‘Terrified and trapped’

Army veteran Stan Brown, a quadriplegic, relies on seven caregivers for nearly everything, from eating and dressing to running errands.

A few weeks ago, when one caregiver showed up to his St. Louis home with a cough, Brown, 72, sent her away and spent the next six hours confined to his bed until his next caregiver arrived for her shift.

Not long after that incident, another caregiver called in sick. She later tested positive for the coronavirus. Brown spent the following two weeks anxiously monitoring himself for symptoms, afraid he had the virus and could spread it to his other caregivers. Though he tried, he was never able to get tested.

“You’re mind goes fairly wild,” Brown said. “I kept thinking, ‘Do I have a cough? Am I hot? Do I taste this? Can I smell this?’”

It’s been several weeks since his caregiver tested positive, and Brown hasn’t shown any symptoms. However, he’s still anxious, and he plans to remain

SEE PARALYZED ON PAGE 10

Paralyzed veterans struggle during pandemic

By NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON

Army veteran Stan Brown, a quadriplegic, relies on seven caregivers for nearly everything, from eating and dressing to running errands.

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River dams break in Michigan, forcing mass evacuation
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Navy issues new guidelines in wake of Iran encounters
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Concert industry eyes socially distant shows
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Online: Get the latest news on the virus outbreak » stripes.com/coronavirus

As restrictions ease, troops in S. Korea find a ‘new normal’

BY KIM GAMEL AND MATTHEW KEELER
Stars and Stripes

PYEONGTAEK, South Korea — American troops and civilians packed South Korean restaurants and barbershops for the first time in about three months Wednesday after the U.S. military lifted most anti-coronavirus restrictions for bases everywhere but the Seoul area.

Soldiers also withdrew from the gates at Camp Humphreys, Camp Casey and bases in the southeastern city of Daegu as the Army ended the need for health questionnaires and temperature checks aimed at preventing the spread of the virus.

Life slowly began to return to what the military is calling a “new normal” as the daily count of confirmed cases in South Korea remains low, but “adults-only” establishments like bars and clubs remain off-limits due to continued concern over cluster infections.

U.S. Forces Korea, which commands some 28,500 service members on the divided peninsula, announced Monday it was lowering its health alert level from Health Protection Condition Charlie to Bravo beginning at 6 a.m. Wednesday for all bases except Yongsan Garrison and others in the surrounding area.

The move happened as South Korea has begun to move toward normalcy, even beginning to reopen schools on Wednesday.

SEE NORMAL ON PAGE 6

Navy swaps Kidd caretaker crew with virus-free sailors

Page 8
Walmart’s online sales surge 74% amid pandemic

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Walmart emerged as one of the few lines to millions of people as the coronavirus spread, leading to surging profit and sales for the world’s largest retailer.

Online sales in the U.S. jumped 74% for its fiscal first quarter that ended April 30, which captured the brunt of the pandemic’s outbreak. Same-store sales rose 10% at U.S. Walmart stores on strong sales of food, health and wellness goods.

At a time when a huge swath of stores that sell nonessential merchandise temporarily shut down, Walmart has the advantage of carrying the items that consumers need during a pandemic.

But unlike its online rivals like Amazon, Walmart enjoys an extensive network of nearly 5,000 physical stores and a variety of delivery and pick-up options that it ramped up to meet crushing demand for essential items, from paper towels to canned food. Walmart’s reputation for low prices also helped as the unemployment rate has spiraled to the high level since the Great Depression.

Walmart also said it’s seeing gains in new customers from across all income brackets.

This month, the company launched Express Delivery, which gets orders to a customer’s home in less than two hours. The program has been tested in 100 stores since mid-April and will be expanded to nearly 2,000 stores in the following weeks.

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

EXCHANGE RATES

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INTEREST RATES

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<td>20-year bond rate</td>
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The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.
Iran encounters prompt new Navy guidelines

By Jon Gambrell
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — The U.S. Navy warned Tuesday it will take “lawful defensive measures” against vessels in the Mideast that come within 100 yards of its warships, offering specific guidelines after a recent close encounter with Iranian vessels in the Persian Gulf.

The measures have typically included turning a ship away from the approaching vessel, sounding its horn, shooting off flares and ultimately firing warning shots to force the vessel away. But offering a specific distance is new for the Navy.

“Our ships are conducting routine operations in international waters wherever international law allows and do not seek conflict,” said Cmdr. Rebecca Rebarich, a Bahrain-based 5th Fleet spokeswoman. “However, our commanding officers retain the right to self-defense if deemed necessary.”

While 100 meters may seem far, it’s incredibly close for large warships that have difficulty in turning quickly, like aircraft carriers.

The U.S. Navy has years of experience with Iranian forces getting that close, namely the hard-line, paramilitary Revolutionary Guard. Their armed speedboats routinely cut across their paths when going through the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which 20% of all oil passes.

Tensions have been high between Iran and the U.S. ever since President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from Tehran’s nuclear deal with world powers in 2018. Last summer saw a series of escalating attacks targeting oil tankers and other sites around the Persian Gulf. It reached a crescendo in January with the U.S. drone strike in Baghdad that killed Iran’s Gen. Qassem Soleimani and an Iranian ballistic missile strike of American forces in Iraq in retaliation.

Those tensions had been expected to rise after Iran’s government overcame the initial chaos that engulfed its response to the coronavirus pandemic. In April, the U.S. accused Iran of conducting “dangerous and harassing” maneuvers near American warships in the northern Persian Gulf. Iran also had been suspected of briefly seizing a Hong Kong-flagged oil tanker just before that.

In April, Trump warned on Twitter: “I have instructed the United States Navy to shoot down and destroy any and all Iranian gunboats if they harass our ships at sea.”

Army reactivates V Corps for Europe mission

By John Vandiver
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Army has reactivated V Corps, a unit of 635 soldiers that will bring more command and control support to missions in Europe, the service announced Tuesday.

The unit will be based at Fort Knox, Ky., and will include a command post in Europe that will be supported by 200 rotational troops.

The location of the Europe post hasn’t yet been announced. The headquarters is expected to be operational by the fall, the Army said.

The corps was inactivated in 2013 as part of an Army force reduction in Europe.

However, over the past five years the Army has expanded its mission on the Continent in connection with Russia’s forced annexation of Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula and concerns about other aggressive moves directed at NATO allies and partners.

“The activation of an additional Corps headquarters provides the needed level of command and control focused on synchronizing U.S. Army, allied, and partner national tactical formations operating in Europe,” said Gen. James McConville, chief of staff of the Army, in a statement.

The move came after a U.S. European Command request, the Army said. The corps’ history dates back to 1918, when the unit was activated during World War I. It activated again for World War II. It was a fixture in Europe during the Cold War and later supported the Army during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

F-35A stealth fighter crashes upon landing at Eglin

From staff and wire reports

Eglin Air Force Base in Florida’s Panhandle suffered its second jet fighter crash in just five days.

Tuesday night, an F-35A Lightning II assigned to the 58th Fighter Squadron crashed upon landing, according to an Air Force press release.

The pilot, who is not being identified, ejected before the crash and is reportedly in stable condition at the base medical facility.

“At the time of the accident, the pilot was participating in a routine night training sortie,” the Air Force said.

The crash site was secured and there was no loss of life or damage to civilian property. The accident is under investigation.

The crash, which happened around 9:30 p.m. local time, comes on the heels of an F-22 Raptor crash last Friday on the base’s practice range. In that incident, a lone pilot also ejected before the crash 12 miles north of the main base. That pilot was also in stable condition after the crash.

The F-22 was assigned to the 43rd Fighter Squadron, part of the 325th Fighter Wing based at Eglin.

The F-35A Lightning II is part of the 33rd Fighter Wing, also based at Eglin. The “Nomads” are a graduate flying and maintenance training wing for fighter jets. A single F-35A costs about $90 million.

Eglin, on the Florida Panhandle, is under the command of the 96th Test Wing, which tests and evaluates Air Force equipment and systems.

Wednesday’s accident marks the second time the A variant of the advanced stealth fighter has crashed. On April 9, 2019, one of the Japan Air Self-Defense Force’s F-35As plunged into the Pacific Ocean about 85 miles east of Misawa Air Base, its home field in northeastern Japan. The pilot, whose remains were recovered about two months later, likely experienced “spatial disorientation,” the JASDF said at the time.

The first F-35 crash happened on Sept. 28, 2018, when a B variant of the joint strike fighter, which is capable of short takeoffs and vertical landings, went down near Beaufort, S.C. The pilot safely ejected.

Correction

In a May 20 story about military retention, The Associated Press erroneously reported that the Air Force is already expecting to fall short of its recruiting goal by as much as 5,800 as a result of the coronavirus outbreak. The Air Force is on track to meet its recruiting goal, but expects to fall short of its effort to get recruits through the training pipeline by as much as 5,800 as a result of the virus.
In Afghanistan, coalition employs remote advising

By J.P. Lawrence
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The U.S.-led NATO coalition in Afghanistan has suspended face-to-face advising three times since February and has generally stuck to remote methods since mid-March, an inspector general report said Tuesday.

Advisers with the NATO Resolute Support mission were restricted from meeting Afghan troops and trained via phone calls, emails and text messaging apps like WhatsApp, even as Taliban violence flared in the country, said the report by the Lead Inspector General for Operation Freedom’s Sentinel.

Coalition advisers have been prevented from almost all face-to-face meetings since March 14 due to concerns over the spread of the coronavirus, the report said. Remote advising can help protect U.S. and coalition troops from COVID-19, combat casualties and insider attacks, but there are clear drawbacks, said Jonathan Schroden, director of the Special Operations Program at CNA, a nonpartisan research organization based in Virginia.

“It is much harder to advise troops and to build the relationships and trust that’s required to do this in a foreign country, if you’re not standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the partner force,” Schroden said.

Coalition troops have resumed some high-level advising in person, as shown by visits by U.S. forces commander Gen. Scott Miller to a few Afghan corps headquarters.

But most advisers are allowed only minimal face-to-face interactions with Afghan troops and government officials, except when mission essential, the report said.

“Our first priority is protection of the force. We continue to advise Afghan partners through remote advising,” Schroden said in a statement.

Three Afghan troops deployed throughout the country told Stars and Stripes that remote advising has led to some difficulties, while two said it didn’t affect their missions.

“It is very clear that communicating with them in person was much easier and effective than getting advice and help from them over the phones,” said Haseenullah Sadsat, a captain with the 215th Maiwand Corps.

“You, you cannot explain fully what you need, sometimes there are misunderstandings, so WhatsApp and other communications can only help halfway.”

Remote advising can’t replace in-person training, “but it can augment it,” a U.S. Army Special Forces officer wrote on the “War on the Rocks” website Wednesday.

It’s proved useful in Iraq and Syria and could allow training to continue post-deployment, wrote Maj. Gordon Richmond, a student at the U.S. Marine Corps’ School of Advanced Warfighting.

Other analysts remained skeptical of its use on a broad scale.

“While it might also work with Afghanistan’s commandos but would be less effective with conventional army and police units, said Schroden, who said he anticipates corruption will increase in the absence of adviser oversight.”

Zubair Babakarkhail contributed to this report.

Stars and Stripes

Afghan officials: 14 civilians, 9 militiamen killed in attacks

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Gunmen killed 14 people in two separate attacks in Afghanistan while the Taliban targeted provincial government checkpoints in the northeast, killing nine militiamen, officials said Wednesday, the latest in relentless violence that continues to plague the war-torn nation.

The attacks took place against the backdrop of renewed United Nations calls for an end to violence and as Washington’s special peace envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, embarked on another round of talks with the Taliban to press them to start negotiating with the newly reconciled Afghan political leadership in Kabul.

In Parwan province, north of the capital, Kabul, an unknown number of gunmen stormed a mosque late on Tuesday, killing 11 worshipers and wounding several others, said Wahida Shahkar, spokeswoman for the provincial governor. Reports earlier in the day said five died.

Also late on Tuesday, gunmen in eastern Khost province attacked a family returning home from a nearby mosque, killing three brothers, according to Adil Haidari, spokesman for the provincial police chief. In both attacks, the gunmen fled the scene.

No one claimed responsibility for either attack but the Taliban promptly denied involvement, Islamic State, which has been increasingly active in Afghanistan after suffering battlefield losses, has carried out similar attacks in the past. Washington blamed the ISIS for last week’s horrific attack on a maternity hospital in Kabul that killed 24 people, including two infants.

In a third attack, the Taliban targeted checkpoints belonging to a local pro-government militia in northeastern Takhar province, killing nine militiamen, said Khalil Aser, spokesman for the provincial police chief.

Aser said that attack took place in the Khwaja Bahuddin district, also late on Tuesday, and also left six militiamen wounded. There was no immediate statement from the Taliban.

Khalilzad, the architect of a U.S.-Taliban deal signed in February, has been trying to salvage the agreement and jump-start intra-Afghan negotiations between the Taliban and Kabul. A power-sharing agreement on Sunday gave the Taliban some local government positions and promised judicial reforms.

The new agreement includes a provision that the Afghan government allows for the U.S.-brokered Taliban to set up their own courts and security institutions.

The Taliban has so far rejected the power-sharing agreement.

The latest attacks come amid the outbreak of a new coronavirus that has so far killed at least 1,300 people in Afghanistan, according to the Health Ministry, and has raised fears that the conflict ravaged country could be more vulnerable to a rapidly spreading virus.

The Taliban, who have so far refused to negotiate with the Afghan government, have asked the government to re-examine its stance in the power-sharing accord.

A screen shot depicts a rocket-propelled grenade, circled, heading toward a C-130J Super Hercules aircraft as it drops cargo in Afghanistan, in September 2019.

Airmen who avoided RPG in Afghanistan receive medals

By J.P. Lawrence
Stars and Stripes

Five airmen have received Combat Action Medals after their C-130 cargo plane narrowly avoided being hit by a rocket-propelled grenade fired by militants last fall, the Air Force said.

The insurgents fired the round at the C-130J Super Hercules from the 39th Airlift Squadron based out of Dyess Air Force Base, Texas, and deployed with the 774th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron, after it completed an emergency nighttime airdrop to Afghan troops in September, a May statement said.

“I noticed a flash of red behind the plane, but it was only for a second or two,” said Senior Airman David Doran, loadmaster on the flight, as quoted in the statement. “At the time I wasn’t scared because I didn’t realize it was an RPG, but possibly a flare.”

An infrared image of the incident released by the Air Force shows a bright white projectile zooming just behind the C-130.

The image appears to match video taken by a remotely piloted MQ-9 drone released by the Air Force in April. In it, two operators assigned to the 20th Attack Squadron share their perspective of watching the RPG streak toward a C-130.

“My heart was racing,” Airman 1st Class Ashley said in the video, which did not provide the full names of either MQ-9 operator. The MQ-9 operators said they tracked the people they said fired the shot, and after waiting 34 minutes for proper clearance, launched a strike on them.

“If we weren’t there for the C-130 drop, the bad guys could have gotten away,” Ashley said.

Members of the C-130 crew received the Combat Action Medal, which was introduced in 2007 for airmen engaged in air or ground fighting in combat zones.


Stars and Stripes

This 39th Airlift Squadron crew, based out of Dyess Air Force Base, Texas, narrowly avoided the RPG. Five members were also awarded the Air Force Combat Action Medal, the service said this month.
By Norman Llamas
Stars and Stripes

AVIANO AIR BASE, Italy — A time capsule containing the U.S. Space Force was recently discovered inside a shipping container where it was stowed away in 1999.

“Honestly, I had forgotten all about the time capsule until I was contacted through email, with the motto ‘To Infinity and Beyond,’” Master Sgt. Kenneth E. Creamer, a contractor at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., said via email. “The fact that the US Space Force has now come about makes perfect sense that this class should have opened the time capsule.”

“Being here, using Zoom to communicate, in 1999, we weren’t probably predicting that,” Towberman said. “So, it’s really a reminder of how you can’t predict change, especially these days.”

After a search for remaining members of ALS class 99-A, one person was located: retired Master Sgt. Kenneth E. Creamer, a contractor at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.

“Honestly, I had forgotten about the time capsule until I was contacted through email, with the motto ‘To Infinity and Beyond,’” Creamer said via email. “The fact that the US Space Force has now come about makes perfect sense that this class should have opened the time capsule.”

“I really don’t remember what was put in the capsule. We wanted a class project that would share some of our experiences with future classes,” Creamer said.

Creamer said that at the time he was a space systems technician assigned to Moron Air Base in Spain as a maintainer for the transportable optical system, a telescope that was part of Space Command.

“I’m not sure if any of that had anything to do with the time capsule and Space Force, but, it seems plausible,” Creamer said.

The contents of the time capsule included a copy of Stars and Stripes from Nov. 24, 1998; a videotape that won’t be played until someone can find a VHS player; many sew-on rank insignia; ALS teaching materials, uniform and letters written by class members.

About 300 airmen attend the ALS course each year at Aviano. It’s designed to prepare senior airmen to supervise and lead teams to support air, space and cyberspace power, according to the ALS website.

A picture of the Aviano Airman Leadership School’s class 99-A is shown at Aviano Air Base, Italy.

By David McLaughlin and Tony Capaccio
Bloomberg

There’s a $17 billion pot of money in the pandemic aid package for companies vital to national security — and no one seems to want it.

The $2 trillion rescue package Congress adopted in late March includes loans and loan guarantees specifically for companies “critical to maintaining national security.” The funds at first were seen as largely directed at Boeing, which at the time had been pleading for a government bailout. But after selling $25 billion in bonds to investors, the aircraft maker turned down the aid, which would have come with strings attached that it didn’t like.

With the $17 billion up for grabs, the U.S. defense industry is asking the Trump administration to change the criteria for getting some of it, arguing that the terms are too strict.

The Treasury Department, which has sole authority over the $17 billion, has limited the companies that qualify to those whose work is designated DX, which means it ranks highest on the military’s list of national priorities, or to companies that have facilities with top-secret security clearances.

Only about 20 companies applied by the May 1 deadline, according to the Defense Department. There are about 300,000 companies in the Pentagon’s contractor supply chain.

“When we’re hearing across the board is that the restrictions and requirements on the money are pretty onerous, and a majority of companies just can’t apply for the money,” said Hawk Carlisle, president of the National Defense Industrial Association, which represents defense contractors.

It’s another example of the Trump administration’s struggle to help businesses that have been decimated by the pandemic. The initial round of $349 billion aimed at small businesses sparked outrage after large restaurant chains, a professional baseball franchise and numerous publicly traded companies were able to get money while mom-and-pop businesses were shut out.

Congress stipulated that companies receiving the national-security loans must provide the government with warrants, equity or senior debt securities and agree to limits on dividends, stock buybacks and executive pay.

But it’s Treasury’s additional criteria that defense firms say are too narrow. It restricted loans to two groups: those with a contract with the DX rating or those with facilities that have top-secret security clearances.

Eric Fanning, president of the Aerospace Industries Association, whose members include Lockheed Martin and BAE Systems, said the criteria should be broadened to cover more companies.
Military begins easing Okinawa restrictions

By Matthew M. Burke
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The two military branches making up the bulk of U.S. personnel on Okinawa relaxed both on- and off-base restrictions Wednesday after three weeks with no new positive coronavirus cases on the island.

Air Force Brig. Gen. Joel Carey, 18th Wing commander, ordered the “phased” lifting of force health protection measures in a message posted Wednesday afternoon on Kadena Air Base’s Facebook page. Marine Forces Japan followed suit with a statement that evening.

Starting Thursday, airmen are allowed to purchase take-out food from off-base restaurants, send their children to off-base schools and child care facilities, and visit beaches and public parks, the 18th Wing statement said.

Airmen will also be able to dine inside restaurants on base, attend chapel services and patronize gyms, pools, outdoor equipment rentals, libraries, movie theaters, beaches, camping and resort areas, among other base opportunities.

“For the past three weeks, the Okinawa Prefectural Government has reported no new cases of COVID-19 as well as a steady decline in the number of patients still infected,” said the 18th Wing statement, referring to the respiratory disease caused by the coronavirus. “Our cases here on Kadena Air Base have also fully recovered and are doing well.”

Some 18th Force Support Squadron facilities may not open right away, the statement said. Updates will be posted to Facebook. The use of reopening facilities is contingent on following posted virus mitigation measures.

Other restrictions remain in place: the use of mass transit, visiting off-base bars, bars, hotels, nail salons and leisure shopping are still prohibited.

Base access is limited to mission-essential personnel, according to a wing Facebook post.

“We are not in the clear yet and we must remain vigilant,” the statement said. “Social distancing is still required for all personnel to the greatest extent possible.”

Cloth face coverings are required when social distancing is not possible, the statement said. The directives apply to all who have base access. Failure to obey could result in “administrative action.”

Marine officials implemented similar changes, according to the statement from III Marine Expeditionary Force.

Marines participating in recreational activities are being told to do so individually, with family or in pairs, the statement said.

In addition to being able to purchase off-base take-out food again, Marines are also authorized to patronize eateries with drive-thru windows. However, inside dining remains restricted.

Marines are also allowed to visit off-base residences.

“These changes are based on a thorough review of the current COVID-19 pandemic situation in the region and the effectiveness of continued [health protection condition] preventive measures,” the statement said.

Marine officials said the measures would constantly be reviewed.

The latest actions by military officials mirror the easing of restrictions by Okinawa government officials. Okinawa prefecture allowed most shuttered businesses to open May 14, as long as they follow social distancing and hygiene protocols. Cabarets and nightclubs, where close contact is part of the service, were scheduled to reopen Wednesday.

As of Tuesday, Okinawa had 146 positive cases, the prefectural website said. The prefecture has reported six deaths, and four people remain in critical condition.

The last new positive case on Okinawa was reported April 30.

Stars and Stripes reporter Aya Ichihashi contributed to this report.
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Normal: Soldiers still remain under a travel ban

FROM FRONT PAGE

Defense Department schools on the military bases are still conducting classes online only, although people can now use local day care facilities.

‘New normal’

“I think it’s great that we are slowly rolling Bravo out so we are just not allowing the bars and clubs, but we are allowed to sit down in restaurants and to start to enjoy Korea again and allow us to start traveling,” Army Capt. Gabi Romero, 29, a medical operations officer from Covina, Calif., said as he enjoyed lunch at a kebab restaurant in the Anjeung-ri area outside Camp Humphreys.

USFK issued a chart with detailed guidelines Tuesday, explaining that people may resume traveling and going to local establishments such as restaurants, salons and museums in all designated areas, but must avoid bars and clubs, which are at the center of an outbreak in the popular district of Itaewon in Seoul.

The military also urged people to maintain social distancing and to wear masks. However, they were still allowed to enter on-base facilities.

“This is the ‘new normal’ — centered on 3 key tenets: protect yourself, protect your bubble, protect others,” U.S. Forces Korea Commander Gen. Robert Abrams said Tuesday in a tweet.

“We need to ease into this with an abundance of caution,” he said. “Protect the force = protect the mission.”

The military largely locked down its 58,000-strong community after being caught in the middle of the burgeoning pandemic in late February when a massive outbreak began in the southeastern city of Daegu and nearby areas with 500 or more cases reported each day.

The South has been lauded for its efforts to contain the virus largely under control. Officials have expressed concern about recent “sporadic infections” in Itaewon and the Samsung Medical Center in Seoul but said strict social distancing measures did not need to be renewed.

The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 38 new cases Wednesday for a total of 11,110, with 263 deaths.

As of Tuesday, Okinawa had 146 positive cases, the prefectural website said. The prefecture has reported six deaths, and four people remain in critical condition.

The last new positive case on Okinawa was reported April 30.

Stars and Stripes reporter Aya Ichihashi contributed to this report.
burke.matt@stripes.com
Twitter: @MatthewMBurke

Soldiers assigned to U.S. Forces Korea on Wednesday dine at a restaurant outside Camp Humphreys, South Korea, while continuing to social distance.

Sgt. Ervin Dunston gets a haircut off base for the first time in months at a barbershop outside Camp Humphreys, South Korea.

Back to business

Local businesses, which had lost most of their customers due to the restrictions, were ready to make up their losses.

Song Ji Sue, supervisor of Hwa Hwa, a popular Korean barbecue restaurant near Camp Humphreys, said business had dropped by about 80% even though the Americans were allowed to order food curbside curbside and dine-in at Wa- shington state on June 18. “I want to go home and see my family.”

HPCON-Charlie and off-limits for nonessential travel from other bases until further notice. Residents may, however, go to other areas and participate in approved activities there.

Carla Reinisch, who lives in the U.S. Embassy residential area on Yongsan, said it was the only major Army installation without an infection.

USFK has reported 28 confirmed cases, including four active-duty service members, but must have recovered.

“It’s very tiring hanging out here and not being able to go anywhere,” Reinisch said, noting it’s difficult even to go for a walk off base. “It’s been really constraining not being able to actually go out and basically live our lives.”

However, he noted it’s a small step since soldiers remain under a military-wide travel ban that has been extended by the Pentagon until at least June 30 as the virus continues to ravage other countries including the United States.

“The only thing that is really affecting me right now is the travel restrictions,” Fowler said, adding that he has applied for an exception to policy so he can return to his wife and daughter in Washington state on June 18. “I want to go home and see my family.”

“Because of how well things are going here in Korea, I’m glad we are going here in Korea, I’m glad we are here in Korea,” said Army Sgt. Shawn Fowler, 26, of Tucson, Ariz. “It’s been really nice to be here.”

“I think we’ve really done so far,” she said.

“We’re all patient; we’ve all been doing good,” she said. “I feel like we’re not being rewarded for all we’ve done so far,” she said.

Stars and Stripes reporter Yoo Kyong Chang contributed to this report.
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Stars and Stripes

BY DAVE ORNAUER
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Online versions of Advanced Placement tests, administered this year by the College Board due to the coronavirus shuttering high schools around the world, were met with mixed reviews by students and teachers in U.S. Defense Department schools in Asia.

AP tests online is new territory for the College Board, but a spokesman for the Department of Defense Education Activity-Pacific said just four of the 5,128 DODEA students that registered for the online tests reported technical problems. The tests are being given over a two-week period which began May 12 and ends Saturday.

“No other cases were reported to us,” DODEA spokesman Frank O’Gara said Tuesday via email. But some students said they had trouble downloading and submitting their tests and getting them done within the allotted time. The tests normally require three hours to complete when administered in a classroom. This year students were given 45 minutes to complete the online versions. Students also said they were given multiple versions of the same tests.

“College Board said there would be only one version of the exams, which was their justification for making everyone take them at the same time,” said Cameron Murray, a senior at Kubasaki High School, Okinawa, who takes seven AP courses.

The College Board, citing test security, administered the tests worldwide at the same time, meaning Pacific students had to test at 1, 3 and 5 a.m. To give multiple versions of the same test would undo the need to take tests at the same time worldwide, students and teachers said.

Molly Austinson, an AP human geography teacher at Camp Humphreys, South Korea, reported five different sets of questions for her students.

And there were technical glitches; four of her students had to request makeup tests, even those who had answered all the questions, she said.

“I just know so many people (who) have had an issue with the process, and these aren’t kids who would typically have user-error issues,” said Addie Grainger, a senior at Kadena High School, Okinawa, who takes three AP courses.

Teachers and students said they acknowledge the need to be on guard against cheating and sharing answers, “but that’s what content creators at College Board are paid to do,” said Kristen Brown of Humphreys High School, who teaches honors subjects to prepare students for AP courses.

“It’s the most inconsiderate thing,” Brown said of having to take tests in early morning hours.

DODEA officials indicated there have been problems, but they’re not as widespread as students and teachers are saying. O’Gara said the College Board reported Sunday that some students encountered challenges submitting tests.

In social media posts and in reports in state-side newspapers, the College Board acknowledged problems and offered alternatives, including taking screen shots of tests and submitting them by email.

DODEA officials declined to comment on the possible existence of multiple versions of the same tests, citing the fact that they’re not DODEA exams. Repeated attempts to reach College Board officials were not successful.

Students reporting no issues with the AP tests included Ruth-Elizabeth Hansen, a junior at Matthew C. Perry High School, who takes an Advanced Placement exam at 3 a.m. on Saturday, at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan.

“Alexa, open Stars and Stripes”

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Martin Hansen
Ruth-Elizabeth Hansen, a junior at Matthew C. Perry High School, takes an Advanced Placement exam at 3 a.m. on Saturday, at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan.

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MCAS Iwakuni releases tentative reopening plan

By James Bolinger
Stars and Stripes

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan — Marine Col. Lance Lewis has released a tentative plan to “re-open” the air station as long as coronavirus conditions in Japan continue to improve and the base remains free from infection.

The air station, about an hour south of Hiroshima in southern Japan, has reported zero infections. Some base services were authorized to open Wednesday, depending on manpower, such as dine-in options at restaurants and several other support services, according to a news release Tuesday on MCAS Iwakuni’s Facebook page.

“Relaxing further restrictions must wait until the Navy and Air Force (U.S.S. Ronald Reagan) are infection-free or if they have been advised not to quarantine,” Lewis wrote Tuesday. “We must be constantly vigilant as we find ourselves utilizing Social Distancing and wearing face coverings becomes a way of life, the loosening of restrictions will cease.

“Right now, everyone aboard this base needs to continue to focus on adhering to the safety hygiene and distancing measures that have made us successful thus far,” he said. “We cannot have carried the ball this far down the field, only to fumble it as we approach the endzone, like my beloved Redskins every single time.”

Col. Lance Lewis

DOD civilians offered emergency leave for virus illnesses in family

By John Vander
Stars and Stripes

Defense Department civilians can take up to two weeks of paid emergency leave if they or a family member are affected by the coronavirus, the Army said this week.

Civilians are eligible if they are under orders to quarantine or if they have been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine, the Army said in a statement Monday.

The new emergency leave category will be authorized through Dec. 31.

Employees who have symptoms of coronavirus and are diagnosed with it also can receive emergency leave at their normal pay rate.

“They must, however, provide documentation of the government agency that issued the order, which must be signed by the person under quarantine or the name of the health care provider who advised the self-quarantine,” the Army said.

Employees caring for a person under a government order to stay at home or directed by a doctor to quarantine will be paid at two-thirds of their normal pay rate, the Army said.

“This includes parents who care for a child under the age of 18 whose school may be closed or directed by a doctor to quarantine restrictions,” the Army said.

But because the civilian pay system has not yet been adjusted to account for those who take emergency leave to care for others, that category of employees will be paid at the full amount but will have to repay one-third of the sum received, the Army said.

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service will take back the owed sum in future pay periods.

The Army cautioned that some agencies could establish exemptions that make some workers ineligible if they are deemed essential.

Virus outbreak

Navy announces plans to restart promotion boards in July

By Caitlin M. Kenney
WASHINGTON—The Navy will restart selection, promotion, and continuation boards July 1 after they were halted in March due to the coronavirus pandemic, the service announced.

“Our overriding commitment is that no sailor will be disadvantaged by the delay in boards,” Rear Adm. Jeff Hughes, the commander of Navy Personnel Command, said in a statement.

Although the boards were postponed, those who are selected for promotion can expect to be assigned the original date of rank and receive any back pay and allowances they were warranted,”

The decision to postpone them was meant to prevent sailors from having to travel to Millington, Tenn., to sit on these boards, and to limit the number of sailors who would be working closely to one another, according to the Navy.

As part of the plan to restart the boards, the Navy has implemented mitigation precautions in order to minimize the health risks related to the coronavirus to personnel, according to the statement. These measures include adjusting the layout of board rooms to adhere to social distancing, additional cleaning of rooms and daily temperature readings, according to the Navy.

The Navy has also conducted administrative selection boards online during the pause and is working to continue that, according to the statement.

Wednesday, May 21, 2020
Stars and Stripes
**Trump threatens Michigan funding over ballots**

**By Nicholas Riccardi and Darlene Superville**

**Associated Press**

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Wednesday threatened to hold up federal funds for two battleground states because they are trying to make it easier to vote during the coronavirus pandemic.

The president’s tweets targeting Michigan and Nevada were his latest salvo against voting by mail, a practice that he has publicly worried will lead so many people to vote that Republicans will lose in November.

Trump began by targeting Michigan, erroneously describing Democratic Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson’s announcement Tuesday that she would send absentee ballot applications to every voter in the state.

“Michigan sends absentee ballots to 7.7 million people ahead of PRIMARYs and the General Election,” Trump tweeted Wednesday. “This was done illegally and without authorization by a rogue Secretary of State. I will ask to hold up funding to Michigan if they want to go down this Voter Fraud path!”

Trump later made a similar threat against Nevada, which has actually sent ballots to voters for its June 9 state primary, due to the coronavirus pandemic: A federal judge recently cleared Nevada’s decision to mail ballots, which were sent by the Republican secretary of state.

“State of Nevada ‘thinks’ that they can send out illegal vote by mail ballots, creating a great Voter Fraud scenario for the State and the U.S. They can’t! If they do, ‘I think’ I can hold up funds to the State. Sorry, but you must not cheat in elections,” Trump tweeted.

It was not immediately clear what funds Trump was referring to. The states are paying for their elections changes through coronavirus relief spending measures the president signed into law. Trump tagged his acting budget director, his chief of staff and the Treasury Department on the tweets.

Trump’s threats drew an immediate sharp response from Democrats, who alluded to impeaching the president for his threats to withhold aid from Ukraine if that country did not help his reelection effort.

“Trump has gone Ukraine on Michigan and Nevada, threatening to cut off funding for their audacity to not make voters choose between protecting their health and exercising their right to vote,” California Secretary of State Alex Padilla, a Democrat, said in a statement. “We will not allow our democracy to become a casualty of this pandemic.”

Trump has been vocal about his opposition to voting by mail, claiming the practice is ripe for fraud although there is scant evidence of widespread wrongdoing with mail-in voting. Trump himself requested a mail ballot for Florida’s GOP primary last month and he has voted absentee in previous elections.

While Republicans insist that Trump’s position on the issue is nuanced and not simply an effort to suppress Democratic votes, the president undermined those arguments Wednesday morning.

Benson noted Trump was objecting to her doing something that Republicans are also doing in other states. “#Michigan: Hi! I also have a name, it’s Jocelyn Benson. And we sent applications, not ballots. Just like my GOP colleagues in Iowa, Georgia, Nebraska and West Virginia,” she tweeted at the president.

On Monday, Republican National Committee Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel portrayed the party’s $20 million campaign against Democratic efforts to expand mail voting as principled stance to protect the sanctity of the ballot. McDaniel said she had no objection to a system like the one Benson would announce the next day because there is a difference between sending all voters a form to request a ballot as opposed to the actual ballot.

Trump’s campaign has pushed his supporters to vote by mail and says its main objection is to mailing ballots to all voters. Five states that used this method have had no significant voter fraud cases. California earlier this month said it’d mail ballots to all voters for November.

The GOP-controlled Senate has so far stopped Democrats from mandating expanded mail and early voting as part of coronavirus relief bills, arguing states should be able to make decisions on their own election systems.

The battle has largely moved to the courts, with Democrats filing at least 15 lawsuits to force states to expand their programs.

The GOP has fought back. In Texas, Attorney General Ken Paxton, a Republican, has argued that the virus should not automatically entitle voters to request an absentee ballot. A federal judge on Tuesday ruled otherwise, ordering the state to let all voters cite the disease as a legal excuse to request a ballot. Paxton has vowed an appeal.
Trump attacks study, defends using malaria drug with food and supplies. The group is encouraging people to donate at HelpPVA.org.

For now, Stan Brown isn’t having trouble with getting food and other basics. He still has his team of caregivers, but he’s worried about what would happen if one of them exposes him to the virus. He’s concerned about the possibility he could be bound to his bed.

“If one goes down, there’s a good chance I may have gotten it and given it to the next person. It’s a domino effect,” Brown said. “If I had it, I wouldn’t want other people to have to work around me.”

All of his caregivers work for him part time, and a few of them — including the one who contracted the virus — spend their other working hours at nearby nursing homes. Nursing homes and other long-term care facilities have been the sites of major coronavirus outbreaks. According to The New York Times, residents and employees of those facilities account for more than one-third of coronavirus deaths, despite accounting for only 0.5% of the population.

The thought is a constant fear to Brown.

“I’m still anxious,” he said. “I haven’t figured out a plan if things go south. I don’t know what I’m going to do.”

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Trump attacks study, defends using malaria drug

**Paralyzed: ‘I haven’t figured out a plan if things go south,’ vet says**

FROM FRONT PAGE

inside despite Missouri, his home state, beginning its reopening plan last week. It will be a long time before Brown feels safe, he said.

“I won’t feel back to normal until we have a vaccine, even if it levels off,” he said. “I’m not going to feel safe getting out until that happens.”

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to be a deadly force in the United States, paralyzed veterans are struggling to meet their basic needs, such as buying groceries, accessing health care and maintaining their independence. With the virus attacking the lungs, leading to breathing problems, some people with paralysis have respiratory insufficiency, according to the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation. Because they may not have use of their abdominal or intercostal muscles, which form the wall of the chest, they lose the ability to force a cough, making them susceptible to respiratory infections.

The Department of Veterans Affairs operates 25 Spinal Cord Injuries and Disorders Centers across the country and maintains a registry of 24,531 paralyzed veterans. As of this week, 96 paralyzed veterans had tested positive for the coronavirus, said VA press secretary Christina Noel.

Of those, 15 veterans — or 16% — have died.

The fatality rate across the U.S. population has been difficult for experts to estimate because of a lack of testing. Early figures have shown that about 5% of Americans who were confirmed to be infected with the virus have died. According to VA data, 985 of its nearly 12,000 patients — or more than 8% — have died.

Navy veteran Tom Wheaton, his wife, Angela, and their two children have been self-quarantining since March 13 at their Colorado home. Wheaton’s paralysis puts him at high risk for the coronavirus.

In comparison, the virus is “kind of a death sentence” for paralyzed veterans, said Tom Wheaton, a paralyzed Navy veteran and the national treasurer of Paralyzed Veterans of America.

Wheaton, 53, has been quarantining with his family at their home in Golden, Colo., for over two months. As a leader of PVA, Wheaton has spent his days checking on members over the phone and on his iPad. He’s worried about their mental health, he said.

“We’re terrified and trapped — a lot more trapped than the general American,” he said. “It’s completely ground out.”

Wheaton’s wife, Angela, serves as his caregiver, and he’s in constant interaction with their two teenage children. However, a lot of PVA members, like Brown, live alone and rely on hired caregivers to come into their homes — a concept that now creates anxiety and fears of getting sick, Wheaton said.

Members have been calling to “buddy checks” and encourage each other. Wheaton described the calls as a lifeline during this stressful time.

“The anxiety, depression — we want to make sure those aren’t prevalent with our members,” Wheaton said. “We don’t want them to come close to thoughts of suicide, which is a risk for us. Any last month is not making it easier.”

Besides their members’ mental health, PVA is worried about paralyzed veterans being able to meet their basic needs, like having enough food. Sharon Moster, executive director of Ohio’s PVA chapter, has noticed a dramatic rise in the amount of help members need to get groceries.

Moster’s chapter serves about 25 paralyzed veterans in their areas. The organization recently launched a public service announcement to educate people about the unique challenges facing paralyzed veterans during the pandemic and to raise funds to provide veterans with food and supplies. The group is encouraging people to donate at HelpPVA.org.

For now, Stan Brown isn’t having trouble with getting food and other basic supplies. He still has his team of caregivers, but he’s worried about what would happen if one of them exposes him to the virus. He’s concerned about the possibility he could be bound to his bed.

“If one goes down, there’s a good chance I may have gotten it and given it to the next person. It’s a domino effect,” Brown said. “If I had it, I wouldn’t want other people to have to work around me.”

All of his caregivers work for him part time, and a few of them — including the one who contracted the virus — spend their other working hours at nearby nursing homes. Nursing homes and other long-term care facilities have been the sites of major coronavirus outbreaks. According to The New York Times, residents and employees of those facilities account for more than one-third of coronavirus deaths, despite accounting for only 0.5% of the population.

The thought is a constant fear to Brown.

“I’m still anxious,” he said. “I haven’t figured out a plan if things go south. I don’t know what I’m going to do.”

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Trump attacks study, defends using malaria drug

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump emphatically defended himself against criticism from medical experts that his announced use of a malaria drug against the coronavirus could spark wide misuse by Americans of the unproven treatment with potentially fatal side effects.

Trump’s revelation a day earlier that he was taking hydroxychloroquine caught many in his administration by surprise and set off an urgent effort by officials to gather information. But the administration’s attempt to address the concerns of health professionals was undercut by the president himself.

He asserted Tuesday without evidence that a study of veterans raising alarm about the drug was “false” and an “enemy statement,” even as his own government warned that the drug should be administered for COVID-19 only in a hospital or research setting.

“If you look at the one survey, the only bad survey, they were giving it to people that were in very bad shape,” Trump said. “That was an apparent reference to a study of hundreds of patients treated by the Department of Veterans Affairs in which more of those in a group who were administered hydroxychloroquine died than among those who weren’t.

“They were very old. Almost dead,” Trump said. “It was a Trump enemy statement.” During a Cabinet meeting, he elicited a defense of his practice from other officials, including VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, who noted the study in question wasn’t conducted by his agency.

But the drug has not been shown to combat the virus in a multitude of other studies as well. Two large observational studies, each involving around 1,400 patients in New York, recently found no COVID benefit from hydroxychloroquine. Two published last week in the medical journal BMJ reached the same conclusion.

No large, rigorous studies have found the drug safe or effective for preventing or treating COVID-19.
Nations reopen, struggle to define ‘a new normal’

By Nicole Winfield and Mike Corder
Associated Press

ROME — As nations around the world loosen coronavirus restrictions, people are discovering that the return to normal is anything but.

How each of those key sectors manages social distancing and temporary job losses will determine the shape of daily life for millions as researchers race to develop a vaccine that is still probably months, if not years, away from being available to all.

What a return to normal looks like varies widely. For hungry migrant workers in India, it was finally being able to return from a lockdown at home to their village once their crops ripened. For the owners of cruise ship workers stranded at sea for months, it was finally reaching shore Wednesday in Croatia. For wealthy shoppers, it was returning to newly reopened boutiques of America’s Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills, Calif.

In Britain, the leader of the House of Commons said that members of Parliament should return to London to work in person June 2 after weeks of remote working. Jacob Rees-Mogg said that the decision recognizes that “the need for business to continue.” Authorities are likely to limit the number of people allowed into the small chamber, where lawmakers sit shoulder-to-shoulder on long benches.

In Italy, where good food is an art form, restaurants and cafes are facing a huge financial hit as they reopen with new restrictions in place. Many restaurants are already using tables to block and end before Thanksgiving.

The head of the Dutch hospitality industry welcomed a decision to allow bars and restaurants to reopen June 1, but warned about the impact of mandatory social distancing rules.

“The restrictions are unfortunately unworkable” for many businesses, said Rober Willemens of Royal Hospitality and Catering Netherlands, adding that more government support is needed to ensure the survival of many bars and restaurants.

Education is also facing a radical rethink.

Cambridge became the first university in Britain to cancel all face-to-face lectures for the upcoming school year, saying that they will still be held online and streamed online until summer 2021. Other institutions have taken different tactics. The University of New South Wales will bring students back to campus, but redesigned its curriculum to start the semester early in August and end before Thanksgiving, allowing them to have masks, testing and contact tracing.

In South Korea, hundreds of thousands of high school seniors had their temperatures checked and used hand sanitizers as they returned Wednesday, many for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the new normal, people’s gratitude at being able to shop or eat out again is mingling with worries about job security.

Business was slow Wednesday at a Paris farmer’s market with a mixed mood among the masked, gloved vendors. A man selling peonies and petunias said that he was glad to get out and see shoppers again, while a woman selling asparagus and tomatoes behind a makeshift plastic screen blamed that her customers were buying less than usual.

Many governments, including those in scores of U.S. states, are in fierce disagreement over what the new normal should even be. As beaches reopened in Barcelona, Spain, some governments have extended the nation’s state of emergency by another two weeks until June 7.

The new normal should even be.

What a return to normal looks like.

Nurses stage a flash mob organized by Piedmont Nursing Union “Nursind Piemonte” and dedicated to the so-called “Forgotten heroes” in Turin, Italy, on Wednesday.

As beaches reopened in Barcelona, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez asked lawmakers to back a plan to extend the nation’s state of emergency by another two weeks until June 7.

Spain’s main opposition, the conservative Popular Party, rejected the move. “You are like a headless chicken running around not knowing what to do,” Popular Party leader Pablo Casado told Sanchez. “To endorse your extension would be irresponsible.”

While infection rates have been falling in Asia and much of Europe, the pandemic is still spiking in Latin America. Brazil this week became the world’s third worst-hit country with more than 250,000 confirmed cases despite limited testing. In Lima, the capital of Peru, coronavirus patients are filling up the city’s intensive care beds.

US extends heightened border enforcement during pandemic

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A Trump administration policy of quickly expelling most migrants stopped along the border because of the COVID-19 pandemic was indefinitely extended Wednesday, as was still needed to prevent the spread of the virus while in custody.

President Donald Trump’s administration issued the initial 30-day order in March, and it was extended for another month in April. The order has no fixed end date, though it said that the CDC will review the policy every 45 days to ensure it is still necessary.

Administration officials have defended the policy amid criticism from advocates who have said that the U.S. is using health as a pretext to rapidly send asylum-seekers and to enact immigration policies aimed at appealing to supporters of the president in an election year.

“Trump’s goal is not to protect our health, it’s to sow division and advance his political agenda,” said Andrea Flores, deputy director of immigration policy for the American Civil Liberties Union.

Under the policy, CBP has been sending Mexican and Central American migrants they encounter along the southwestern border back to Mexico in about two hours. It is turning people from other countries over to Immigration and Customs Enforcement for rapid repatriation, removing people who might have remained in the country for months, or even years, to pursue asylum claims.

Human Rights First, a nonpartisan human rights organization, said that the CDC order has already been used to block and expel thousands of asylum-seekers to dangerous places.

“This new extension of the CDC order will end U.S. refugee and child protections at the border indefinitely, endangering rather than saving lives,” said Eleanor Acer, the group’s senior director for refugee protection. “There is little doubt that the Trump administration will wield this indefinite ban to expel and block asylum-seekers and children for many months or longer, possibly until this administration is no longer in office.

The U.S. is also quickly expelling migrants encountered entering across the northern border with Canada, though there are far fewer than along the southwest. Acting U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Chad Wolf said in announcing the extension that the restrictions were one of the most critical tools his department has to “prevent the further spread of the virus and to protect the American people, DHS front-line officers and those in their care and custody from COVID-19.”

The previous order was due to expire Wednesday. Redfield said that the new one would remain in effect until “the danger of further introduction of COVID-19 into the United States has ceased to be a serious danger to the public health.” He also noted that vaccines and treatment for the virus were still months away, and that cases were increasing in the U.S., Canada and Mexico.
**States join FEMA effort to counter misinformation**

Associated Press

TRENTON — New Jersey’s top homeland security official received nearly nonstop calls in early March from trucking companies and other logistics firms wanting to know if rumors of an impending national lockdown were true.

They weren’t, and Jared Maples soon learned that the companies were turning to misinformation stemming from text messages shared widely across the country.

State officials debunked the messages, but Maples said that the whole episode was a “whooa” moment for him and other state officials. Weeks later, New Jersey launched a website aimed at debunking misinformation and rumors about COVID-19.

New Jersey’s effort mirrors a rumor-control site set up by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which is part of efforts underway in other states to combat conspiracy theories, hoaxes and rumors about COVID-19.

A federal judge on Tuesday rejected an effort to require Arkansas to release inmates at high risk of contracting the coronavirus and to take other steps to curb the virus’s spread in its prisons.

U.S. District Judge Kristine Baker denied the motion for preliminary injunction filed by a group of inmates who said that the state hasn’t done enough to prevent the virus’ spread. The lawsuit was filed in response to an outbreak at one prison, the Cummins Unit, where 91 inmates have tested positive for the virus and eight have died from the illness caused by it.

The lawsuit sought the release of elderly or disabled inmates who are not posing a threat to the inmates or to the community because of the coronavirus, or for those transferred to home confinement. Baker said that federal law prevents inmates from moving to such releases before the inmates have exhausted administrative remedies.

**Arkansas**

LITTLE ROCK — A federal judge on Tuesday rejected an effort to require Arkansas to release inmates at high risk of contracting the coronavirus and to take other steps to curb the virus’s spread in its prisons.

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**Delaware**

DOVER — Democratic Gov. John Carney on Tuesday announced a further loosening of restrictions on Delaware businesses, but Republican lawmakers claimed that his plan would be done slowly and has abused his authority.

Carney said that retail establishments may start operating by appointment only Wednesday morning, and that restaurants and bars can begin applying Friday to expand outdoor-seating capacity when those businesses reopen next month.

Meanwhile, a group of 15 GOP lawmakers sent a letter to Carney calling for a broad easing of his coronavirus restrictions.

The lawmakers accused Carney of favoring “large and powerful business interests over our local merchants” and of spreading panic and fear “far and wide” through mixed messages and confusion.

**Florida**

TALLAHASSEE — The chief architect of Florida’s coronavirus website was fired this week after a dispute over what information should be made public, underscoring how entwined public health data and politics have become as elected officials move to reopen their communities amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has said that his decision to begin reopening his state has been driven by science, and federal epidemiologists have praised his administration’s daily release of coronavirus data as clear and comprehensible, and user-friendly.

But questions about the integrity of Florida’s COVID-19 dashboard, which provides daily snapshots of Florida’s COVID-19 infections, testing and deaths, have mounted over the past few weeks. A judge granted a temporary order last week.

**Pennsylvania**

HARRISBURG — Nearly 50 Pennsylvania nursing homes have reported 20 or more deaths related to COVID-19 according to partial data released Tuesday by the state Department of Health.

After weeks of delay, state health officials released a list of 557 long-term care facilities in Pennsylvania reporting cases of the coronavirus among residents or staff.

Nursing homes and personal care homes have struggled for months to contain the virus, with COVID-19 related data as staff, testing supplies and personal protective equipment in the early days of the pandemic.

Overdose deaths have eclipsed the number of fatalities from the coronavirus in Pennsylvania, with 88 people dying from drug overdoses, the highest county total for a 30-day span in the county, since early March from grocery chains, trucking companies and other logistics firms wanting to know if rumors of an impending national lockdown were true.

They weren’t, and Jared Maples soon learned that the companies were turning to misinformation stemming from text messages shared widely across the country.

State officials debunked the messages, but Maples said that the whole episode was a “whooa” moment for him and other state officials. Weeks later, New Jersey launched a website aimed at debunking misinformation and rumors about COVID-19.
By David Crary
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Nine sex abuse lawsuits were filed Tuesday in New York against three Boy Scout local councils, signaling an escalation of efforts to pressure councils nationwide to pay a big share of an eventual settlement in the Scouts’ bankruptcy proceedings.

The lawsuits were filed shortly after an easing of coronavirus lockdown rules enabled courts in some parts of New York to resume the handling of civil cases.

One of the lawyers coordinating the filing, Mike Pfau, said that his Seattle-based firm expects to file scores more lawsuits in other parts of New York, as well as in New Jersey and California, after full reopening of courts there.

Two other firms, Oregon-based Crew Janci LLP and Chicago-based Hurley McKenna & Mertz, said that they had similar plans, indicating that there could be hundreds of such lawsuits altogether.

An injunction issued by the bankruptcy judge, Laurie Selber Silverstein, blocks the lawyers from proceeding with lawsuits against the local councils through at least June 8. But several lawyers said that they will press for it to be lifted unless the councils’ financial information is fully disclosed and they agree to contribute significantly to a proposed victim compensation fund.

“The local councils are required to make a substantial contribution,” said Stephen Crew of Crew Janci. “If they don’t, the plan won’t be approved.”

Proceedings are underway at federal bankruptcy court in Delaware aimed at creating a compensation fund for thousands of men molested as youngsters decades ago by scoutmasters or other leaders.

In its bankruptcy filing, the BSA said that the 261 local councils, which have extensive property holdings and other assets, are separate legal entities and should not be included as debtors in the case.

The councils are represented by an ad hoc committee in the proceedings, and negotiations are in progress over disclosure of their assets and records as a step toward determining their contributions to the compensation fund.

Pfau said that he was skeptical the councils would agree to contributions large enough to forestall lawsuits against them.

The lawsuits filed Tuesday involve allegations of abuse from men who were Scouts decades ago in local councils in upstate New York that have subsequently merged into the Leatherstocking Council, the Baden-Powell Council and the Seneca Waterways Council.

Leaders of those three councils declined to comment on the new lawsuits. Two of them referred inquiries to BSA headquarters, which issued a statement reiterating its goal of fairly compensating abuse survivors while preserving the Boy Scouts’ mission.

“We are working with and actively encouraging the ad hoc committee, councils and attorneys representing survivors of abuse to find a solution that will appropriately fund a trust, while also ensuring the future of Scouting,” the statement said.

Biden wins Dem primary in Oregon
Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. — Former Vice President Joe Biden won Oregon’s Democratic presidential primary Tuesday, outpacing Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, who both suspended their campaigns earlier this year.

Republican voters in Oregon’s vast 2nd Congressional District selected a former state senator to be their candidate to replace Rep. Greg Walden, as who didn’t run for a 12th term in the conservative region covering the rural eastern and central part of the state. Cliff Bentz bested former state legislators Jason Atkinson and Knute Buehler.

Bentz will have the advantage in the November election in the predominantly Republican part of the state. His opponent is unclear with a victor not yet declared on the Democratic side. The 2nd is the only Oregon U.S. House District represented by a Republican. Oregon’s four Democratic U.S. House members all won their primaries.
Thousands flee as dams break in central Michigan

Associated Press

MIDLAND, Mich. — Rapidly rising water overtook dams and flooded communities in a swath of Michigan, where authorities ordered about 10,000 people in central Michigan, where flooding struck communities near rain-swollen waterways Saturday, to leave home. By Wednesday morning, an area that was several feet high covered some streets near the river in downtown Midland, including Riverside Park, and reaching a hotel and parking lots.

The river rose Wednesday morning to 34.4 feet in Midland, topping a previous record reading of 33.9 feet set during flooding in 1986, the National Weather Service said.

Its flood stage is 24 feet, and it was expected to crest by day’s end at about 38 feet.

The Weather Service urged anyone near the river to seek higher ground following “catastrophic dam failures” at the Edenville Dam, about 140 miles north of Detroit, and the Sanford Dam, about seven miles downriver. The evacuations come as Michigan remains under a stay-at-home order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer said downtown Midland, a city of 42,000 about 8 miles downstream from the Sanford Dam, faced an especially serious flooding threat. Dow Chemical Co.’s main plant sits on the city’s riverbank.

“In the next 12 to 15 hours, downtown Midland could be under approximately 9 feet of water,” the governor said during a late Tuesday briefing. “We are anticipating an historic high water level.”

Steve Carlson, 61, said he and his wife, Patty, fled their Midland home about 8:30 p.m. Tuesday on their own accord after an evacuation order was issued for a large swath of the city and they noticed neighborhood crevices were spilling over local roads, threatening some homes.

“They had risen a lot and the worst was yet to come,” he said Wednesday morning.

One couple who lives in their neighborhood decided to stay put, but Carlson said everyone else evacuated from the area. They spent the night in a hotel. He said they’ve been wearing face masks in the hotel to protect themselves from the coronavirus.

“The hotel was very happy to be see people coming in. There were refugees coming in,” he said with a laugh.

Further down the Tittabawassee River, communities in Saginaw County were on alert for flooding, with a flash flood watch in effect Wednesday.

By the numbers

3.7M

Births last year in the United States, a roughly 1% drop from 2018. It’s the fifth consecutive year that births have declined.

34

Birth rates fell for women 34 and younger, and rose for women in their late 30s and early 40s.

Democrats protest removal of Transportation watchdog

BY MATTHEW DALY AND DAVID KOENIG

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Congressional Democrats are protesting President Donald Trump’s decision to remove the Transportation Department’s acting inspector general, the latest in a string of actions by Trump to fire or replace government watchdogs.

The Democratic chairs of three House panels on Tuesday demanded that Mitch Behm be reinstated immediately as acting inspector general.

The lawmakers also demanded that the Trump administration turn over information about current investigations that might have played a role in Behm’s removal, including a review of whether Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao has given preferential treatment to Kentucky. Her husband, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Kentucky Republican, is seeking reelection this year.

Behm’s removal “is the latest in a series of politically motivated firings of inspectors general by President Trump,” the lawmakers wrote. “This assault on the integrity and independence of inspectors general appears to be an intentional campaign to undermine their ability to expose corruption and protect taxpayer dollars from waste, fraud and abuse.”

The letter was signed by Rep. Peter DeFazio of Oregon, chairman of the House Transportation Committee; Oversight Committee Chair Carolyn Maloney of New York; and Virginia Rep. Gerald Connolly, who leads an Oversight subcommittee.

A spokesman for Chao said Behm was not fired and continues to serve as acting inspector general. Howard Elliott, administrator of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, is replacing Behm while continuing to lead the pipeline agency.

“Mr. Elliott will bring decades of valuable expertise to the role of acting inspector general, both in safety and in law enforcement,” the spokesman said, noting that Elliott came out of retirement to lead the pipeline agency after serving as safety chief for CSX Transportation, a large freight railroad company.

US births down, virus may lower them more

Associated Press

NEW YORK — U.S. births continued to fall last year, leading to the lowest number of newborns in 35 years.

The decline is the latest sign of a prolonged national “baby bust” that’s been going on for more than a decade. And some experts believe the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on the economy will suppress the numbers further.

“This unpredictable environment, and anxiety about the future, is going to make women think twice about having children,” said Dr. Denise Jamieson, chair of obstetrics and gynecology at Emory University.

The latest numbers were released Wednesday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The report, which is considered preliminary, is based on a review of more than 99% of birth certificates issued last year.

The CDC found the number of births fell about 1% from 2018, to about 3.7 million. Birth rates continued to fall for teen moms and for women in their 20s.

Aside from a one-year uptick in 2014, U.S. births have been falling every year since 2007, when a recession hit. The drop continued after the economy rebounded.

Experts say there are a number of causes, but chief among them are shifting attitudes about motherhood: Many women and couples delay childbearing and have fewer kids once they start.

The economy is a factor, but not because of short-term cycles in hiring. Many jobs are low-paying and unstable, and coupled with high rents and other factors have caused women and couples to be much more cautious about having kids, said Dr. John Santelli, a Virginia fertility researcher.

The impact of the last recession “is probably having a lot of ‘coronababies’ is ‘widely perceived as a myth,’” said Hans-Peter Kohler, a University of Pennsylvania fertility researcher.

The debate most demographers say there are a number of causes, but chief among them are shifting attitudes about motherhood: Many women and couples delay childbearing and have fewer kids once they start.

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The impact of the last recession “is probably having a lot of ‘coronababies’ is ‘widely perceived as a myth,’” said Hans-Peter Kohler, a University of Pennsylvania fertility researcher.

The debate most demographers agree is not about whether there will be a decline, but whether it will be lasting, he said.

SOURCE: The Associated Press
**AMERICAN ROUNDPUP**

**Porn actor fighting to save childhood tree**

**NY** — Porn actor Ron Jeremy is fighting to save a tree his father planted outside their New York home the day he was born.

Jeremy took to Twitter, saying that utility Con Edison was going to cut down the tree that was planted in Queens in 1953. Jeremy, who has been staying at a Hollywood hotel during the coronavirus pandemic, told the New York Daily News that a neighbor let him know the trunk was wrapped in yellow tape last week.

The tree is on city property, and the Parks Department can choose to remove it, according to Con Edison.

Jeremy said he considered traveling to New York to protest the tree’s removal but didn’t feel comfortable flying.

**Scientists: Lava from eruption still cooling**

**HI** — Lava from the Kilauea volcano eruption in May 2018 is still cooling down and estimated to be only halfway cooled, scientists said.

The U.S. Geological Survey’s Hawaiian Volcano Observatory said cooled exterior lava has insolated deeper areas of the lava flow, The Hawaii Tribune-Herald reported.

The exterior cooled because of exposure to air and rain, but the insulation is expected to keep some rock further below at extremely high temperatures for years, observatory geologist Carolyn Parcheta said.

Based on the average thickness of the lava of about 82 feet, Parcheta said there is a likelihood the liquid lava, or lava higher than about 1,500 degrees Fahrenheit, still exists in lava delta spots beneath the surface.

**Police drag street racers to jail in crackdown**

**GA** — Atlanta Police said that they arrested 44 people and issued 114 tickets over the weekend for off-road offenses related to illegal street racing.

Racers have been particularly noticeable in Atlanta since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, with less traffic giving them more room to speed along Georgia’s roads and freeways.

Charges included speeding, reckless driving, and laying drag, which Georgia law defines as creating a danger by driving a car in circles or zigzags. Other criminal charges included driving under the influence, drinking in public and marijuana possession, with 29 vehicles impounded.

**Church begins removal of damaged statue**

**UT** — The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints started work to temporarily remove a damaged statue from the church’s Salt Lake Temple.

Removal of the Angel Moroni statue with a crane began as part of a four-year project to renovate and restore the temple, The Deseret News reported.

Work progresses on multiple levels of scaffolding secured the statue, which is 210 feet above Temple Square in Salt Lake City.

Workers placed straps around the 12-foot-6-inch figure, which is made of hammered copper and covered in 22-karat gold leaf.

The statue was damaged during a 5.7 magnitude earthquake that struck west of Salt Lake City March 18.

**Eagle camera returns, watching new eggs**

**AK** — Anchorage, Alaska — Two bald eagles watching over a pair of eggs in their Alaska nest could be joined by an audience of online viewers who are also eager to see the chicks hatch.

The live camera feed called Kenai Eagle Cam is part of the City of Kenai’s YouTube channel, which is available on the city’s website, The Anchorage Daily News reported.

The eagle cam, a partnership between the city and the Kenai Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center, went live in 2017 and was also running in 2018. The video feed’s first summer online attracted millions of views.

The eggs produced by eagles named Aurora and Redoubt are expected to hatch between May 28 and June 2, city spokeswoman Christine Cunningham said.

**Fire ruins nearly all of school’s football gear**

**FL** — Tampa — A fire on the campus of a Tampa high school destroyed nearly all of its football program’s equipment, from game day necessities to practice dummies and more.

Fire officials said the blaze at Blake High School was completely contained in under 45 minutes, but destroyed the 10-by-20 foot shed that housed the school’s equipment.

The school’s game-day equipment, field markers, pylons, chains, practice equipment, pop-up dummies, pads and all daily workout gear are presumed lost.

**Boater injured byizzly in attack near cub**

**OR** — A boater who inadvertedly came between the parent and her cub, a Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks official said. A helicopter took the man to a hospital for treatment of non-life- threatening injuries, The Great Falls Tribune reported.

Greg Lemon, a Fish, Wildlife and Parks department spokesman, said a man was a member of a group taking boats down the Sun River was attacked after he stepped into some bushes without being aware of the animals.

“He put himself between the sow and the cub,” Lemon said.

“The sow saw him and immediately attacked him, bit him in a couple of places.”

“Right now the scene has been cleared and the sow swam the river and the cub stayed on the other side, but we’re not going to take any further action with the bears,” Lemon said.

**Police: Man shoots himself in groin at party**

**CA** — Los Angeles — A man shot himself in the groin at a Hollywood Hills party when a man accidentally shot himself in the groin, Los Angeles police said.

Officers responding to noise complaints found more than 100 people gathered at an island-term rental property that appeared to have been reserved for the occasion, said police Lt. Mark Chong.

The officers heard a single gunshot and called for backup, Chong said. An investigation revealed that a man had been shot in his groin area. The wound is believed to have been accidentally self-inflicted and not life-threatening, Chong said.

Mayor fined for listing donors in small print

**OR** — Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler was fined $500 for listing his largest contributors on his campaign mailer in type that was too small, and two other candidates in city races were given warnings for not properly disclosing their largest donors on their websites and social media accounts.

The city charter says the disclosures have to be legible to a person “with average reading, vision and hearing faculties,” and that the font has to be the same size or larger than most other words on the material.

One of Wheeler’s opponents, Ozzie Gonzalez, and city council candidate Keith Wilson could also be fined for not listing top donors on their websites and social media accounts.

From wire reports
Trying to strike the right chord

Concert industry plans socially distant shows as states start to reopen

By KRISTIN M. HALL
Associated Press

The last time bassist Jon Jones played a concert with his country group Eli Young Band was March 8. He hopes to hit the stage again in June to launch a new drive-in concert series in his first return to live music with fans since the devastating coronavirus.

“This is going to be a surreal kind of setting,” Jones said of plans to play acoustically to 400 cars full of people at the new Texas Rangers stadium in Arlington, Texas. As states start to let businesses reopen under limitations, music industry organizers are testing new models of smaller, socially distant concerts. Jones is cautiously optimistic that drive-in concerts might help crack open a door for musicians that slammed shut quickly in March.

“We’re going to be one of those last industries, those last segments that opens up, unfortunately,” Jones said. “I do hope that everybody is cautious and opens up appropriately and slowly.”

George Couri, of artist management company Triple 8 Management, teamed up with the Rangers to put on the four-night concert series called Concert in Your Car starting June 4. The interest was so high that tickets sold out quickly and additional shows were added. In all 3,200 tickets have been sold.

“It’s about creating an experience for live music again,” Couri said. “The big driver for me is to prove it can work. It would give people hope that this can be repeated again and again in many different places.”

Bringing back live concerts hasn’t been easy. A venue in Arkansas had to postpone an indoor concert that would have defied the state’s ban on large gatherings after health officials ordered the show shut down. The concert featuring singer Travis McCready went on Monday night.

Drive-in concerts aren’t new, but in the wake of the pandemic, the idea is taking hold in Europe and the United States. Country star Keith Urban played a drive-in theater in Tennessee last week with scaled-back production and crowd, but he said that he hopes the concert industry in the near future will pivot to a drive-in style, but with larger capacity.

“The stage is going to be coming out to the parking lot and people will be staying in their cars,” said Couri. “It will be an endless tailgate party.”

In Florida, DJ D-Nice, who has been entertaining people online with his popular DJ sets on Instagram called #ClubQuarantine, played music for first responders in their cars May 16. Concert promoter and venue operator Live Nation is planning to test fanless concerts, drive-in concerts and “reduced-capacity shows” indoors and outdoors, according to President and CEO Michael Rapino, who spoke about the ideas on an investor call.

Tailgate Fest in California proved the concept was viable as an option before the pandemic. The festival where fans are encouraged to watch from their RVs, trucks or cars is going into its third year this August.

Melissa Carbone, the CEO of Tailgate Fest, said there are a lot of changes coming to the festival this year because of the coronavirus, including removing a general admission pit area and a VIP pool party, and they are expecting attendance to drop from last year’s high of 25,000. The lineup of Dierks Bentley, Lynyrd Skynyrd and TLC hasn’t changed as of yet.

The World Health Organization has guidance and risk assessments for mass gatherings during the outbreak, said Lucia Mullen, an analyst at Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security and part of the WHO’s expert cell for mass gatherings and COVID-19.

For concerts, Mullen said recommendations included moving events outdoors, limiting attendance, spacing people out, taking temperatures of participants and staff, hand sanitizing stations and extra cleaning. But she said organizers should also look at the aftereffects of holding a mass gathering in an outbreak, such as contract tracing.

“If they know who is going there so they can follow up with them if they do find out there is a case and alert all of the participants so they can get themselves checked out,” Mullen said.

In a rapidly changing outlook, Mullen said event organizers should rely heavily on the advice of local health officials.

“The more weeks can change an epidemiological context in a city,” she said.

For most bands, touring is a large majority of their income, well above what they get for releasing albums. But Couri said this initial launch of drive-in concerts at the Texas stadium won’t be a huge money-making endeavor early on.

They are charging $40 for each car, and all tickets have to be purchased in advance. No concessions or merchandise will be available for sale to reduce contact between people. All bands will play acoustically, so there’s minimal production crew needed. There won’t even be outdoor speakers because the music will be transmitted by radio.

Jones said for him and the members of the Eli Young Band, they aren’t doing the drive-in shows solely to make up lost income, but instead to give music back to the fans.

“I think people need something safe that they can go do and if we can be that, that’s awesome,” Jones said.
**TRUMP CAN EXPLOIT BIDEN’S FREQUENT LEFT TURNS**

**BY HENRY OLSEN**

The Washington Post

Joe Biden’s announcement that he will revoke permits for the Keystone XL pipeline if elected is more than a policy statement: it’s a political statement. And it’s yet another sign that the former vice president will talk to the center but govern from the left.

Blocking the pipeline has been a cause celebre for environmentalists for more than a decade. Because it ships crude oil produced from Canadian tar sands in Alberta, they argue that it promotes the exploitation of environmentally dangerous fossil fuels. Environmentalists also argue that this encourages climate change by making another source of energy available. The gas-causing fuel commercially viable. They succeeded in persuading President Barack Obama to veto the project in 2015 by denying necessary federal permits, but President Donald Trump reversed that decision after taking office.

Biden, too, has campaigned as a more centrist candidate on energy policy. He’s refused to fully support the Green New Deal, acknowledging the need for oil and gas for the time being. He has cast a vote of confidence in a ban on fracking. But his decision to block an energy project already underway clashes with that message. So, too, does his decision to appoint the hard-line progressive Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., to co-chair one of his campaign’s committees on climate policy. It is a prime example of Biden’s mistake to the left to court pro-
gressive support.

Throughout his career, Biden has moved to the left as Democratic politics changed. This is most clearly seen in his mutating stances on abortion. He began his Senate career as an abortion opponent, going so far as to vote for a constitutional amendment overturning Roe v. Wade. He abandoned his 40-plus-year history of supporting the Hyde Amendment, which prevents Medicaid aid from paying for most abortions, within days of being challenged on his views last summer on a court case.

Health care is another issue for which Biden has tilted leftward. During the Bill Clinton administration, Biden supported the bill, but now he’s con-
orably skewed him for during the Demo-
cratic debate last June. Now, he wants to get rid of restrictions on Medicare for All, and he wants to expand Medicaid for gay marriage in the 1990s, for it in 2012. He advocated increasing the Social Security retirement age; pushed for mak-
ing sentences for possessing crack much harsher than those for having cocaine; and supported the Iraq War — all of which he has changed his mind on.

This achieves, this is unremarkable. Politicians with long careers often bend with time and, in this, Biden is no excep-
tion. What’s remarkable is that the bend-
ing always seems to go to the left, and that
he takes his new position with a righteous moralism that acts as a perfume to cover the stench of his confusion. Gentle certainties should be concerned about this well-established pattern. If they
Biden back, they will genuinely get some
one committed to prudence and national
unity? Or will they get some whose overriding passion is to be acclaimed by his enemies? Whatever he has to say to win the applause?

Trump would do well to focus on this when he starts to define Biden. Biden’s fre-
quency of vacillations might be viewed as ev-
erying, but Trump’s own verbal inaccuracies and serial misstatements make him a less than compelling candidate to oppose. A crazy liberal would also likely backfire. The presumptive Democratic nominee has long practiced the art of trending left but sounding reasonable, keeping just enough room between his latest deepest conviction and those of the left to maintain plausible deniability. These are only two of the rea-
sons the former vice president for dear-of-foe for Trump, provided he maintains a minimal veneer of competence.

Trump should instead attack Biden for being a weak and vain man who adopts the views of those whose approval he craves. It’s a truer charge than the al-
terneck of American politics. He is a prime example of what it is that will wound Biden’s pride. Like many pliant people, he is convinced of his strength and decisive and is likely to lash out in fury at any perceived slight. The former vice

Henry Olsen is a Washington Post columnist and a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center.
Faith in medicine and science is all too often based on trust. But today, in the rush to share scientific progress in combating COVID-19, that trust is being undermined.

Private companies, governments, and research institutes are holding news conferences to report potential breakthroughs that cannot be verified. The results are always favorable, but the full data on which the announcements are based are not immediately available for critical review.

This is "publication by press release," and it's damaging trust in the fundamental methods of science and medicine at a time when we need it most.

The most recent example is Moderna's claim Monday of favorable results in its vaccine trial, which it announced without revealing any of the underlying data. The announcement added billions of dollars to the value of the company, with its shares jumping almost 20%. Many analysts believe it contributed to a 900-point gain in the Dow Jones industrial average.

The Moderna announcement described a safety trial of its vaccine based on eight healthy volunteers. The claim was that all eight people, who also recovered, had little to no detectable levels of neutralizing antibodies equivalent to those found in convalescent serum of those who recovered from COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus. What to make of that claim? Hard to say, because we have no sense of what those levels were. This is the equivalent of a chief executive of a public company announcing a favorable earnings report without supplying supporting financial data, which the Securities and Exchange Commission would never allow.

There is a legitimate question regarding what Moderna reported and what means the scientific and medical literature reports that some people who have recovered have little to no detectable neutralizing antibodies. There is even existing scientific literature that suggests it is possible neutralizing antibodies may not protect animals or humans from infection or reinfection by coronaviruses.

Such "publication by press release" seems to be a standard practice lately. The National Institutes of Health announced last month that the drug remdesivir offered a clear benefit to COVID-19 patients with moderate disease, shortening the length of their hospital stay by several days. But did it really? Twenty days after the announcement, the supporting data has still not been published. Without the data, no doctor treating a patient can be sure they are doing the right thing.

Another paper, published the same day, found that remdesivir had no measurable effect on patient survival or the amount of virus detectable in nasopharynx and lung secretions. What then should a practicing physician do? Follow the unsupported advice of a news announcement or a medical report published in a leading scientific journal? This is not an idle question: The NIH announcement triggered a global stampede for limited supplies of the drug.

The case is more nuanced for the vaccine developed by the Jenner Institute at Oxford University, though the mileposts remain the same: It started with a public pronouncement of favorable results from an early study, this time in monkeys, well before any data was publicly released. An NIH scientist working on a trial of the Oxford vaccine gave an interview to The New York Times, claiming the drug was a "success."

But the data, released as a prepublication version more than two weeks later, didn't quite live up to the early claim. All of the vaccinated monkeys became infected when exposed to the virus. Though there was some reduction in the amount of viral RNA detected in the lungs, there was no reduction in the nasal secretions in the vaccinated monkeys. So the positive result reported by the Oxford group turned out not to be protection from infection at all, something we should all agree is what a successful vaccine would do. Instead, it lowered only the amount of virus recoverable from the vaccinated monkey's lung.

To the Jenner Institute's credit, it does warn visitors to its website that there have been many false reports about the progress of its vaccine trial. Still, having a scientist working on the trial present preliminary results in such a positive manner without having yet released the full data is cause for concern.

We all understand the need to share scientific and medical data as rapidly as possible in this time of crisis. But a media announcement alone is not enough. There are other ways to share the data quickly and transparently: posting manuscripts before review or acceptance on publicly available websites or working with journals to allow an early but limited release of the data that allows doctors and scientists to reach their own conclusion, based on the evidence available.

The media also bears responsibility. Asking experts to opine on unsubstantiated claims is not useful. Medicine and science are not matters of majority opinion; they are matters of fact supported by transparent data. This is the backbone of scientific and medical integrity and our only hope to end this pandemic. We can't give up on our standards now.

William Haseltine is a former Harvard University medical school professor and chairman of a university's cancer and HIV/AIDS research department. He was a scientific advisor on an independent assessment of the think tank ACCESS Health International.

**Rush to share good news is undermining science**

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**The unsung war heroes of the National Rifle Association**

**By Frank Smyth**

The National Rifle Association of America has a long, exquisite history of service to the nation. Many of its leaders from past generations were war heroes. But their legacies, largely for political reasons, are barely known today.

The NRA was founded in 1871 by veteran Union officers in New York City six years after the Civil War. They knew that both the Union and Confederate armies had tipped the balance in favor of modern European wars. Their aim was to improve rifle training and support efforts to make firearms safer.

NRA co-founder William Conant Church had been a journalist, once slightly wounded during the Civil War. Battle of Williamsburg in Virginia. He later became an Army brevet lieutenant colonel. The other NRA co-founder, George Wood Wingate, who had served as a Union cavalryman in the Civil War, was promoted to sergeant during fighting in Carlisle, Pa., during nearby Battle of Gettysburg.

Wingate later wrote the Manual of Rifle Practice, and his training regimen was adopted by most branches of military service and state national guards. Church published his rifle manual in his Army and Navy Journal and Gazette of the Regular and Volunteer Forces, the first of its kind later renamed Armed Forces Journal. In its pages, Church also became the first to advocate for a new vocabulary — one that disparages blacks and one that disparages Indians — from its vocabulary, doing so a half century before the turn of the 20th century. By then he had lost the right hand in a hunting accident. He later helped design and deploy the tanks credited with having tipped the balance in favor of recent European wars.

James A. Drain led the NRA after the turn of the 20th century. By then he had lost his right hand in a hunting accident. But he still later served in World War I as a lieutenant colonel leading an ordnance corps in France. He later helped design and deploy the tanks credited with helping defeat the Central Powers, earning him the Army Distinguished Service Medal.

Milton A. Reckord was, until recently, the longest serving chief executive of the NRA. Reckord served in the Mexican Expedition. During World War I, he led troops in the Battle of Meuse-Argonne in the Allied offensive, for which he was bestowed upon him the Croix de Guerre with Palm and his own nation awarded him the Distinguished Service Medal. In World War II, he first trained recruits and then became the Provost Marshal for Europe in charge of enemy prisoners of war, earning the Distinguished Service Medal with a bronze oak leaf cluster, and the Bronze Star.

The NRA has honored other war heroes among the NRA’s past leadership like the late World War II Marine fighter pilot Joe Foss, who received the Medal of Honor for his aerial combat role in the Battle of Guadalcanal. But Foss, unlike many other war heroes, joined the NRA board after the organization’s “shift” to prioritize gun rights, as one former NRA president put it, in 1977 in what is still known in the lore as the “Cincinnati Revolt.”

Three years before, in 1974, Reckord, at 94, was interviewed by NRA officials in his home for an NRA oral history. In it, he described how a law that he and the NRA supported during the Tommy Gun Days of Prohibition that outlawed automatic firearms (still on the books) was “sane, reasonable and effective.” The NRA oral history was never published.

Mike A. Edson led the NRA through the late 1950s. He became known as “Red Mike” back when he was commanding a Marine expeditionary detachment in the late 1920s in Nicaragua, where he earned the Navy Cross. He later earned the Medal of Honor for leading the defense of “Edson’s Ridge,” overseeing an airfield, in the Battle of Guadalcanal. Edson’s other honors included two Legion of Merit decorations, a Presidential Unit Citation with two bronze stars, and, from the United Kingdom, the Distinguished Service Order.

Franklin L. Orth led the NRA through the 1960s. He entered World War II as a captain in the infantry who “served on extra-hazardous duty in long-range penetrations behind the Japanese lines in Burma.” Orth later served in the Eisenhower administration as deputy assistant secretary of the Army, and as president of the U.S. Olympic Committee.

Orth’s legacy, however, is also largely forgotten. “The NRA does not advocate an ‘ostriech’ attitude toward firearms legislation,” said Orth in 1967, one year before the NRA supported the Gun Control Act of 1968. “We recognize that the dynamism and complexities of modern society create new problems which demand new solutions.” It was this federal gun law that radicalized the NRA along with others who formed the nation’s gun rights movement in the 1970s.

Since then, the NRA’s new leaders have focused more on the future than the past. Politics is never a good reason, however, to keep the legacies of any war heroes in the dark.

Frank Smyth is author of “The NRA: The Unauthorized History.”
Brighten your day!

Read letters from kids to deployed servicemembers and their heartwarming responses.

**LETTER FROM EMILY**

Dear Pen pal!
My name is Emily.
I live in Germany.
Where do you live?

From Emily

**LETTER FROM NICK**

Dear Emily,
My name is Nick. I live in Hawaii, but I used to live in Germany for 3 years.
Do you have a pet?

From Nick
Brady holds workout with new teammates at prep field

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Tom Brady isn't letting the coronavirus pandemic — or NFL rules against players working out at team facilities — keep him from preparing for a new season with his new Tampa Bay team.

Brady gathered some of his Buccaneers teammates on a high school field early Tuesday for a throwing session. Brady wore a Buccaneers helmet and an orange jersey over his shoulder pads. The informal, players-only workout at Berkeley Preparatory School lasted two hours, according to The Tampa Bay Times.

It's not unusual for quarterbacks to organize passing workouts before training camp, but the pandemic has changed normal routines. Teams have had to rely on virtual meetings instead of traditional offseason programs as the NFL tries to make plans for a 2020 season, possibly without fans at stadiums.

Because of the pandemic, which has forced social distancing and sheltering at home as the new rules, any gathering of players is notable — especially one involving Brady, a six-time Super Bowl champion with the New England Patriots. Brady, 42, signed a two-year, $50 million contract with the Bucs in March.

After signing with the Bucs, Brady asked for phone numbers of his teammates. He apparently made use of that list to organize Tuesday's workout.

It was an encouraging sign for fans on the same day NFL teams began opening facilities to a limited number of personnel. The facilities are still off-limits for coaches and players, except for players undergoing injury rehabilitation.

Center Ryan Jensen practiced shotgun snaps to Brady on the artificial turf football field. Though he's the newcomer, Brady was in charge, according to the newspaper. Brady walked through a route with receiver Mike Evans, demonstrating for the veteran and other players exactly where to make their cuts. Quarterbacks Blaine Gabbert and Ryan Griffin also threw passes.

Among other players attending the session were receiver Scotty Miller, tight ends Cameron Brate and O.J. Howard and running back Dare Ogunbowale.

Teams cannot organize such workouts, and the Buccaneers did not publicize Tuesday's session. There was no immediate reply from the team to a request from The Associated Press for comment on the workout.

Tuesday's session went better than Brady's attempt to work out privately at a Tampa park last month. After he was told by a security guard that the park was closed and he had to leave, Brady received an apology from Mayor Jane Castor.

Patriots. Brady, 42, signed a two-year, $50 million contract with the Bucs in March.

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It was an encouraging sign for fans on the same day NFL teams began opening facilities to a limited number of personnel. The facilities are still off-limits for coaches and players, except for players undergoing injury rehabilitation.

Center Ryan Jensen practiced shotgun snaps to Brady on the artificial turf football field. Though he's the newcomer, Brady was in charge, according to the newspaper. Brady walked through a route with receiver Mike Evans, demonstrating for the veteran and other players exactly where to make their cuts. Quarterbacks Blaine Gabbert and Ryan Griffin also threw passes.

Among other players attending the session were receiver Scotty Miller, tight ends Cameron Brate and O.J. Howard and running back Dare Ogunbowale.

Teams cannot organize such workouts, and the Buccaneers did not publicize Tuesday's session. There was no immediate reply from the team to a request from The Associated Press for comment on the workout.

Tuesday's session went better than Brady's attempt to work out privately at a Tampa park last month. After he was told by a security guard that the park was closed and he had to leave, Brady received an apology from Mayor Jane Castor.

By Tom Withers

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Browns center JC Tretter is cautiously optimistic the NFL season — at least some version of it — will take place in 2020. He's just not certain when it will start.

The newly elected president of the NFL Players Association, Tretter said Tuesday that the COVID-19 virus outbreak has hatched so many unknowns and created such a fluid situation it's impossible to predict when football will be back — or what it will look like.

“This is a contact disease, and we play a contact sport,” Tretter said during a Zoom video conference. “Voters in his peers just days before the global pandemic brought the sports world to a standstill in March, Tretter said he's solely focused on the health of the league's players, who have remained in virtual contact during an offseason none of them could have imagined.

Tretter is encouraged that some teams have reopened their facilities, but he acknowledged there's a "long list of hurdles" to be cleared before players can get back together to prepare for a season that remains uncertain and strangely distant.

The 29-year-old Tretter, who graduated from Cornell with a degree in industrial labor relations, has been deeply involved in discussions ranging from scheduling to preexisting medical conditions and other safety considerations.

Everything is in play. Nothing is higher on Tretter's checklist than the well-being of players who are facing a ruthless, invisible opponent with an ever-changing game plan.

Although he's a relative rookie when it comes to football diplomacy, Tretter gave several non-committal answers Tuesday.

"There's no bad idea at this point, and you kind of have to think outside the box," Tretter said when asked about the potential of players wearing modified face masks with surgical materials. "And just because it's an idea doesn't mean things are definitely going to happen, but you need to explore it, and you need to understand it. You need to be fit."

You have to focus on getting inside of this world of coronavirus and don't get caught up in trying to fit coronavirus inside this world. The way coronavirus has kind of changed how every industry is working, you can't expect just to throw football back in and think that the virus is going to kneel down to almighty football.

Tretter said the union has been holding biweekly conference calls for players and their spouses.

For players to feel confident outside their homes, Tretter said they'll need guarantees that every precaution has been taken.

"The way this thing passes along is through contact, and that's what we do for a living," he said. "We interact with each other at the facility, at practice, weight lifting, at the meal room, it's shoulder to shoulder standing by each other, passing things around.

So there is a long list of ideas we need to come up with on how to make this environment safe for us. And that's why it's going to be a lot of thinking involved in that."
Border poses possible hurdle for NHL

Restrictions could cause travel problems for Canadian squads

BY JOHN WAWROW AND STEPHEN WHYNOS
Associated Press

The NHL is still more than a week away from determining a return-to-play format, a person familiar with discussions told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

And what that plan resembles could be complicated further should the U.S. and Canada extend border restrictions to nonessential travel into July, the person said, speaking on the condition of anonymity because the discussions are private.

The person spoke after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced border restrictions will stay in effect through June 21. This marks the second time the restrictions have been extended since first being put into place March 18 because of the new coronavirus pandemic.

“I am hopeful that today’s announcement will not have a material impact on our return to play discussions and timeline,” NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly wrote in an email.

Though the NHL has left open the possibility of having training camps as late as early August, it was unclear what effect further border restrictions will have on a league with seven of its 31 teams based in Canada.

There’s also a question of how travel restrictions will affect players, many of whom have returned to their offseason homes including about 17% of players currently self-isolating overseas.

In a separate development, the NHLPA's executive board voted unanimously to defer players' regular-season salaries through the end of May. Players were owed their final checks on April 15, before voting to defer those payments for a month.

The decision provides temporary relief to the NHL's bottom line, opening the possibility of players forging some or the entire remainder of their final checks.

The players stand to lose all or a portion of what they are owed under the collective bargaining agreement.

Players and owners split hockey-related revenue on a 50-50 basis, with a percentage of players' salaries placed in an escrow fund. Owners can draw from the fund should their share fall below 50%, which is projected to happen this season.

Owners considered the players’ previous decision to defer payment as a sign of good faith. Daly declined to comment on the latest deferment, saying it’s a decision left entirely to players.

The NHL paused its season on March 12, with Commissioner Gary Bettman adamant the league intends to award the Stanley Cup, even if it means extending the playoffs into September.

The decision on when and how to resume the season is being left with a committee made up of representatives of the NHL and NHL Players' Association.

The topics of discussion include whether it's feasible to conclude all or a portion of the regular season or go directly into the playoffs. The season was postponed with 189 games remaining and teams having played an uneven number of games.

Among the options discussed are an expanded playoff format, featuring as many as 24 teams, and the likelihood of having groups of teams gather and play games a select number of hub cities around the continent and without fans present.

There is no set deadline as to when play must resume before the NHL considers canceling the season. Games could feasibly be played into October with the 2020-21 season potentially opening in December or January.

New Jersey Devils defenseman Connor Carrick said both sides are attempting to make the best of a difficult situation.

“It’s going to be an interesting solution, and I think you embrace the novelty with it,” Carrick said.

Sports writer Tom Canavan contributed.

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Rain pushes back Darlington return for Xfinity Series

Race postponed until Thursday

By Pete Iacobelli
Associated Press

DARLINGTON, S.C. — Noah Gragson couldn’t wait to get back to Xfinity Series racing at Darlington.

Instead, he and the rest of the competitors will have to wait until Thursday after heavy rain postponed the series’ first race since March, when the coronavirus pandemic shut down sports.

“After two months of waiting, what’s another couple of days?” Gragson said.

NASCAR officials called the race about two hours after the scheduled 6 p.m. start. The event is now set for Thursday at noon.

The track was dry and fast until the rains hit about 4 p.m. The storms increased and lessened several times during that stretch and NASCAR had Air Titans out at least three times when it looked like things might clear.

The Rangers would have the option to do that in their new ballpark instead of returning to Arizona whenever it is time to get back to spring training.

They still haven’t played a game, or even had an organized workout, in their $1.2 billion stadium with a retractable roof.

Spring training has been on hold more than two months because of the coronavirus pandemic, also delaying the start of the regular season. That wiped out two planned exhibitions at Globe Life Field, along with 25 regular-season home games so far.

Major League Baseball owners last week approved a proposal that could lead to the season starting in July. That would be preceded by a second spring training period, and teams could have the option to do that in their new ballparks or at their spring training camps in Arizona or Florida, though there still are a lot of details to be worked out and approved by owners and players.

“Our preference would be to stay here in Texas and have spring training 2.0,” Rangers GM and president Jon Daniels said Tuesday. “So if that holds, then we would hold camp here in Arlington.

The team wouldn’t have multiple fields available like at its complex in Surprise, Ariz., but Daniels sees the new stadium as a resource with advantages.

“One of the critical pieces here is being able to space people out responsibly and safely, and we’re going to have as much or more space than anybody. And brand-new, clean, state-of-the-art facilities,” he said.

The Rangers could also utilize their former home across the street, even though it was reconfigured for football and the short-lived revival of the XFL. There are two weight rooms in the new stadium, and they have another one in the old stadium, which now has a turf field that could be used for throwing programs and maybe even batting practice.

“We have more space, certainly indoor space, here. And then, when you look at the reality of the weather in Arizona … yeah, you have 6 1/2 fields, but are you really going to use that when it’s 115 (degrees) outside?” Daniels said. “I don’t think that the advantage of the more additional fields would have benefited us. That kind of played partially into our decision to stay here.”

Being in Texas instead of Arizona would eliminate the close proximity to some other teams to play additional spring training games before the season.

The Rangers would have to depend primarily on intrasquad games.

“I think I’ll be able to get our guys enough live looks at each other in intrasquad games or live BP or different scenarios,” the GM said.

Angels plan employee furloughs

By Greg Beacham
Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — The Los Angeles Angels will implement furloughs across their organization starting June 1, becoming the latest team to take steps against the financial impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Angels spokesperson Marie Garvey issued a statement on the decision Tuesday.

“We are assisting all staff by paying health care through the end of the year. We are also contributing $1 Million to an Angels Employment Assistance Fund to provide grants for those in need.”

The Angels’ furloughs will impact employees across the front office, scouting department, player development department and minor league system. They had already pledged to pay their employees through May.

The $1 million employee assistance fund is separate from the $1.2 million already put up by the team to pay Angel Stadium’s roughly 1,800 workers. The furloughed employees will keep their medical benefits for the rest of the year or until Oct. 31, depending on their contracts.

The Tampa Bay Rays have already implemented furloughs, while the Miami Marlins and the Cincinnati Reds also plan furloughs, including some baseball operations employees. Other teams have cut employees’ salaries, and more announcements of furloughs are expected as the lack of game revenue widely impacts the sport.

Workers clean seats inside the newly constructed Globe Life Field in Arlington, Texas, on March 11. The Texas Rangers say they would prefer to stay in their new park whenever they get back to spring training.
There is no universal playbook for coronavirus testing in professional sports. Protocols and procedures, guidelines and handbooks—they could be as different as rulebooks.

There’s plenty of common ground, though, which explains why executives and doctors from various leagues have consulted with each other while moving closer to at least a partial return to competition amid a pandemic.

League officials essentially are choosing the best option from a list of bad choices, and it comes down to how much risk they are willing to take.

“When you look at the people that run these other sports, these are all really smart guys,” UFC President Dana White said. “And nobody knows their business better than they do.

“They have to literally sit down and break through item by item on what they need to do and how they need to do it by item. The overall picture is that there’s a lot to be desired from testing to use it as a definitive indicator that everybody’s safe.”

Stuart Miller
ITF Senior Executive Director

JACKSONVILLE, Fla.

BY MARK LONG
Associated Press

The standard playbook for testing in pro sports doesn’t exist yet.