droplets or close contact.

The best way to prevent it is by washing your hands thoroughly and frequently, avoiding contact with sick people and staying home if you are experiencing symptoms, authorities say.

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VIRUS OUTBREAK
Trump approves $8.3B measure to combat virus

By Andrew Taylor
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Friday signed an $8.3 billion measure to help tackle the coronavirus outbreak that has killed more than a dozen people in the U.S. and infected more than 200.

The legislation provides federal public health agencies with money for vaccine development and potential treatments and helps state and local governments prepare and respond to the threat. The rapid spread of the virus has rocked financial markets, interrupted travel and threatens to affect everyday life in the United States.

Trump had planned to sign the bill during a visit to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. But he told reporters Friday that concerns were raised about “one person who was potentially infected” who worked at the CDC. Trump said the person has since tested negative for the new virus, and the CDC was added to his schedule on Friday.

The Senate passed the $8.3 billion measure Thursday to help tackle the outbreak in hopes of reassuring a fearful public and accelerating the government’s response to the virus. Its rapid spread is threatening to upend everyday life in the United States and across the globe.

The money would pay for a multifaceted attack on a virus that is spreading more widely every day, sending financial markets spiraling again Thursday, disrupting travel and potentially threatening the U.S. economy’s decade-long expansion.

Thursday’s sweeping 96-1 vote sends the bill to the White House for President Donald Trump’s signature. Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., cast the sole “no” vote. The House passed the bill Wednesday by a 415-2 vote.

The plan would more than triple the $2.5 billion amount outlined by the White House 10 days ago. The Trump proposal was immediately discarded by members of Congress from both parties. Instead, the bipartisan leadership of the House and Senate Appropriations committees negotiated the increased figure and other provisions of the legislation in a burst of bipartisan cooperation.

“I believe no expense should be spared to protect the American people.”

Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala., appropriations committee chairman

Virus pop-up shop opens in DC

By Asghar Khalil
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The nation’s capital has pop-up shops for food and drink, even marijuana. And now, coronavirus prevention supplies.

At local stores sell out of masks and hand sanitizer, Adilisha Patrom, owner of a co-working and event space next to Gallaudet University, saw an opportunity and jumped on it.

Inside, her storefront, different models of face masks and hand sanitizer bottles in various sizes are displayed along with a stack of information sheets from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

A Florida native who came to Washington to attend Howard University, Patrom, 29, sells her masks for between $5 and $20, depending on the model. She also puts together prevention kits with masks, surgical gloves and sanitizer, which sell for $20 to $30. The high-end N95 masks are priced at about twice what they sell for on Amazon. But Patrom says her goal isn’t to get rich. Rather, she sees the shop as a service to the community and says discounts are available to those in need and to senior citizens, who are most vulnerable to the virus.

“I just feel so blessed to have, just to have the ability,” to stock up on supplies, she said.

The idea started with a health crisis in her own family, Patrom’s father was diagnosed with a blood cancer in November. With her father’s immune system weakened by ongoing chemotherapy treatments, Patrom bought boxes of N95 facemasks, which are considered superior to the basic surgical masks.

Both she and her father wear the masks routinely when going to the grocery store or elsewhere around town.

As the global coronavirus death toll increased and the virus began making inroads in the U.S., Patrom decided to stock up on hand sanitizers and open her shop. So far, business has been slow. Patrom said she has only made three sales since opening early this week. The majority of her visitors, she says, are just seeking basic information and walking away with a CDC fact sheet.

“I think people haven’t started freaking out yet,” she said. “A lot of people are just waiting for that first (local case).”

Army researchers work on vaccines

By Caitlin M. Kenney
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department is ratcheting up its efforts against coronavirus as Army researchers work to develop a vaccine for the illness.

Army medical researchers said Thursday that the U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command and the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research are working on testing and developing two vaccines, or “candidates,” that could be used potentially to combat coronavirus, officially named COVID-19.

The team is working in coordination with the Vaccine Research Center at the National Institutes of Health. The Army has received a sample of the coronavirus from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that was taken from an American patient in Washington state.

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“I think people haven’t started freaking out yet,” she said. “A lot of people are just waiting for that first (local case).”

Army researchers work on vaccines

By Caitlin M. Kenney
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department is ratcheting up its efforts against coronavirus as Army researchers work to develop a vaccine for the illness.

Army medical researchers said Thursday that the U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command and the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research are working on testing and developing two vaccines, or “candidates,” that could be used potentially to combat coronavirus, officially named COVID-19.

The team is working in coordination with the Vaccine Research Center at the National Institutes of Health. The Army has received a sample of the coronavirus from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that was taken from an American patient in Washington state.
BANGKOK — Crossing more borders, the new coronavirus hit a milestone Friday, infecting more than 100,000 people worldwide as it wove itself deeper into the daily lives of millions, infecting the powerful, the unprotected poor and the vast masses in between.

The virus, which has killed nearly 3,400 people, edged into more and more U.S. states, popped up in at least four new countries and even breached the halls of the Vatican. It forced mosques in Iran and beyond to halt weekly Muslim prayers. It brought Israeli and Palestinian authorities together to block pilgrims from Jesus’ birthplace in Bethlehem. And it upended Japan’s plans for the Olympic torch parade.

“Who is going to feed their families?” asked Elias al-Arja, head of a hotel owners’ union in Bethlehem in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where tourists have been banned and the storied Church of the Nativity shuttered.

The 100,000 figure of global infections is largely symbolic but dwarfs other major outbreaks in recent decades. SARS, MERS and Ebola affected far fewer people but had higher mortality rates.

The economic impact grew to hit already-struggling communities for months to come.

The head of the U.N.’s food agency, the World Food Program, warned of the potential for “absolute devastation” as the outbreak’s effects ripple through Africa and the Middle East.

India scrambled to stave off an epidemic that could overwhelm its under-funded and understaffed health care system, with not nearly enough labs or hospitals for its 1.3 billion people.

Yet even as COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus, reached new territory, it was retrofitting in China, where it first emerged late last year, and slowing in South Korea, another major epicenter.

More than half of those who contracted the virus have now recovered, and U.S. health officials said they expect a far lower death rate than the World Health Organization’s international estimate of 3.4% — a high rate that doesn’t account for mild cases that go uncounted.

The fear and the crackdowns that swept through China are now shifting westward, as workers in Europe and the U.S. stay home, authorities vigorously sanitize public places and consumers flock to stores for household staples.

“The Western world is now following some of China’s playbook,” said Chris Beauchamp, a market analyst at the financial firm IG.

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The spectacle of a cruise ship ordered to stay at sea off the California coast over virus fears replicated ones weeks ago on the other side of the globe in which hundreds of people were infected on a ship even during a quarantine. Thailand on Friday blocked a separate cruise ship from docking, worried that it carried dozens of passengers from Italy, the center of Europe’s epidemic, which has 148 virus deaths. No one on that ship was known to be infected.

In the U.S. the number of cases passed 230 people scattered across 18 states. China reported 143 new cases Friday, the same as a day earlier and about one-third what the country was seeing a week ago. Just a month ago, China was reporting several thousand new cases a day. The problem has now flipped, with the outbreak moving to Europe — where Italy, Germany and France had the most cases — and beyond.

South Korea reported 505 additional cases Friday, down from a high of 851 on Tuesday.

The new virus has spread to about 90 countries. The Netherlands reported its first virus death Friday while Serbia, Slovakia, Peru and Cameroon announced their first infections.

Even Vatican City was hit, with the tiny city-state confirming its first case Friday but not saying who was infected. The Vatican has insisted that 83-year-old Pope Francis, who has been sick, only has COVID-19.

The new coronavirus is known to affect the elderly more than other groups.

And in the United States, officials in Washington state are so concerned about having space to care for the sick they were expected to close a $4 million deal to open a new coronavirus ward at a hospital in West Seattle.

In Iran, authorities warned Friday they may use “force” to halt travel between cities and announced the new coronavirus has killed 124 people amid 4,747 confirmed cases in the Islamic Republic.

Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour offered the figures at a televised news conference. He did not elaborate on the threat to use force, though he acknowledged the virus now was in all of Iran’s 31 provinces.

The threat was to restrict travel to stop people from using closed schools and universities as an excuse to go to the Caspian Sea and other Iranian vacation spots. Semi-official news agencies in Iran posted images of long traffic lines as people tried to reach the Caspian coast from Tehran on Friday, despite authorities earlier telling people to remain in their cities.

Iran on Thursday announced it would put checkpoints in place to limit travel between major cities, hoping to stem the spread of the virus.

Iran canceled Friday prayers across its major cities. Elsewhere in the region, Iraq canceled Friday prayers in Karbala, where a weekly sermon is delivered on behalf of the country’s top Shiite cleric. Authorities in the United Arab Emirates meanwhile limited prayers to two verses of the Quran so they lasted no longer than 10 minutes, over concerns about the virus.

More than 4,990 cases of the virus, which causes the illness COVID-19, have been confirmed across the Middle East. Iran and Italy are the world’s highest death tolls aside of China.

In Tehran, firefighters sprayed disinfectant on an 11-mile length of Tehran’s famous Valiasr Ave- nue, some from firetrucks and others walking along its sidewalks, spraying ATMs and storefronts.

“It would be great if they did it every day,” grocery store owner Reza Razaeinejad said after the firefighters sprayed outside his shop. “It should not be just a one-time thing and should be done frequently, especially in places like here where movement and traffic happens a lot.”
Sanders struggles to expand base as Warren exits race

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — It took Joe Biden's moderate rivals just hours to unite behind his presidential campaign after former rival Pete Buttigieg dropped out. But Bernie Sanders hasn't been so fortunate.

Elizabeth Warren, one of Sanders' closest ideological allies, declined to endorse anyone after suspending her campaign on Thursday. She didn't rule out an endorsement of her New England neighbor but said she wanted to "take a deep breath and spend a little time on that."

High-profile Warren supporters across the country, particularly women, were also hesitant to race into Sanders' camp. And on Capitol Hill, where Biden was racking up new endorsements daily, the Vermont senator hasn't earned a single new endorsement, even among the most progressive elected officials, in two weeks.

The dangerous silence from Warren and progressive officials across the country comes at the worst time for Sanders, who's suddenly losing momentum in a two-man race with the former vice president as another set of high-stakes primary elections looms.

Within the campaign, some lament Sanders' unwillingness to court elected officials as Biden's coalition grows exponentially. The former vice president earned endorsements this week from three former rivals just hours after they suspended their campaigns: Pete Buttigieg, Amy Klobuchar and Mike Bloomberg.

Another former competitor, former Texas Rep. Beto O'Rourke, also endorsed Biden on the eve of Texas' primary, which Biden narrowly won.

Biden's team has already announced plans to dispatch Klobuchar, a Midwestern moderate, to Michigan ahead of the state's critical primary election on Tuesday.

Many would-be Sanders supporters, meanwhile, are taking a wait-and-see approach. Adam Green, the co-founder of the Progressive Change Campaign Change Committee, said the organization would ultimately endorse whoever Warren does.

"We are among her many supporters who are rooting for her to exert every ounce of leverage she has in this moment of goodwill in order to advance the big ideas and the people she cares so much about," Green said Thursday.

He said Warren, a former Harvard law professor and expert on the legalities of contracts, would approach the decision carefully and that process "might be time-intensive or it might not be."

The National Organization for Women, whose political action committee endorsed Warren earlier in the week, encouraged War ren to take her time.

Trump defends rhetoric at town hall

Associated Press

SCRANTON, Pa. — President Donald Trump defended the administration's response to the coronavirus and his confrontational style of name-calling political opponents as he fielded questions Thursday from select members of the public in his first TV town hall of the 2020 election cycle.

Trump, who regularly calls his top Democratic presidential opponents "Sleepy Joe" and "Crazy Bernie," was asked whether he could deliver his message without the controversial rhetoric. "When they hit us, we have to hit back. I really feel that," Trump said in response to the first of two questions about civility. "You can't turn your cheek."

Fox News, the president's favorite network, hosted the live event in Scranton, Pa., a rare instance where the president answered questions from the public.

The first question, from an undecided voter, was about the administration's response to the virus. The number of the cases in the U.S. stood at about 200 on Thursday, including 12 deaths — 11 in Washington state and one in California.

"Everybody has to be calm. It's all going to work out," Trump said, sounding defensive at times as a pair of Fox News journalists pressed him on the issue. "We hope it doesn't last too long."

It was Trump's first 2020 visit to Pennsylvania, a battleground state he won by about 44,000 votes in 2016. He did particularly well in northeastern Pennsylvania, where Scranton and Wilkes-Barre have long anchored a strong Democratic presence.

The state is home turf to former Vice President Joe Biden, who spent his first 10 years in Scranton before his family moved to Wilmington, Delaware. An electric billboard proclaimed "Scranton is Joe Biden country."

Biden's prospects of winning the Democratic presidential nomination surged in the past week after he won South Carolina and then 10 of 14 states on Super Tuesday. Asked about the Democratic race, the Republican Trump said several times that he was "mentally prepared to take on Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders.

"I was ready ... and now I have a whole different deal," Trump said at the event, which was scheduled before Biden's resurgence. Trump chose Scranton as the setting.

He blamed Elizabeth Warren, who dropped out of the Democratic race Thursday, for hurting Sanders' chances by not folding her campaign sooner.

Tickets to the town hall were distributed through the Eventbrite website and Fox confirmed questions were selected from people who submitted them via the website. The audience seemed overwhelmingly supportive of Trump, greeting the president with thunderous applause and "USA, USA" chants.

One female questioner told Trump it was "truly an honor" to have him in Scranton. "Just don't tell my husband," she said.

US added robust 273K jobs in February

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Hiring in the United States jumped in February as employers added a robust 273,000 jobs, evidence that the economy was in strong shape before the coronavirus began to sweep through the nation.

The Labor Department said Friday that the unemployment rate fell to 3.5% last month, matching a 50-year low, down from 3.6% in January.

The monthly job gain comes from a survey of payrolls in the second week of February, predating the viral outbreak. So far, there are few signs that the job market has been affected by the disease, but most economists expect hiring to slow in the coming months.

Wage growth slowed slightly in February, rising 3% compared with a year earlier, down from a 3.1% year-over-year average gain in January. Paychecks have grown at a 3% pace or higher for more than a year and a half and have slowed since reaching 3.5% last summer.

If employers were to start slashing jobs as a consequence of the virus, it could significantly escalate the economic damage. For that reason, a range of job market barometers will provide some of the most vital signals about how the economy is withstanding the virus' impact.

Widespread layoffs can transform slowdowns in just one or two sectors — the travel industry, say, or manufacturing — into a full-blown downturn for the overall economy. When workers lose jobs and pay, they typically cut spending. Their friends and relatives who are still employed grow anxious about their own jobs and wary of spending freely, a cycle that can trigger further job cuts.

So long as monthly job gains remain above 100,000 or so, the unemployment rate should stay low and the economy may be able to avoid a downturn. If the monthly pace were to sink below that level for a sustained period, joblessness would likely rise.
States scramble to prepare for food stamps rule change

By Sophia Tareen
Associated Press

CHICAGO — Having food stamps offers Richard Butler a stability he’s rarely known in his 25 years. He was in state custody at age 2, spent his teen years at a Chicago boys’ home and jail for burglary, and has since struggled to find a permanent home.

“Starving people does not help the world to me,” said Butler, who shares a one-bedroom apartment with two others. “We can go without a lot of things, like phones and music. We can’t go without eating.”

But that stability is being threatened for people like Butler, who are able-bodied, without dependents and between the ages 18 and 49. New Trump administration rules taking effect April 1 put hundreds of thousands of people in his situation at risk of losing their benefits. They hit particularly hard in places like Illinois, which also has been dealing with a separate, similar change in the nation’s third-largest city.

From Hawaii to Pennsylvania, states are scrambling to blunt the impact, with roughly 700,000 people at risk of losing benefits unless they meet certain work, training or school requirements. They’ve filed a multi-state lawsuit, expanded publicly funded job training, developed pilot programs and doubled down efforts to reach vulnerable communities, including the homeless, rural residents and people of color.

Social services providers say they won’t be able to fill the gap, making increased homelessness and more hospital visits among the likely consequences, especially as they’ve already seen troubling signs in some states.

“This is a devastating effect,” said Robert Campbell, managing director at Feeding America, which runs hundreds of food banks nationwide. “It will increase demands on the emergency food system, food banks and food pantries.”

Currently, work-eligible, able-bodied adults without dependents under 50 can receive monthly benefits if they meet a 20-hour weekly job, training or school requirement. Those who don’t are limited to three months of food stamps over three years.

However, states with high unemployment or few jobs have been able to waive time limits. Every state except Delaware has sought a waiver at some point, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

The new rules make it harder to get waivers. They’re the first of three changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, which feeds 36 million people nationwide.

The Trump administration has touted the change as a way to get people working and save $5.5 billion over five years. Able-bodied adults without dependents are 7% of SNAP recipients.

But states fighting the change say that argument is misguided.

“Not everyone is in a position to get a job tomorrow, and taking away access to food is only going to make that more difficult.”

Teresa Miller
Pennsylvania Department of Human Services secretary

Some states are focusing on rural areas, which have less access to transportation and services.

Hawaii, for instance, wants to develop a pilot program to help 400 Molokai residents keep benefits. The rural island once had a waiver in place because of unemployment, but the new rules assign Molokai to the same job market as nearby, more prosperous Maui, even though a 30-minute plane ride is the only way to travel between the islands.

The program would use education, training and volunteering to fulfill the work requirement. It’s modeled after similar programs used in remote Alaska, which is seeking waivers for less-populated areas. Roughly 5,000 in Alaska could lose benefits.

Attorneys general in nearly 20 states and Washington, D.C., have sued to block the changes. They argue the changes will force people to divert their limited funds, leading to homelessness and health problems.

People with food insecurity spend 45% more on medical care annually than those who are food secure, according to a 2018 report by the nonprofit Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Experts say critics’ worries are founded and point to Kentucky as a case study.

Like a handful of states, Kentucky has voluntarily instated time limits for SNAP benefits since 2017. More than 13,000 people in Kentucky lost benefits because they reached the three-month limit, according to a 2019 U.S. Department of Agriculture report.

Anecdotally, there’s been an increase in food pantry visits.

In Fayette County, which lost its waiver in 2015, the number of monthly household visits to food pantries jumped from 1,800 in 2015 to 5,700 in 2019, according to Meals on Wheels of Fayette County and the Kentucky Association of Food Banks.

“Staffing problems don’t help them get employment,” said Mary Frances Charlton, a Chicago Coalition for the Homeless attorney. ""
Russia-Turkey truce in Syria halts bombing

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Idlib’s skies were completely free of Russian and Syrian government warplanes for the first time in five years, residents reported a relative but tense calm as a cease-fire deal brokered by Moscow and Ankara took hold in Syria’s northwestern province. The truce halted a terrifying campaign of bombing by new government troops that killed hundreds and sent a million people fleeing toward the Turkish border and beyond, as the Syrian-backed assault by Syrian government forces on the country’s last rebel stronghold.

The agreement, announced Thursday after a six-hour meeting between the Turkish and Russian presidents in Moscow, temporarily froze the conflict lines. The deal does not force Syrian President Bashar Assad’s forces to roll back military gains made in the past three months, which had been a key Turkish demand. That effectively rules out the possibility of hundreds of thousands of displaced people returning to their homes.

The deal also lacked specifics of a known mechanism to enforce the truce. It is the latest of many cease-fire agreements for Idlib over the past few years. All have ended up unraveling after a few months as government forces and new rebel groups intensified fighting.

The Observatory later reported a clash between Syrian troops and Taliban fighters in the Jabal al-Zawiya region in Idlib. The Observatory said 15 combatants were killed, six from the government side and nine from the Turkistan Islamic Party, which is largely made up of Chinese jihadis.

The Russia-Turkey agreement appears to achieve Moscow’s key goal of allowing the Syrian government to keep control of the south-north highway known as the M5. Syrian forces captured the highway’s last segment in the latest offensive.

Judges also said it would set up a security corridor along the M4, a key east-west highway in Idlib. According to the cease-fire deal, published in Syrian pro-government media, Russian and Turkish forces are supposed to begin joint patrols on the M4 on March 15.

The reopening of the M4, which has been closed by insurgents since 2012, will be a test for the new Turkey-Syria deal. Under a Russia-Syria agreement reached in the summer of 2018, the two highways were supposed to be opened before the end of that year. But rejection of the deal by the U.S.-backed, al-Qaida-linked National Liberation Front in Idlib kept the two vital roads closed.

Erdogan said there would be “no question of change” regarding Turkey’s 12 observation posts inside Idlib. The posts are manned by Turkish troops and are in place as part of a 2018 agreement with Russia.

EU criticizes Turkey on exploiting migrants as border clashes return

Associated Press

KASTANIES, Greece — Clashes between Greek riot police and migrants attempting to cross the border from Turkey erupted anew Friday as European Union foreign ministers took aim at what they called “Turkey’s use of migratory pressure for political purposes.”

Greek riot police used tear gas and a water cannon to drive back people trying to cross the land border from Turkey in the morning. Turkish police fired volleys of tear gas back toward Greece in an ongoing standoff between Ankara and the EU over who should care for migrants and refugees.

Later in the day, clashes erupted in the area and people camped out near the border appeared to be moving further away from the frontier, possibly to a makeshift camp set up nearby.

Thousands of refugees and other migrants have been trying to get into Greece through the country’s eastern land and sea borders in the past weeks after Turkey declared its previously guarded borders with Europe were open.

Following through after months of threats, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said last week his country, which already houses more than 3.5 million Syrian refugees, would no longer be Europe’s gatekeeper.

He has demanded European shoulder more of the burden of caring for refugees. But the EU insists it is abide by a 2016 deal in which it disbursed billions of euros in refugee aide in return for Turkey keeping refugees on its soil.

Erdogan’s decision has alarmed EU countries, which are still seeing political fallout from mass migration five years ago.

EU foreign ministers met in Zagreb, Croatia on Friday to discuss the Greece-Turkey border situation and events in Syria, where Turkish troops are fighting to expand their military foothold in the country’s eastern land and sea borders in the past weeks after Turkey declared its previously guarded borders with Europe were open.

In a joint statement after the emergency meeting, the ministers expressed “full solidarity with Greece, which faces an unprecedented situation, as well as with Bulgaria, Cyprus and other Member States, which might be similarly affected.”

They said the EU was “determined” to protect its external borders and that “illegal crossings will not be tolerated.”

Judge says Dubai ruler threatened wife

Associated Press

LONDON — The rul by Dubai conducte a campaign of fear and intimidation against his estranged wife and ordered the abduction of two of his daughters, a British judge ruled in documents that were unsealed Thursday.

A judge at the High Court in London found that Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, 70, “acted in a manner from the end of 2018 which has been aimed at intimidating and frightening” his ex-wife Princess Haya, 45.

Judge Andrew McFarlane also said the sheikh “ordred and orchestrated” the abductions and forced return to Dubai of two of his adult daughters from another marriage: Sheikh Shamsa in August 2000, and Sheikh Amal in 2018.

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The judge made rulings in December and January after a battle between the estranged spouses over the welfare of their two children, but the sheikh fought to prevent them from being made public. The U.K. Supreme Court quashed that attempt on Thursday.

Princess Haya, daughter of the late King Hussein of Jordan, married the Dubai ruler in 2004, becoming his second of four official wives. The couple has a daughter, Jouda, 12, and 8-year-old son Zayed, the youngest of the ruler’s 25 children.

In April 2019, Princess Haya fled the Gulf emirate with her children, saying she had become terrified of her husband’s threats and intimidation.

The threat continued after the princess moved to London, and the judge said, adding that the sheikh had used the apparatus of the state “to threaten, intimidate, mistreat and oppress with a total disregard for the rule of law.”

In May 2019, Sheikh Mohammed launched legal action, seeking the children’s return to Dubai, while Princess Haya asked for them to be made wards of the British court and stay in the U.K.

The sheikh later dropped his bid to take the children back to Dubai and fought unsuccessfully to prevent the court from issuing a fact-finding judgment on his wife’s allegations.

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The great thing about the Resident Evil 3 remake is that it gives Capcom a chance to improve on an already great vision. With the current hardware, developers are no longer constrained by technological limitations. They can put dozens of zombies on screen and improve their artificial intelligence to make them smarter. They can craft detailed environments that bring harrowing situations to life. The hardware can handle it all.

With the Resident Evil 3 remake, Capcom updates a classic that was ahead of its time. It carries over concepts of the original, following Jill Valentine as she tries to escape Raccoon City. At the time, that was a departure for the series. The previous games tended to be claustrophobic as players explored mansions, police stations and subterranean bases.

**Detailed environment**

Resident Evil 3 was different because it put Jill in an urban environment. She wandered alleys, catwalks and city streets. It’s wide open with more dangers on the screen as the undead pounded on fences and lurked around corners. It’s an environment that begs to be explored, but that also meant I was technically dead-end alley, turn around to backtrack and find that zombies have followed Jill, essentially trapping her. The game is full of these dangers, but it also gives players opportunities to fight back. Apparently in the rush to evacuate the doomed metropolis, authorities left barrels of gasoline and malfunctioning generators.

**Expert players will conserve their ammo by using these environmental hazards to eliminate several zombies at once rather than pumping bullets into them one at a time. Players can shoot the barrels to ignite explosions killing surrounding undead. Meanwhile, firing at generators can disperse electricity to stun them. At that moment, Jill can knife them to death, but that takes time.**

For players who want to save every bullet, they can also just avoid the undead altogether. It’s a viable solution in Resident Evil 3, and sometimes encouraged. It’s often better to lure zombies to one side of a rooftop in order to run past them on the other end. When being chased, players shouldn’t confront any undead and just use the dodge button to dip away from them. Although the visuals and zombies look better, players can expect the same sort of puzzles as the previous entries. They’ll find random jellies in boxes and journal clues that help them open a safe or find a pivotal item. The problems aren’t difficult per se, but they’re easier if players pay attention to their environment.

**A nemesis called Nemesis**

Players have to deal with Nemesis. It’s essentially Mr. X from Resident Evil 2 on steroids. The tyrant variant follows Jill around Raccoon City and has more maneuverability and intelligence than the previous monster. In the demo I played, I found some protected zones in safe rooms, but that also meant I was technically trapped as it loomed behind the door. One way to deal with Nemesis is to toss a grenade. It stuns him, and he also drops a supply box with goodies inside. Another way is to run with an obstacle between Nemesis and Jill. They just need to make sure that he can’t corner quickly while rushing toward players.

Further on, players will encounter tougher monsters than zombies in the sewers, and they’ll have to use the environment more to their advantage. I found that using corners helps when fighting these bigger creatures called Hunter Gammas. They’re also more deadly than the normal zombies because they can devour players in one bite.

The demo climaxed with a boss battle against Nemesis atop a building. This is where the tyrant variant shows its combat prowess. It uses a flamethrower against Jill and can climb using its tentacles. Players have to keep their distance and find its weak point to survive.

**Intriguing multiplayer**

The other major feature of Resident Evil 3 is an asymmetrical multiplayer mode called Resistance. It pits four players against one mastermind. The goal is for the four survivors to escape, or for the Umbrella exec at the helm to kill them all. The concept is comparable to Left 4 Dead except instead of the director throwing out enemies, a human controls that aspect of gameplay. The mastermind acts almost like a dungeon master, setting up challenges against the group. The player can lay down traps and place zombies and other creatures throughout the path. The mastermind role has limitations. They have a deck of options with cards that cost a certain number of points. Those points regenerate over time. On top of that, the mastermind can only place the enemies and traps using surveillance cameras found in key spots in each room.

There’s plenty of strategy as the antagonist has to figure out where to place the obstacles and how many of them to produce. They’ll need to look at the map and figure out where the survivors are headed. It’s smart to put zombies and traps on the way to objectives such as keys or canisters.

Each mastermind has his or her speciality. Daniel Fabron and Annette Birkin rely on creatures and buffs while Alex Wesker is an expert with traps and infection. Ozwell Spencer uses Umbrella tech to stall players. The survivors have to escape within a certain time allotment, and that time can be extended by killing zombies or finishing tasks. If they die, they lose time in their bid to escape.

The ace up the masterminds’ sleeves are the monsters they control. Annette deploys her husband, a G-virus-infected William Birkin, while Daniel has control of Mr. X. Alex can drop Yateveo, a bioweapon plant that sits in one place. Spencer has a force field that blocks a path. Players have to be mindful of how they use these creatures because they cost a lot to summon onto the battlefield.

On the survivors’ end, each has a special ability that counteracts some creature or obstacle. Valerie is the healer who can also mark ammo and other items in a room. January can jam the cameras and raise the costs of drooping zombies and traps for the mastermind. Tyrone is the tank and can deal pain to armored zombies with melee attacks. Samuel has a similar ability, but he’s geared toward damage. Martin can disarm traps while Becca deals damage with firearms. To succeed, players need a good mix of characters who cover everyone’s weaknesses.

Resistance mode can feel like a game of cat and mouse. Survivors blindly look for the three keys needed in the first phase. The second phase requires them to find a zombie a security card, and they need to use that guard at three ATM-looking machines to open a door to the third phase. The final section has the survivors looking for red canisters that they must destroy. If they can knock out three of them, they can escape and win.

Teamwork is mandatory. The mastermind can lock players in a room and turn off the lights, making navigation and fighting difficult. Survivors need to use their talents harmoniously to get out alive, but keep in mind, it’s possible that not everyone will escape. Some players could fall during the last stage of the battle and not make it out alive.

Built into Resistance is a progression system. The more players use a certain mastermind or survivor, the higher their level goes.

It’s better than some of Capcom’s other Resident Evil multiplayer games. It feels like it could have been a full-fledged game on its own, but being packaged with the Resident Evil 3 remake makes the project an even better value for fans.

**The Resident Evil 3 remake comes out April 3 on PlayStation 4, Xbox One and PC.**

**Online:** residentevil.com/re3/us
Thirsting for a better solution

Experts warn that ‘dry fasting,’ or abstaining from water, is a terrible idea

By Jessica Roy
Los Angeles Times

A new fad diet making the rounds on wellness influencer Instagram won't actually help you lose weight. And it could cause dehydration, urinary tract infections, kidney stones, organ failure — even death.

It’s called “dry fasting.” It goes beyond what most of us would consider fasting — abstaining from solid food or liquid calories — and requires consuming no water or liquids of any kind for many hours or even days at a time.

In practice, what dry fasting will do is make you look a bit more toned, because your body is using up the water in your cells for energy.

Even more dubious claims suggest that dry fasting forces your body to burn toxins, or fat, or inflammation, or tumors. It does not. When you stop feeding your body calories, it breaks down muscle and fat. The toxic byproducts of that breakdown process build up in your kidneys, making your kidneys go without water to letting your car’s engine run out of oil. “You can basically burn out some parts of the car that you’re going to have to replace,” she said.

“Don’t want those replacement parts to include your vital organs.”

Another unintended consequence of dry fasting: It sets your body in conservation mode. “Your body likes homeostasis,” said Yi, the physician. “If you’re going to cut back on water, your body will produce hormones and chemicals to hold onto any water.”

So while you might gain a very short-term benefit by looking a tiny bit more toned while you’re severely dehydrated (bodybuilders have been known to dry fast before competitions for that reason), once you consume liquid again, your body rebounds and desperately hangs on to even more water than before. It’s like yo-yo dieting in fast motion.

Dry fasting is not the same thing as intermittent fasting, which has become a popular fad diet in recent years. There are different variations of intermittent fasting, but most people start with 16 hours of fasting followed by eight hours of eating. Martin Berkhan created the “LeanGains” 16:8 intermittent fasting guide and is widely credited with popularizing the diet. On his website, leangains.com, Berkhan writes that during the 16-hour fasting window, coffee, calorie-free sweeteners, diet soda, sugar-free gum and up to a teaspoon of milk in a cup of coffee won’t break the fast.

The subreddit for fasting, r/fasting, has an “Introduction to Intermittent Fasting” guide that contains the following tips for surviving the fasting portion of your day:

- Drink lots of cold water
- Always carry water, a canteen, a bottle, or keep a full glass within sight
- Water, water, water, water

Valter Longo has studied starvation, fasting and calorie restriction in humans for nearly 30 years. He’s currently the director of the Longevity Institute at USC and a professor of gerontology. Fasting-type diets have grown in popularity in recent years for a simple reason, he said: “Because they work.”

But he said he’s not aware of any reputable studies about the effects of dry fasting, and said he wouldn’t even consider putting one together, also for a simple reason: It’s incredibly dangerous.

“For sure, the body needs to reset, but there are safe ways of doing that, and dry fasting is not one of them,” Longo said. “We require water.”

His work has involved looking at how cultures and religions have engaged with starvation and fasting throughout history, and says he hasn’t heard of any that involved extended fasting without water.

The closest is Ramadan, during which observers go without food or water during daylight hours — but at most, that lasts for 16 hours, and it’s preceded and followed by extensive hydration.

If someone tries dry fasting for a full day, Longo said, they risk side effects like developing kidney stones. Longer than that, and you start risking your life.

Some proponents of “dry fasting” eschew water but recommend hydrating with fresh fruits and vegetables. Hydrating with fruit is certainly better than not hydrating at all. An orange has about a half-cup of water in it; to get to the recommended 68 ounces of water a day, you’d have to eat around 17 oranges. That’s a lot of peeling.
Online dating moving beyond the app screen

BY LOUISE DIXON  
Associated Press

While taboos surrounding online dating are long gone, some of today’s app users are sick of the endless swiping and virtual pen-palling that leads nowhere when it comes to long-term relationships, according to industry leaders who are responding with new ways to get users off their phones and out meeting people in the real world.

David Vermeulen is one such leader. His Inner Circle, launched in 2012, is more closely curating the experience toward the end of the decade as some people have become “Tinder tired.”

He’s hosting offline events in cities around the globe to help make that happen among his 2 million members. His app also plans to add an automated response to anyone who just messages “Hi” as an incentive to start a conversation. You have to do better,” Vermeulen said.

It’s not just the newer generation of apps that are adapting to changing dating appetites. OkCupid is one of the original dating sites, started by two Harvard math graduates in 2004. Beginning life as a desktop website, it developed into an app with the advent of smartphones. Today, OkCupid boasts that it sets up 50,000 dates per week.

The site enforces certain restrictions to try and weed out those not interested in getting to that date. The company insists that users post more about themselves, and they will recycle responsibly.

The company makes a variety of other charging devices, smartphone cases and cables, all with the environment in mind. This includes 100% recycled scrap paper in their shipping boxes. Online: gonimble.com; $59.99

The Eufy Security Wi-Fi Video Doorbell has a simple installation to your existing doorbell’s wiring and is packed with great home security features. At 4.8-by-1.7-by-0.9 inches, the Eufy security camera doorbell ($159.99) is similar in size to other video doorbells but includes 4GB of built-in storage. This allows up to 30 days of video with a standard of 30 videos a day of 30 seconds each, to be stored and accessed from the companion app.

There’s no monthly fees or cloud subscription, and your data is stored on an encrypted server. According to Eufy, the military-grade AES-256 chip ensures data is encrypted on transmission and storage.

We’re gonna say: OK, this is not the best start for a conversation. You have to do better,” Vermeulen said.

The Eufy Security Wi-Fi Video Doorbell is similar in size to other video doorbells, and includes 4GB of built-in storage.

The video doorbell comes with a pair of mounting plates and connects to your existing Wi-Fi with a 2.4GHz wireless router. It functions as a standard doorbell with a push ring and sends the ringing alert to the included WiFi-connected chime in addition to sending a smartphone notification letting you instantly know and see who is at the door. Each doorbell can be connected to up to four chimes.

When someone is at the door, you’ll see them through the Eufy Security app on your smartphone and respond live with two-way audio or send a pre-recorded response you previously set up back to your subject at the door. Up to three instant responses can be stored and sent upon your command.

Videos stored actually give you an additional three seconds of footage before the initial alert sets off the recording. This can often give insight into who’s approaching or other aspects of the situation.

The 160-degree angle of view camera has HDR imaging, which allows it to adjust for low light or backlit situations. The image is captured in a 4:3 aspect ratio for a much bigger image compared to others offering a 16:9 ratio and a resolution of 2560 x 1920.

During setup, you can customize the activity zone, which tells the camera where to detect motion. The camera has technology to detect human faces and body shapes so you don’t get an alert when neighborhood pets are running by.

The Eufy Security Wi-Fi Video Doorbell also connects to Alexa and Google Voice Assistant so you can check live views with a voice command.

As mentioned, installation is easy, but you are dealing with live wires for power from your existing doorbell, so use caution.

A battery-powered model with many of the same features is also available ($199.99). Online: eufylife.com

The Nimble wireless stand has a portable battery with a kickstand for vertical charging.

BY GREGG ELLMAN  
Tribune News Service

Charging is just a way of life — we all love it when we have a fully charged device. Nimble charging devices are among the best, providing customers with high-quality products with portable power and great looks.

Nimble is an eco-friendly personal tech brand, making its products from natural renewable sources like plant-based plastics and constructing sharp-looking soft non-slip grip exteriors made from recycled water bottles and organic hemp.

I tried the wireless chargers, which are made in several versions. The Nimble wireless stand is simple; a kickstand charges the battery vertically, and you can keep the kickstand folded for flat charging.

The portable (5-by-3.03-by-0.65-inch) battery delivers 10W of power for Samsung and Androids and up to 7.5W of power to the Apple iPhone 8 or newer. There’s also an extra USB-A port to plug in another device needing a boost of power. A charging cable for the battery and a USB AC plug is included.

A nice Nimble feature: When you purchase a product from them, they send you a prepaid return envelope so you can send them any outdated electronics, and they will recycle responsibly.

The company makes a variety of other charging devices, smartphone cases and cables, all with the environment in mind. This includes 100% recycled scrap paper in their shipping boxes. Online: gonimble.com; $59.99
Woman goes to jail for 100th birthday

**NC** — For her 100th birthday, Ruth Bryant crossed a significant item off her bucket list. She went to jail.

The Person County Sheriff’s Office helped fulfill Bryant’s unusual wish when two deputies showed up at her assisted living facility to serve her a warrant charging her with indecent exposure, news outlets reported.

The two deputies handcuffed Bryant to her walker and placed her in a patrol car, giving her the full experience with lights and sirens flashing and blaring. Before she got in, the deputies warned her not to put up a fight, and she playfully kicked at them, WRAL reported.

Once in the jail, Bryant was treated like, well, a criminal. She had a mugshot taken, spent a few minutes in a jail cell, and left with “PERSON COUNTY JAIL” on it. A file in it.

Town elects therapy dog as its pet mayor

**VT** — Fair Haven, Vermont chose its most recent pet mayor Wednesday.

Murfee won the race in Fair Haven, WCAV-TV reported. The therapy dog beat out the incubent goat, Mayor Mara Lincoln, and K-9 Sammy, a town police dog.

Eight eighth-graders count 350 ballots Wednesday morning to determine the winner.

The pet mayor race aims to raise money for a new playground and get children interested in politics.

Murfee visits nursing homes, schools and hospitals as part of Caring Canines Therapy Dogs of Southern Vermont.

Livestream will feature peregrine falcon nest

**VA** — For the fourth year in a row, nature lovers will be able to watch a livestream of a peregrine falcon nest in downtown Richmond.

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has set up a live video feed of the nest on the 21st floor of the Riverfront Plaza building. The feed is available for viewing online.

The department said in a news release that wildlife officials have confirmed that last year’s new male — identifiable by his bands — is back again with an unband ed female. The falcon cam will remain live until July.

**FL** — A black bear attacked a man and scratched him on the chest outside his Florida Panhan dle home, officials said.

The man was not seriously injured in his brush with the bear.

**AMERICAN ROUNDUP**

**Woman goes to jail for 100th birthday**

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Black bear scratches man outside of his home

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The man was not seriously in jured in his brush with the bear.

**Arts in the Capitol**

Susan Patton uses a cellphone photograph of “Bluesman” McKinney Williams as her in hand model while putting the finishing touches to her oil painting as Williams plays in the rotunda of the Capitol in Jackson, Miss., on Thursday. The Mississippi Arts Commission’s annual Arts Day at the Capitol brought a variety of performance, musical, visual artists and supporting organizations to mingle with lawmakers and stress the importance of the arts as both entertainment and educational.

**10-year-old boy fires shotgun during standoff**

**CA** — A 10-year-old boy is in custody after he fired shotgun rounds at police in San Diego during a two-hour standoff Thursday morning, according to The San Diego Union-Tribune. There were no immediate reports of injuries.

The boy turned himself in after he’d hol ed up behind a shed at his home, San Diego Police Lt. Shawn Takeuchi told reporters.

His parents had called police shortly after 9 a.m. because he was having an emotional and mental crisis, authorities said. Crisis negotiators and SWAT officers responded to the home.

**Man arrested in cockfighting probe**

**VA** — Authorities have arrested a northern Virginia man and seized more than 60 chickens as part of an investigation into an alleged cockfighting operation.

Prince William County Police announced Wednesday that Arwin Pingol, 35, of Manassas has been charged with 38 felony counts of animal fighting. Police said they carried out a search warrant after receiving a tip and found 63 chickens and two dogs at Pingol’s home on Ellis worth Road.

From wire reports
No, Warren’s loss isn’t about sexism

BY JOSH GREENEAN

New York Daily News

“Don’t tell me this isn’t about sexism,” is what at least one feminist writer is saying about Elizabeth Warren’s failure to win the Democratic nomination. That’s not the case. Warren’s loss was about more than just sexism. She lost because she was unable to appeal to the broader base of voters that she was trying to reach.

Warren’s campaign was built around a strong, unwavering commitment to fighting for the middle class. She proposed policies that would make college more affordable, protect Medicare for All, and provide universal health care. These are all things that are very important to American voters, but they are not the only factors that determine whether a candidate can win.

Warren also faced criticism for her handling of the Russia investigation and her support for former President Barack Obama. These issues hurt her in the primary, particularly among African American voters who are important to the Democratic Party.

But the biggest factor in Warren’s loss was her inability to connect with voters. She was never able to break through to the American people and show them why she was the best choice for the presidency. This is a common problem for candidates who run on a platform of change and progress.

In the end, Warren’s loss was about more than just sexism. It was about the American people’s desire for leaders who can connect with them and show them the way forward.

Robin Greenean is the New York Daily News editorial page editor.
### Eugene Sheffer Crossword

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Across</th>
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**Clues:**
- Across:
  1. Stashed (15)
  4. Animation frames (16)
  8. Capital of Azerbaijan (13)
  12. Scratch (out) (9)
  13. Power co. supply (12)
  14. Hertz rival (5)
  15. Gym unit (7)
  16. Beloved (8)
  18. 1995 superhero film starring Val Kilmer (10)
  21. Historic time (7)
  22. Texas tea (8)
  23. Reuben cheese (8)
  26. Silly Putty container (9)
  27. UFO pilots (6)
  30. Wife of Zeus (5)
  31. Quillers’ get-together (9)
  32. Bullets (10)
  33. “Of course” (12)
  35. Replace a dancer (14)
  36. Erie Canal mule (11)
  37. Cistern (7)
  38. Actor who played Two-Face in 18-Across (7)
  45. Fencing sword (7)
  46. Novelist Victor (10)
  47. Yellowstone grazer (5)
  48. Comic Carvey (8)
  50. Slugger’s stat (10)

**Down:**
- 1. Basil or thyme (9)
- 2. Furniture brand (9)
- 3. Univ. division (7)
- 4. Coniferous trees (11)
- 5. Kagan of the Supreme Court (8)
- 6. Canadian flag emblem (6)
- 7. Dickens miser (9)
- 8. Biblical tower (8)
- 9. Tel — (9)
- 10. Flying toy (7)
- 11. Cold War initials (6)
- 18. Butte’s kin (8)
- 20. Fix illegally (8)
- 23. Bashful (6)
- 24. Teeny (6)
- 25. Apr. addressee (8)

**Answer to Previous Puzzle:***

- ZAP WAS BONDS
- USO OVA RATIO
- BTW WALKATHON
- IRE S LANT
- NORM OBE ASTC
- OWN WALKUP
- IBANI BAITS
- WALKIN RUM
- OPTS DOWE OGRE
- GORGE LAD
- WALK ON AIR OBI
- EXAMS PMS ABC
- SLOSH SEE MIT

**Cryptoquip:**

MR JNT’QB AEMK TG MW E

PZEWKMWEIMEW CNPGMSEA.

JNT OMHCS QBZBMIB ZEQB

RQNO E QBHMPSBQBK WNQP B.

Yesterday’s Cryptoquip: WHEN A LADY WHO’S A MOTHER WANTS ENTRY INTO A NIGHTCLUB, WHAT MIGHT A BOUNCER DO? CARD A MOM.

Today’s Cryptoquip Clue: W equals N
**Thursday's men's scores**

**EAST**
- Ian Poulter 36-33—69 -3
- Graeme McDowell 35-33—68 -4
- C. Bezuidenhout 35-33—68 -4
- Sam Burns 31-37—68 -4

**FAR WEST**
- Si Woo Kim 34-38—72 E
- Brooks Koepka 37-35—72 E
- Max Homa 36-36—72 E
- Billy Horschel 38-34—72 E

**MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL**

**Boston Red Sox** — Signed M. Russell Callis to a two-year contract.
**D. C. United** — Reassigned RHP Tanner McHugh to a one year contract.
**San Diego Padres** — Reassigned RHP Hector Velazquez for assignment.
**Washington Nationals** — Optioned RHP Tanner Schley to the minors.

**Women's conference tournaments**

**American East Conference**
- First Round, March 9
- 1st seed vs. 4th seed
- 2nd seed vs. 3rd seed
- 1st seed vs. 2nd seed

**Atlantic Coast Conference**
- First Round, March 9
- Florida State vs. Virginia
- Wake Forest vs. Virginia Tech
- NC State vs. Virginia Tech
- Duke vs. Boston College

**Atlantic 10 Conference**
- First Round, March 9
- Lipscomb at Florida Gulf Coast
- Kennesaw State at Liberty
- Norfolk State at Georgia State
- Duquesne at St. Bonaventure

**Atlantic 11 Conference**
- First Round, March 9
- Marquette vs. Villanova-Xavier winner
- St. John's vs. Creighton

**Atlantic 12 Conference**
- First Round, March 9
- Seton Hall vs. Butler

**Big Sky Conference**
- First Round, March 9
- Idaho vs. Montana-Sacramento State

**Big Ten Conference**
- First Round, March 9
- Maryland vs. Purdue

**Horizon League**
- First Round, March 9
- Loyola Chicago vs. Wisconsin

**Pac-12 Conference**
- First Round, March 9
- Oregon vs. USC

**Southeastern Conference**
- First Round, March 9
- Florida vs. Auburn

**WAC**
- First Round, March 9
- Arkansas Tech vs. Texas-Permian Valley

**Women's basketball**

**Friday's scores**
- California Baptist 6, Nevada 5
- Missouri 63, Kansas State 52
- Oregon 74, Hawaii 56
- Rice 82, UTEP 59
- Louisiana Tech 69, UTSA 30
- Arkansas St. 86, South Alabama 80
- Missouri St. 85, Valparaiso 70
- Mississippi St. 79, South Alabama 70
- Texas A&M 78, Arkansas 71
- South Carolina 78, Georgia Tech 71
- Florida St. 81, Kentucky 76
- Miami (FL) 75, Florida 71

**Thursday's scores**
- Murray State 62, Tennessee-Martin 56
- Alabama St. 63, Liberty 60
- Western Kentucky 66, Tulane 57
- Notre Dame 63, Boston College 48
- St. Louis 75, Dayton 51

**Dallas** — Agreed to terms with Friday's starter.

**Kansas City Chiefs** — Signed K. C. Oubre Jr. to a four-year contract.

**Inter Miami CF** — Reassigned FC Dallas to a one year contract.

**UConn** — Reassigned FC Dallas to a one year contract.

**Sports on AFN**

**Friday's scores**
- California Baptist 6, Nevada 5

**Saturday’s scores**
- Northern Colorado 66, Montana State 56
- Idaho State 61, Weber State 53
- Missouri Valley 121, Missouri 66

**Women's basketball**

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- St. Louis 75, Dayton 51

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- Missouri Valley 121, Missouri 66

**Women’s basketball**

**Thursday’s scores**
- Long Island, S. Florida 5, Hofstra 4
- Oklahoma St. 2, BYU 1
- California Baptist 6, Nevada 5
- Stony Brook 6, Siena 5
- UC Riverside 7, Holy Cross 6
- Washington St. 16, Niagara 7

**Tennis**

**Men’s doubles**
- Sam Querrey and Mike Bryan

**Women’s doubles**
- Elise Mertens and Elina Svitolina

**Saturday’s scores**
- UConn 77, Houston 71
- Alabama A&M 56, Samling St. 57
- Alcorn St. 88, Alabama St. 60
- Bethune-Cookman 72, Florida A&M 67
- Florida Southern 80, Embry-Riddle 67
- Jackson St. 71, Alabama St. 59
- Memphis 67, University of Alabama 61
- Morehouse 54, Paine 54
- NC Central 60, NC A&T 60
- Nova Southeastern 93, Palm Beach Atlantic 77
- Southern U. 80, Oklahoma St. 74

**Thursday’s scores**
- Damien Riat to a two-year contract.
- K’Waun Williams.
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- manuel Mosley, QB Nick Mullens and RB Daniel Brunskill. TE Ross Dwelley, CB Em- bally abusing officials.
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Briefly

Outbreak ends World Cup finals

Mikaela Shiffrin’s chances of extending her three-year reign as overall champion took another hit when the World Cup ski finals were canceled Friday due to the virus outbreak.

Shiffrin had already lost her lead in the standings because of a month-long absence following the death of her father.

Shiffrin announced on Thursday that she was returning to the circuit in Europe but now she has only one set of races left in Are, Sweden — if she enters — to try to erase her 153-point deficit to Italian rival Federica Brignone.

Considering the virus, the Italian Winter Sports Federation was hoping to host the finals, scheduled for March 18-22 in Cortina d’Ampezzo, without fans. But during an emergency International Ski Federation board meeting on Friday, every nation besides Italy voted to cancel the event, the Italian federation said.

“It’s with great disappointment that I accept this decision,” Italian federation president Flavio Roda said. “Every member of the board made their decision based on limitations that their respective governments have imposed in relation to the virus.”

World Cup rules prevent the finals from being moved to another location.

Nearly 150 people have died in Italy, the epicenter of the outbreak in Europe, and more than 3,000 have tested positive for the virus. Many nations have imposed travel restrictions to Italy.

Also:

Despite the spreading virus, Tokyo Olympic organizers have finally held a test event. The recent outbreak of the coronavirus has forced them to rearrange or postpone several. But they allowed a sport climbing event on Friday to go ahead, with a few restrictions: no fans and no top athletes. Instead they used amateurs to test the climbing facility.

Almost all sports events and large gatherings have been shut down in Japan.

Preseason baseball is being played without fans, the soccer J-League is suspended until March 18, and a spring sumo event will be contested in an empty arena. Schools are also closed across the country.

The International Olympic Committee and local organizers say the Olympics will open near Aug. 25.

Virologists, however, say it’s impossible to tell if the spreading virus will allow that to happen, and a cancellation or postponement are possible.

Twelve deaths in Japan have been attributed to the virus.

Jets’ Williams arrested for gun

NEW YORK — New York Jets defensive lineman Quinnen Williams was arrested for criminal possession of a weapon Thursday night when he attempted to board a plane, police said in a statement.

Williams was released.

Police said Williams was a permit holder in his home state of Alabama but not in New York — for the .45-caliber pistol he was carrying onto the flight. It was not immediately known whether the Glock 19 pistol he was carrying onto the flight was loaded.

Williams was drafted with the No. 3 overall pick last year out of the University of Alabama. He played in 13 games as a rookie, finishing nine starts, and had 31 tackles with 2 1/2 sacks and a fumble recovery for the Jets.

Clippers forward Paul George, left, drives past the Rockets’ Robert Covington for a bucket during the first half on Thursday in Houston. Out of Los Angeles, nine points, rebounds, and seven assists in Los Angeles’ 120-105 victory. The Clippers have won six straight.

Outlook: The Rockets were done in by their shooting woes in a game that was billed as a matchup of two of the top teams in the Western Conference, but was a rout almost from the start.

Houston’s shooting woes didn’t end after the break and the Rockets missed 11 of 12 three-pointers in the third quarter, including a couple of air balls. But the Rockets didn’t just struggle from long-range as they also missed several layups in the quarter to leave Los Angeles up 90-65 entering the fourth.

“It’s a great learning experience for us on both ends of the floor,” Harden said. “We’ve got 21 games left to prepare ourselves for the bigger picture. So we watch film tomorrow and get better and be ready to go for the next game.”

Roundup

Clippers roll past Rockets

HOUSTON — Kawhi Leonard scored 25 points and the Los Angeles Clippers rolled over the Houston Rockets 120-105 on Thursday night for their sixth straight victory.

The Rockets were done in by their shooting woes in a game that was billed as a matchup of two of the top teams in the Western Conference, but was a rout almost from the start.

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“It’s a great learning experience for us on both ends of the floor,” Harden said. “We’ve got 21 games left to prepare ourselves for the bigger picture. So we watch film tomorrow and get better and be ready to go for the next game.”

Nuggets 114, Hornets 112: Jamal Murray hit a running, off-balance 13-footer from the baseline with 5.1 seconds left, and Denver overcame an eight-point fourth-quarter deficit to beat host Charlotte.

Murray had 18 points, and Nikola Jokic added 14 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists.

Devonte Graham had 24 points and seven assists for the Hornets. P.J. Washington added 20 points and Terry Rozier had 19. Rozier’s three-pointer at the buzzerummies.

76ers 125, Kings 108: Tobias Harris had 28 points and 14 rebounds and short-handed Philadelphia beat Sacramento for its first road win in more than a month.

Shake Milton scored 20 points and Al Horford had 18 points, eight rebounds and six assists for the Sixers, who also won in Sacramento for the first time since 2015. Alc Burks added 17 points and Raul Neto had 16.

De’Aaron Fox had 23 points and seven assists for Sacramento. Buddy Hield scored 22.

Philadelphia ended its nine-game road losing streak while continuing to play without Joel Embiid and Ben Simmons. Embiid sat out a fourth straight game because of a left shoulder sprain, while Simmons missed his sixth straight with a nerve impingement in his back.

Sparks forward Alana Beard, left, drives past the Mystics’ Tina Charles during the second half of a WNBA basketball game, Friday, Aug. 24, 2018, in Los Angeles. (AP Photo/Mark J. Terrill)

Column

Flarios: Would-be would-be may want to consider what they are doing for the better...

The 22-year-old Williams was being processed by Port Authority Police late Thursday night. Police said the matter will be handled by the Queens district attorney’s office after Williams was released.

Williams was trial for the No. 3 overall pick last year out of the University of Alabama. He played in 13 games as a rookie, finishing nine starts, and had 31 tackles with 2 1/2 sacks and a fumble recovery for the Jets.

— Associated Press

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

x-Toronto 44 18 .710
Boston 43 19 .694
Philadelphia 38 25 .603
Braves have died 13 40 .366
New York 19 36 .349

Southwest Division

Miami 40 22 .680
Oklahoma City 37 45 .433
Washington 32 39 .463
Chicago 35 41 .470
Atlanta 31 44 .410

Central Division

x-Milwaukee 53 9 .855
Milwaukee 38 26 13
Chicago 27 41 33
San Antonio 26 34 .433
New Orleans 26 36 .439

Western Conference

Southwest Division

x-Houston 39 15 .717
Dallas 38 25 .603
Memphis 32 31 .500
San Antonio 26 34 .433
New Orleans 26 36 .439

Northwest Division

Denver 43 20 .677
Utah 39 22 .639
Portland 38 35 .444
Minnesota 31 45 .410

Pacific Division

L.A. Lakers 40 15 .714
L.A. Clippers 39 16 .690
Phoenix 34 35 .486
Golden State 30 15 .645

Tuesday’s games

L.A. Clippers 121, Sacramento 108
Philadelphia 125, San Antonio 102
Toronto 121, Golden State 111

Thursday’s games

Denver 114, Charlotte 112
L.A. Clippers 120, Milwaukee 115
Brooklyn 120, Miami 116
L.A. Lakers 119, Oklahoma City 113

Friday’s games

Atlanta 104, Washington 103
Philadelphia 108, Oklahoma City 114
San Antonio 107, Detroit 98

Holiday games

July 20-23, July 26-29
January 1-4, 11-14

NBA playoffs end April 21
Regular season ends March 21

Leaders

Scoring

G FG FT PTS AVG

Harden, HOU 51 548 260 1405 27.5
Beal, WAS 54 561 368 1644 30.4
Antetokounmpo, MIL 59 514 386 1531 25.9

Rebounds

Assists

NBA Draft

Free-agent evaluation reports

Free agents:

Rondo, BKN 50 347 235 1086 2.1

Gaston AVG

OFF DEF TOT AVG

Drummond, CLE 57 585 367 1526 27.4
Whitehead, POR 53 532 321 1200 23.5

Free-agent evaluations

San Antonio 354 733 1230 3.4

Three-point percentage

(none minimum 200 attempts)

Percy, CLE 290 179 119 2.0

Pettigrew, MEM 295 245 156 0.6

Dunn, POR 256 151 100 0.6

Morris, LAC 116 24.3

Saturday, July 7, 2020

SPORTS BRIEFS/NBA

• STARS AND STRIPES •

PAGE 18
Curry’s 23 not enough for Warriors

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Stephen Curry seemed every bit himself after a four-month layoff, save for a little long-range rust.

“His legs must look exactly the same to me,” coach Steve Kerr said.

Curry scored 23 points for Golden State in his anticipated return from a broken left hand on Thursday, but the Toronto Raptors beat the Warriors 121-113 Thursday night to clinch a playoff berth with a 121-113 victory in San Francisco.

Around the NBA

No stopping these Bucks

By Tim Reynolds

Associated Press

It’s reasonable to think Milwau-
kee is not going to win all 20 of its remaining games, which means not all is lost for the Golden State Warriors this season.

They’ll still be the only team in NBA history to win 73 games.

The Warriors were a record 73-9 in the 2015-16 season, and the same players will be rested en route Indiana on Wednesday. But there’s still a chance Milwaukee could be able to make a case as the most dominant team in league history in one regard — margin of victory.

This season’s Bucks are out-
scoring teams by 12.4 points per game. That’s the best pace in NBA history, just ahead of the mark of 12.2 set by the 1971-72 Los Angeles Lakers — a team with a Hall of Fame coach in Bill Sharman, four Hall of Fame players in Wilt Chamberlain, Gail Goodrich, Elgin Baylor and Jerry West, and a player who would become a Hall of Fame coach in Pat Riley.

And the Bucks are in that stratosphere.

“We’ve still got a lot more basketball to play,” guard Wesley Matthews said. “And we know where we’re at and where we want to be. It’s a pretty special feeling to be where we’re at in the standings.”

Matthews then offered a sentence that should send shud-
ders across the rest of the NBA: “There’s a lot of room for improvement and growth.”

The way the Bucks are going, they’ll have the No. 1 seed in the Eastern Conference race sewn by the last week of March and probably home-court advantage for the entirety of the NBA playoffs wrapped up not long afterward. Yet they’re still focused on finding ways to get better.

Milwaukee coach Mike Budenholzer was asked if it’s difficult to be critical when a team is off to one of the best starts in NBA history.

“It’s not hard,” Budenholzer said. “It’s one part of what makes coaching either maddening or a lot of fun. You can always push them to be better and there’s always things we can do better and when we lose there’s things that we do well and it’s not all terrible. So hopefully we walk that line of keeping our guys, you know, hungry and growing and improving and recognizing when they do things well, also.”

Milwaukee is on pace for 70 wins this season. It’s likely that the players will be rested once the Bucks clinch all that can be clinched in the regular season, though Budenholzer also understands the delicate balance and the need to be playing the right way when the playoffs start in b heavily a month and a half.

“It’s a fine line to walk,” he said.

Not bad enough

The worst team in NBA history to make the playoffs, in terms of won-lost record, is the 1987-88 San Antonio Spurs. They went 31-51.

That dubious mark won’t be caught this season. Well, probably not. Anyway.

For the first time since 2015, a team — maybe more than one — with a losing record is likely going to get into the postseason.

Orlando and Brooklyn are both well below the .500 mark and yet still have comfortable holds on what would be the last two playoff spots in the Eastern Conference.

Memphis has the No. 8 spot in the West with a .500 record.

So-called “play-in” notion where the No. 9 and No. 10 teams from each conference would have a spot at making the field through a mini-playoff.

Such games would be dramatic, which would be nice.

Of course, such games would also open the door to more bad teams getting into the playoffs, which wouldn’t be so nice.

Expect competitive balance across the NBA to be a big talking point again soon. After Monday’s games, the league had 12 teams with winning percentages of .600 or better, one team at .597 — Dallas, a mere game away from top-

ing .600 — and the other 17 teams all below the .500 mark.

By the numbers

12.4

Points per game the Bucks are outscoring opponents this season. The full-season record is the 12.28 mark by the 1971-72 Los Angeles Lakers.

70

Wins the Bucks will have at their current pace this season.

119.1

Points per game this season for the Bucks, tops in the league.

Sources: Associated Press, NBA.com

MILWAUKEE BUCKS center Brook Lopez, right, looks for an opening past Miami Heat forward Jae Crowder on Monday. The Bucks lost 119-107 and their chance to match the 2015-16 Golden State Warriors’ record of 73 regular season wins.

BY TIM REYNOLDS

Associated Press

The Milwaukee Bucks’ Giannis Antetokounmpo has been even better than during his MVP-winning campaign last season, averaging 29.6 points, 13.8 rebounds and 5.8 assists.

Only three teams were better through 62 games than Milwaukee:

The 2015-16 Warriors were 56-6, the 1995-96 Chicago Bulls were 55-7 and the 1996-97 Bulls were 54-8. There have been four other teams to start 53-9, most recently the 2015-16 San Antonio Spurs.

“At the end of the day you’re going to win some games and lose some games,” Bucks star and reigning NBA MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo said. “We’re not going to go 82-0.”

The goal for the Bucks is clear — win 16 games in the playoffs. The rest, to them, doesn’t seem to matter much.

SOURCES: Associated Press, NBA.com

Bucks center Brook Lopez, right, looks for an opening past Miami Heat forward Jae Crowder on Monday. The Bucks lost 119-107 and their chance to match the 2015-16 Golden State Warriors’ record of 73 regular season wins.

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College Basketball

**Year after winning Pac-12, Huskies are in the basement**

By Tim Booth

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Until just a couple of weeks ago, the only loss on Baylor’s resume had come at the hands of Washington. Until the end of December, the Huskies and their talented group of freshmen were ranked in the bottom half of the AP Top 25. As Washington begins its final road trip of the conference season this weekend at the Arizona schools, the Huskies find themselves stuck in last place in the Pac-12. They are 3-13 in conference play, a disappointing start to the season.

“A series of documents totaling nearly 300 pages of arguments and supporting materials, the school claims several facts involving Bill Self’s basketball program are in dispute, including charges that Kansas lacked institutional control and its Hall of Fame coach and his assistant, Kurtis Townsend, had committed a series of high-level violations.”

“The NCAA issued its original notice of accusations on Sept. 23, which included five violations for men’s basketball — all Level 1, the most severe — and two lesser violations for football. The school then received an amended notice Jan. 30 that added an eighth, low-level violation involving the current football staff led by Les Miles.”

While the NCAA’s notice does not detail what Kansas is accused of doing, the program was among the most prominent in an NCAA probe into a pay-for-play scheme that began with an FBI investigation into apparel company Adidas. One of its former employees testified at trial that he made payments to the family of one Kansas recruit and the guardian of a current player, and text messages presented in court revealed a close relationship between Self and the Adidas employee.

The school had a Thursday deadline to issue its response. Ultimately, a hearing will be scheduled and Kansas will present its case. The NCAA will then issue its ruling, often within several months, and the school retains the right to appeal.

The former Adidas employee, T.J. Gassnola, testified in October that he made a $900,000 payment to the family of then-Kansas recruit Billy Preston and $2,500 to the guardian of forward Silvio De Sousa, who just this week finished a 12-game suspension for an unrelated issue — he was involved in a brawl during a game against Kansas State. Gassnola also said he paid $20,000 to Fenny Falmagne, De Sousa’s guardian.

Gassnola, who avoided prison time by cooperating with the FBI, insisted Self and his coaching staff were unaware of the payments, even though text messages detailed their close relationship.

But an attorney for former Adidas executive Jim Gatto told a jury that his client approved the payment to Falmagne only after Self and Townsend requested it.

**Kansas objects to NCAA allegations**

By Dave Skretna

Associated Press

LAWRENCE, Kan. — The University of Kansas forcefully objected to charges that its storied men’s basketball program, currently No. 1 in the nation, and its football programs had committed significant violations tied primarily to recruiting when it issued its formal response to the NCAA’s notice of allegations Thursday night.

“In a series of documents totaling nearly 300 pages of arguments and supporting materials, the school claims several facts involving Bill Self’s basketball program are in dispute, including charges that Kansas lacked institutional control and its Hall of Fame coach and his assistant, Kurtis Townsend, had committed a series of high-level violations.”

“There is no reasonable conclusion that members of the university, including the men’s basketball staff, knew or should have known about any violations of NCAA rules,” the response said. “Self had no knowledge of any NCAA rules violations or illicit conduct exhibited by Adidas, its employees or its consultants.”

Voluminous evidence demonstrates uncontestably that Coach Self did, in fact, promote an atmosphere of compliance.”

The NCAA issued its original notice of allegations on Sept. 23, which included five violations for men’s basketball — all Level 1, the most severe — and two lesser violations for football. The school then received an amended notice Jan. 30 that added an eighth, low-level violation involving the current football staff led by Les Miles.

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## Scoreboard

### COLLEGE BASKETBALL

**Elon vs. James Madison**

**Maine at Vermont**

**UMass-Lowell at Hartford**

- Lipscomb 73, North Florida 71
- Liberty 66, Stetson 62
- Liberty vs. Lipscomb

**Longwood 53, Hampton 78**

**Gardner-Webb 72, UNC-Asheville 62**

**Valparaiso 58, Evansville 55**

**Green Bay 78, Oakland 63**

**N. Iowa vs Drake**

**Green Bay vs. Northern Kentucky**

**UNC Greensboro vs. Chattanooga**

**ETSU vs. Samford-VMI winner**

**Lafayette 73, Army West Point 68**

**Boston U. 69 Navy 63**

**Bucknell 64, American U. 59**

**Colgate 83, Lehigh 70**

**Belmont vs. Tennessee St.**

**Austin Peay 76, E. Illinois 65**

**Saint Francis (Pa.) at Sacred Heart**

**Semifinal winners**

- San Diego St. vs. Boise State
- Wyoming 74, Nevada 71
- San Diego St. 73, Air Force 60

**Pepperdine vs. Santa Clara**

**Coastal Carolina at UT Arlington**

**Arkansas State at Louisiana**

### Colonial Athletic Association

**Men's conference tournaments**

**First Round**

- Liberty 66, Stetson 62
- Lipscomb 73, North Florida 71
- Delaware 87, Georgia Southern 41
- Gardner-Webb 72, UNC-Asheville 62
- Radford 62, Charleston Southern 48
- Longwood 66, Hampton 78

**Second Round**

- Liberty vs. Lipscomb
- Big South Conference
- At Radford, Va.
- At Coastal Carolina, Conway

**Quarterfinals**

- Thursday, March 5
- Winthrop, UNC, Campbell
- Gardner-Webb 72, UNC-Asheville 62
- Radford 62, Charleston Southern 48
- Longwood 66, Hampton 78

**Semiinals**

- Friday, March 6
- Radford vs. Longwood
- Winthrop vs. Campbell

**Colonial Athletic Association All-Tournament Team**

**At Washington, D.C.**

- Caleb Mills added 20 for Houston (22-8, 12-7 American Athletic Conference), which fell into a tie for second place in the conference. Isaiah Whaley had 13 for Connecticut (18-12, 9-8 American Athletic Conference), which insists to pace Illinois (20-10, 12-7 Big Ten), which saw its conference championship hopes fade a bit with a loss. Matt Bradley led the Bears (13-17, 7-10) with 15 points. Grant Anticevich added 10.

**At Asheville, N.C.**

- No. 13 Oregon 90, California 56: Payton Pritchard led four teammates in double figures with 20 points and the host Ducks used an early scoring outburst to pull away from the Golden Bears in the first half.

### Roundup

**San Diego St. overtakes Air Force**

Associated Press

San Diego State's Yanni Wetzell dunked as Air Force's Reaton Van Soellen defends during the second half of Thursday's Mountain West Conference tournament quarterfinal in Las Vegas.

Wolverines beat the Cornhuskers as fans welcomed former coach John Beilein back to Crisler Center.

- Nebraska (7-23, 2-17) was without guard Cam Mack, suspended for a violation of team rules. The Cornhuskers have lost 15 straight.
- Isaiah Livers had 15 points and 10 rebounds for Michigan (19-11, 10-9 Big Ten), and Simpson had 10 assists. Haanif Cheatham led Nebraska with 19 points.
- Beilein, who was in the crowd, coached the Wolverines for 12 seasons before accepting the head coaching job with the NBA's Cleveland Cavaliers.

- Lafayette 73, Army 68: Leo O’Boyle scored 20 points, E.J. Stephens added 14 and Lukas Jarrett 13 as the fifth-seeded Leopards scored 20 points, E.J. Stephens added 14 and Lukas Jarrett 13 as the fifth-seeded Leopards scored 20 points, E.J. Stephens added 14 and Lukas Jarrett 13 as the fifth-seeded Leopards.

- The win sets up a semifinal match against top-seeded Aztecs (29-1), who rode a 21-3 run in the second half of Thursday's Mountain West Conference tournament quarterfinal in Las Vegas.

- The win moves Oregon (23-7) back into a tie with UCLA for first place in the Pac-12 at 12-5 with the regular season ending Saturday.

- The win also sets the Ducks up as a 21st consecutive home victory, including all 16 home games this season. He shot 6-for-8 overall, including making all three of his three-point attempts.

- Oregon shot 63% from the field overall, including 71% (12-for-17) on threes as Anthony Mathis added 17 points on 5-for-6 shooting from three-point range. Will Richardson and Addison Patterson each had 13, and Shakur Juiston chipped in 10.

- Matt Bradley led the Bears (13-17, 7-10) with 15 points. Grant Anticevich added 10.

- No. 19 Ohio State 71, No. 23 Illinois 63: Kaleb Wesson scored 19 points to lead the host Buckeyes past the Illini.

- E.J. Liddell tied a career high with 17 points and had 11 rebounds for Ohio State (21-9, 11-8 Big Ten), which has won four in a row and nine of its last 11. The Buckeyes are playing well at a critical time, with a road matchup against No. 16 Michigan State looming this weekend and the Big Ten tournament beginning Wednesday in Indianapolis.

- Ayo Dosunmu had 21 points and five assists to pace Illinois (20-10, 12-7), which saw its conference championship hopes fade a bit more after starting the day a half-game behind leaders Maryland, Wisconsin and Michigan. Still, the Illini are poised for a berth in the NCAA Tournament for the first time in seven years.

- UConn 77, No. 21 Houston 71: Christian Vital scored 26 points in his final home game and the Huskies beat the Cougars 77-71.

- Freshman James Bouknight added 17 points and Isaiah Whaley had 13 for Connecticut (18-12, 9-8 American Athletic Conference), which won its fourth straight game, but just its second this season over a ranked opponent.

- Quentin Grimes scored 24 points and Caleb Mills added 20 for Houston (22-9, 12-5), which fell into tie for second place in the conference.

- In the Colonial Athletic Association, Charleston Southern won the conference title and Montana State won the Big Sky.

- The win sets up a semifinal match against No. 1-seeded Colgate Sunday.

- O’Boyle was 6-for-8 from the field, including 4-for-5 from beyond the three-point arc for Lafayette (19-11), which shot 52% in the second half to break away and lead by as many as 14.

- Army’s Tommy Funk scored nine of his 21 points in a late surge and cut the 14-point gap down to 69-65 with a layup at 1:10 left to play. Funk also made 12 assists for the Black Knights (15-15).

- Boston U. 69, Navy 63: Navoyo McCay scored 19 points, Walter Whyte added 18 points and 10 rebounds as the third-seeded Terriers beat the sixth-seeded Midshipmen in a Patriot League quarterfinal.

- BU moves on to host a semifinal on Sunday against No. 7 seed Bucknell (16-14). The Terriers swept the season series against the Bison.

- Jonas Harper added 11 points for BU.

- Cam Davis scored 13 points to lead Navy (14-16). Evan Wielck added 12 points and John Carter Jr. and Tyler Nelson had 10 apiece.

- Navy pulled to 65-63 with 1:10 left following a Davis three-pointer and a Greg Summers layup, but the Midshipmen then committed a turnover and missed their last three shots.
Roundup

FLYERS BEAT CAROLINA, WIN EIGHTH STRAIGHT

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — The label has a nice ring to it around Philly: the first-place Flyers.

“Their turn was to come, now, in the Metropolitan Division, and it’s still March, but for a franchise that 15 months ago was nestled at the bottom of the standings and now, for the first time since 2012, is up there with the rest of the Met,” said Hurricanes coach Rod Brind’Amour.

“Vigneault said. ‘Players, coaches, fans, Flyers fans, hockey fans. I mean, this is great hockey. The competition is unfair and we’re playing well right now. Everybody should be excited.’

Carter Hart stopped 28 shots and four players scored to lead Philadelphia to its eighth straight win, 4-1 over the Carolina Hurricanes on Thursday night.

“Ivan Provorov, Michael Raffl, Nicolas Aube-Kubel and Sean Couturier scored for the Flyers, who continued their scorching recent run,” said Quinn.

It’s quite normal for everybody to be excited,” coach Alain Vigneault said. “Players, coaches, fans, Flyers fans, hockey fans.

“It’s a tie, for now, in the Metropolitan Division and it’s still March, but for a franchise that 15 months ago was nestled at the bottom of the standings and now, for the first time since 2012, is up there with the rest of the Met,” said Hurricanes coach Rod Brind’Amour.

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“I mean, this is great hockey. The competition is unfair and we’re playing well right now. Everybody should be excited.”

Flyers goalie Carter Hart, left, blocks a shot as the Carolina Hurricanes’ Teuvo Teravainen looks for the rebound during Thursday’s game in Philadelphia. Hart stopped 28 shots in the Flyers’ 4-1 victory.

Torey Krug scored 4:08 into overtime, Patrice Bergeron also had a goal and Boston beat host Florida for its fourth straight win.

“I didn’t expect that,” said Zibanejad. “I knew something was going on when I came in and no one was in here.”

His performance also wowed his teammates on social media, including goalie Henrik Lundqvist, who tweeted: ‘Are you kidding me?? Did that just happen? What a performance!’

Tony DeAngelo had a goal and two assists, and New York ended a three-game skid.

The Rangers center is also the first player in league history to have 30 points in a month.

When Zibanejad first entered the locker room after the game, it was empty — until his hiding teammates surprised him and quickly mobbed him with hugs.

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Red Sox pitcher Kyle Hart wipes sweat during Thursday's spring training baseball game against Astros in Fort Myers, Fla.

Who should they boo?

Astros paying the price; Red Sox await fate

By Maureen Mullin

Associated Press

FORT MYERS, Fla. — Right-hander Collin McHugh agreed Thursday to a $600,000, one-year contract with the pitching-needy Boston Red Sox, a deal that allows him earn up to $25 million.

However, he is recovering from a flexor injury in his pitching arm and is not expected to be ready for opening day. He has worked at Angel Stadium for most of the past four decades.

While Houston’s 5-0 win. Kyle Tucker homered, people were cheering for him.
The puck kept finding Mika Zibanejad — and he kept burying them in the back of the net.

Five times.

And, the last put him in the New York Rangers’ record books and delivered them a big-time victory.

Zibanejad scored five goals to match the franchise record, capping the scoring spree 33 seconds into overtime in a wild 6-5 win over the Washington Capitals on Thursday night.

“Today I was at the right spot at the right time,” he said. “It’s a night I will remember for a long time.”

Zibanejad is the second player in NHL history to score his fifth goal in overtime, joining Detroit’s Sergei Fedorov, who accomplished the feat on Dec. 26, 1996 — also against Washington.

“That puck followed me today, I guess,” he said. “You look at the goals and it’s unbelievable plays being made and today I was at the right spot at the right time.

“It’s a night I will remember for a long time.”

Zibanejad’s 38th of the season