Slight rebound looks shaky

US unemployment claims fall to 751,000, but new infections pose threat

By Christopher Ruggaber
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans seeking unemployment benefits fell last week to 751,000, the lowest since March, but it's still historically high and indicates the viral pandemic is forcing many employers to cut jobs.

Applications for unemployment aid fell 40,000 from the previous week, the Labor Department said Thursday. They fell in 30 states, including big drops in California, Florida and Texas. Claims rose significantly in Arizona, Illinois, and Michigan.

Merkel tells Germans to expect ‘difficult winter’ as cases reach new high

By Erica Earl
Stars and Stripes

Early this month, for example, Staff Sgt. Breanna Adams of the 374th Civil Engineer Squadron wrote to the group that she and her husband often heard clear, persistent knocking noises within their old eastside tower unit. Security camera footage showed televisions and bedroom lights turning on and off when no one was home, she told Stars and Stripes on Wednesday.

Adachi said she started the group because she wanted to feel less alone and get confirmation that she wasn’t “crazy” because of her experiences.

“At first, I was able to brush it all off, excusing everything away on things on my then-husband,” Adachi said in a recent interview with Stars and Stripes via Facebook Messenger from her home in Oregon.

“But when he deployed, I suddenly was left with no one else in the house to blame for what was going on.”

SEE PARANORMAL ON PAGE 6
Demand boosts UPS revenue, costs goes up too

Associated Press

Profit and revenue are rising at UPS, whose brown delivery trucks have become omnipresent on neighborhood streets during the pandemic, but so are costs. The company reported Wednesday that third-quarter profit rose 12% to $21.24 billion. Both figures to deliver, revenue climbed 16% to $21.24 billion. Both figures beat expectations. However, operating profit in the company's key U.S. package business was nearly 10% less profitable than a year ago because of higher costs as UPS hired workers and expanded service. UPS shares fell 8.8%, their biggest one-day percentage drop in nearly six years.

With so many people getting what they need delivered to the front door, drivers for United Parcel Service Inc. are staying busy. The company's consolidated average daily volume jumped 13.5%.

Prices were roughly constant, with the average price per piece rising for U.S. ground shipments and slipping slightly for express deliveries like next-day air. Unlike the domestic package business, profit rose in the company's international package and freight units.

New CEO Carol Tome said the results were led by strong demand for shipments leaving Asia and growth among small and medium-sized businesses. She said the higher profit indicates that the company's "better, not bigger" strategy is working.
Iwakuni ratchets up exercise experience

BY JAMES BOLINGER
Stars and Stripes

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan — Everyone had a part this year in the annual base-defense drills, including Marines, sailors, Japanese troops and even service members’ families living in base housing.

Air station commander Col. Lance Lewis significantly expanded this year’s Active Shield exercise to include drills on pandemic response, missile strikes, aeromedical evacuations and daylong overhead patrols by two AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters. The three-day exercise concluded around 1 p.m. Thursday.

At 6 p.m. Wednesday, the station went into a 12-hour lockdown that meant everyone, including family members, had to shelter in place during a simulated attack. Everyone should know what to expect during an emergency, Lewis said.

“Families are going to be here, and this is where we are going to operate out of, whether it be here or across mainland Japan,” he told Stars and Stripes on Wednesday. “This is an overseas military installation that does military operations and that’s the primary reason for our existence out here.”

In eastern Japan at Yokota Air Base, the headquarters in western Tokyo of U.S. Forces Japan, the 374th Airlift Wing and 730th Air Mobility Squadron conducted a similar readiness exercise.

The base advised everyone to expect loud noises, simulated gunfire, first-responder activity and military personnel in protective gear and gas masks. The “giants voice” sounded sirens and simulated-attack warnings throughout the week.

“All of these are standard parts of crisis response exercises,” the base advised on a Facebook post Oct. 21, “so although it may look and sound differently than a normal Yokota day, these are training exercises.”

At MCAS Iwakuni, Lewis said he wanted to make the exercise as realistic as possible this year. It was shorter in duration than Yokota’s but more pervasive.

A real-life response would involve multiple U.S. squadrons and the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force, he said. Large-scale exercises are the only way to identify sticking points between units, issues with command and control and concerns about resource allocation.

The exercise teamed Marines and sailors at Iwakuni with soldiers of the 13th Brigade of the JGSDF Middle Army, who practiced responding to simulated overnight missile attacks Wednesday and a mass casualty event Thursday.

Japanese troops took part in all aspects of the exercise, from planning to execution, Lewis said.

“At the strategic level, it’s about the Japanese-American alliance that’s has been strong for 60 years,” he said. “At the operational and tactical level, this is their country, this is their home, and they will defend it as well.”

Throughout the week, power to base buildings was cut, roads were blocked across the installation and support facilities were closed. Explosive ordnance technicians responded to calls and military police set up cordons and defended base entrances against a simulated attack.

Starting at noon Wednesday until nearly 10 p.m., sirens intermittently warned of the simulated attacks. Around 3 a.m. Thursday, combat engineers from Marine Wing Support Squadron 171 filled a simulated crater in the runway using a concrete pad for practice.

Simulating a pandemic response, sailors at the Branch Health Clinic distributed the seasonal flu vaccine to about 90% of the base service members over 48 hours, Lt. j.g. Maria Moncayo, the environmental health officer who organized the response, told Stars and Stripes on Thursday.

Lewis said he filled a notecard with his observations this year and is making plans for next year’s Active Shield.

“As a commander here, this has really met my expectations for where I want this base to be headed, but Marines are never satisfied,” he said. “Next year will be different. Next year we will have ironed out the things we are learning right now. I know we will add new things, because we always need to be improving.”

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First phase of $34M air freight terminal opens at Osan Air Base

BY MATTHEW KEELER
Stars and Stripes

OSAN AIR BASE, South Korea — A new, $34 million air freight terminal opened this week at Osan, part of a two-phase project to update aged and inadequate base facilities.

The warehouse complex will handle cargo for the Defense Department and other service branches. Its design allows for maximum efficiency and future expansion as well, said 731st Air Mobility Squadron commander Lt. Col. Ryan Murray during the opening ceremony Monday.

The terminal has upgraded freight storage space with larger refrigerators, freezers, a security cage, as well as a covered outside storage to accommodate around 80 pallet positions,” he said. “With the increased size, the facility can handle approximately 300% more cargo than before, enabling increased throughput.”

The logistics complex is part of a construction project that consolidated seven outdated buildings into two modernized facilities, effectively doubling cargo yard space and tripling the warehouse square footage. Planning began in October 2013, Murray said.

Phase two calls for a new equipment maintenance facility to be completed by fall 2021. At the ceremony, Murray recognized key personnel including South Korean contractors, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and many others involved in building the $4,330,000 square-foot warehouse and administration building.

The project also includes over 98,000 square feet of parking for vehicles, equipment and pallets.

Col. Jason Terry, the 51st Aircraft Mobility Operations Wing commander, spoke at the opening over a live video feed from Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii.

“It should be noted that agile logistics in a contested environment is a fundamental element of joint warfighting, and this new facility enhances that capability,” he said.

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Soldier wins Army challenge with range app

BY CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

Winning the XVIII Airborne Corps’ first “Dragon’s Lair” innovation challenge with an idea to improve training range management by using mobile apps earned Maj. Evan Adams his choice of any Army school. He opted for something sensible, if less action-packed.

The planning officer with the 101st Airborne Division was one of five finalists who presented problem-solving ideas via video teleconference to a panel of judges in a competition this week at Fort Bragg, N.C. All were focused on addressing headaches with training ranges.

Adams pitched a “RangeFinder” mobile application designed to help streamline the management and booking of weapons ranges, while improving communications and disseminating plans, policies and procedures. He likened it to a Gerber multitool, which would bring several functions into one pocket-sized package.

“We have all these tools, all these capabilities exist,” he told Stars and Stripes on Thursday. “It’s just, nobody’s combined them.”

For wowing six panelists with the idea Tuesday, he got a four-day liberty pass and could have the school of his choice in the XVIII Airborne Corps’ first “Dragon’s Lair” innovation challenge on Tuesday.

This proposed “RangeFinder” mobile application for scheduling and managing Army training ranges earned Maj. Evan Adams, of the 101st Airborne Division, a four-day liberty pass and the school of his choice in the XVIII Airborne Corps’ first “Dragon’s Lair” innovation challenge on Tuesday.

During the XVIII Airborne Corps’ “Dragon’s Lair” innovation challenge on Tuesday, Capt. Michael Stenvik of the 82nd Airborne Division pitches an idea for adding the option to reserve training ranges for smaller blocks of time in the Army’s range management system.

“This proposed "RangeFinder" mobile application for scheduling and managing Army training ranges earned Maj. Evan Adams, of the 101st Airborne Division, a four-day liberty pass and the school of his choice in the XVIII Airborne Corps’ first "Dragon’s Lair" innovation challenge on Tuesday.

Adams said he was excited about the potential that the Army could develop user-friendly mobile apps to help with medical readiness or to replace the cumbersome Defense Travel System.

His idea beat out four other finalists that got the most votes out of the dozens of online submissions to the Dragon Innovation Challenge. The initiative, backed by the corps’ three-star commander Lt. Gen. Erik Kurilla, is aimed at spurring creative solutions from within the 3rd Infantry, 10th Mountain, 82nd Airborne and 101st Airborne divisions, as well as the 20th Engineer Brigade, 16th Military Police Brigade and 3rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command.

“Top-down leadership with bottom-up refinement,” said Master Sgt. Roy Smith, one of the panelists. “You don’t need a lot of rank on your chest to have a good idea.”

Filling out the field of finalists who entered the “Dragon’s Lair” to pitch their ideas this week were three soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division — 1st Sgt. Daniel Murphy, Capt. Michael Stenvik, and 1st Sgt. Richard Greve — and 1st Lt. Nathan Wagner of the 10th Mountain Division.

From tweaks to an existing range management system to development of division-level marksmanship instructor training, all five proposals had some merit, said panelist Maj. William Blank. But Adams’ represented something “bigger” that encapsulated the spirit of the challenge.

Adams, who sees the idea as “inevitable” rather than revolutionary, highlighted several advantages to using smartphones to replace or enhance operations that mainly rely on landline phones, two-way radios, clumsy websites and PowerPoint slides.

On Wednesday, the corps headquarters began working on how to implement Adams’ idea, said Col. Joe Buccino, the corps’ spokesman.

A second edition of the Dragon’s Lair is scheduled for Nov. 17. “We know there are ideas out there and we want them in the Dragon’s Lair,” he said.

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Marine rotational force heads into Norway training

By: ABREY LIGGINS
Stars and Stripes

U.S. Marines returned to Norway for a two-month training mission, marking the first such deployment since the Corps announced it was ending larger back-to-back rotations.

About 350 Marines and sailors from the 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, will begin Arctic warfare training after they complete a period of quarantine for the coronavirus, Marine Forces Europe and Africa said in a statement.

The “Feistehunden Battalion” serves as the new Marine Rotational Force-Europe and will conduct numerous drills alongside the Norwegian army, the statement said.

“Norway offers challenging terrain and unique training opportunities to improve our cold-weather and mountain-warfare skills, enabling our force to fight and win in arctic conditions,” Lt. Col. Ryan Cordie, commander of 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, said in the statement.

The unit is expected to make several return trips to Norway over the course of the year with a larger follow-on rotation scheduled in early 2021.

In August, the Marine Corps announced the end of continuous troop rotations to Norway, where hundreds of Marines had been deployed for the past three years. Instead of having up to 700 troops at a time in Norway on six-month rotations, the Marines opted for a periodic training and exercise program.

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Fort Hood brigade starts its Europe deployment

BY ABREY LIGGINS
Stars and Stripes

Soldiers with a Fort Hood, Texas-based tank brigade are beginning a nine-month rotation in support of the Army’s efforts to deter Russian aggression along NATO’s eastern flank, U.S. Army Europe said.

Members of the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division will start arriving this week at military and commercial airports in Germany, Poland and Romania, USAREUR said in a statement.

“The deployment of ready, combat-credible U.S. forces to Europe is evidence of the strong and unremitting U.S. commitment to NATO and Europe,” USAREUR said in a statement.

Fort Hood, the Army’s only armored combat brigade, is the only U.S. military unit supporting the National Command Authority in its efforts to deter Russian aggression in Europe.

The troops conducted a restriction of movement and were tested for the coronavirus before deploying, and will quarantine upon arrival in Europe to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus.

The tank brigade out of Fort Hood will replace the 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, which also did a nine-month rotation.


U.S. Army

Screeshot/Army innovation portal

U.S. Army
National Guard troops to assist at voting sites in 3 states

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — Wisconsin, Kentucky and Tennessee will use National Guard troops to assist at polling locations on Election Day — either serving as poll workers, assisting at polling locations or opening facilities to host voting.

“What's unique about this mission for the Guard is it allows our guardsmen to serve in the communities that they live in. It's neighbors helping neighbors,” said Army Brig. Gen. Robyn Blader, assistant adjutant general for the Wisconsin National Guard.

Speaking during a late Wednesday call between officials from four state National Guards and reporters, Blader said Guard support for Tuesday's elections has not been finalized, but should protests or civil unrest follow what has been an unusual presidential election.

In Kentucky, where 280 troops will support poll workers at voting locations in 38 counties, officials were clear that the “support will be in a non-law-enforcement capacity,” according to a news release. Instead, they will help with setting up and cleaning polling locations and assisting with traffic, parking and crowd control, just as they did in a June election.

After a summer of racial and political unrest across the country, there are concerns about possible violence during and after Tuesday’s election, and the use of the Guard to control crowds has been floated in some states, according to officials on Wednesday’s call and news reports.

Texas has been reported to be activating up to 1,000 National Guard troops as soon as the weekend to protect state government facilities and landmarks, according to the San Antonio Express-News.

Officials at the Texas Military Department declined to confirm or deny the deployment, but released a statement that troops have not been requested at any polling locations in the state. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott’s office also declined to comment.

Guard officials in Nebraska, Wisconsin, Tennessee and Washington said they are speaking with police departments and state law enforcement officials to determine what might be needed to ensure the safety of people and property following the election.

“It’s not new,” said Air Force Maj. Gen. Jeff Holmes, adjutant general for the Nebraska National Guard. “It’s something we do year in and year out for a variety of events.”

To ensure that no one is alarmed about a military presence at polling locations, National Guard members are working, each state said their service members will work in civilian clothes. Should an issue develop at the polling site, Guard members are advised to call 911 if there is violence or a disturbance at the location where they are working, according to the officials in the three states with troops deployed at voting sites.

Prior to 2020, Wisconsin had never used National Guard troops as poll workers, but Tuesday will mark the fourth time since April for Guard members to conduct such a mission, Blader said.

About 30 Tennessee Guard troops will assist by opening 13 of its facilities in rural areas to serve as polling locations, said Army Maj. Gen. Jeff Holmes, adjutant general for the state’s Guard. Full-time, uniformed personnel of those facilities will work off-site that day, but about two Guard members will work each site to open and close the facility, he said.

The Tennessee Guard is also offering counties across the state cyber security support, Holmes said. They began this effort last year, but demand has increased because of a “higher situational awareness of vulnerability,” he said.

In Washington state, where voting is completely by mail, the National Guard is providing cyber security support where requested, said Air Force Brig. Gen. Gent Welsh, the assistant adjutant general for the state Guard. Troops offer vulnerability assessments and serve as “extra eyes and quality control.”

“It makes sense to have military-grade helpers out there,” Welsh said. “We teach them how to do these things as well.”

Between the coronavirus pandemic, numerous weather events and the racial unrest that began in late May, officials conceded that they have worked to keep a balance between fulfilling the needs of their state and maintaining readiness for overseas missions.

While the state of Louisiana hasn't requested poll support, troops from that National Guard are involved in missions for coronavirus relief, recovery from three hurricanes and an overseas deployment of one of the state's largest brigades, according to the state's Guard.

“There has definitely been some stress op-tempo wise,” said Holmes of Tennessee. “The group that's largely affected is medical providers. We've leaned heavily on them.”

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Paranormal: Yokota base’s history plays into possible hauntings

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Two former Marines were charged for illegally making, transporting, and selling firearms, including one who was investigated for white supremacist activities while in the service, the Justice Department announced Tuesday.

Former Marines Liam Montgomery Collins, 21, and Jordan Duncan, 25, were arrested along with Paul James Kryscuk, 35, on federal charges Oct. 20 for “conspiracy to unlawfully manufacture, possess, and distribute various weapons, ammunition, and suppressors,” according to a news release from the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of North Carolina.

“ Militar y sites tend to gather lore and ghost stories, and not only because of deaths in battle,” Jones said.

“Military bases have added layers of mystery because most people don’t have access to them,” she said, “so the knowledge and stories are all secondhand.”

Jones said a group like the Yokota Ghost Hunter Club fosters interest in history. “Adachi, the club founder, said the height of her supernatural experience came one night when she noticed her normally clingy collar charm of Saint Francis for protection.

“Years later, now divorced, still not religious,” Adachi said, “and my kitty still wears that same charm just in case.”

Ex-Marines charged in conspiracy to illegally make, sell guns

By Caitlin M. Kenney
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Two former Marines were arrested for illegally making, transporting, and selling firearms, including one who was investigated for white supremacist activities while in the service, the Justice Department announced Tuesday.

Former Marines Liam Montgomery Collins, 21, and Jordan Duncan, 25, were arrested along with Paul James Kryscuk, 35, on federal charges Oct. 20 for “conspiracy to unlawfully manufacture, possess, and distribute various weapons, ammunition, and suppressors,” according to a news release from the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of North Carolina.

“The Marine Corps will continue to assist the investigating authorities in any way we can,” Capt. Joseph Butterfield, a Marine Corps spokesman, said in a statement Wednesday.

Collins and Kryscuk are co-defendants who “used the conspiracy to enrich themselves and others by manufacturing and selling hard to obtain firearms and firearm parts in a manner that would hide these purchases from the federal government,” the Justice Department said. Duncan was aware of the illegal activity and participated in it, according to the release.

Collins made multiple money transfers to Kryscuk from May 2019 to the present to buy guns, including a 9 mm pistol and suppressor and a short-barreled rifle, according to the Justice Department. Kryscuk then made the firearms and suppressors from parts that he bought from vendors. He also used an alias to mail the firearms and suppressor from Idaho, where he lived, to Jacksonville, N.C. Duncan resides in Boise, Idaho.

Kryscuk also mailed the short-barrel rifle to Collins without registering it with the federal government, which is required, according to the Justice Department.

At the time, Collins was a lance corporal in the Marine Corps assigned to 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, at Camp Lejeune, N.C., according to the Marine Corps.

Collins served in the Marine Corps as a rifleman from August 21, 2017, to Sept. 21, 2020, a shorter enlistment than the typical four-year term, according to his service record.

“Collins’ premature discharge is indicative of the fact that the character of his service was incongruent with Marine Corps’ expectations and standards,” Butterfield said in a statement. “Due to the associated administrative processes, further details are not releasable.”

A Newsweek story from November 2019 reported Collins was linked to racist and anti-Semitic postings on the neo-Nazi, white supremacist website called Iron March. A Marine Corps statement in the story said the service intended to investigate the allegation.

Butterfield confirmed Wednesday that Collins was investigated at the time following “allegations of white supremacist activities.”

“Following the investigation, appropriate actions were taken. Those actions, however, where administrative in nature and not releasable,” he said.

Duncan served in the Marine Corps from Sept. 9, 2013, to Sept. 8, 2018, as a cryptologic language analyst, rising to the rank of corporal. He also was last assigned to Camp Lejeune with the 2nd Radio Battalion, Marine Information Group, II Marine Expeditionary Force, according to his service record.

Collins and Kryscuk are charged with conspiracy to manufacture guns and ship them between states, transporting guns between states without a license, and transporting a gun between states that is not registered as required, according to the release. If convicted, each face a combination of 20 years in prison.

Duncan is charged with conspiracy to manufacture guns and ship them between states, according to the release. He faces a maximum of five years in prison if convicted.

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PARIS — An attacker armed with a knife killed three people inside a church Thursday in the Mediterranean city of Nice, French authorities said, prompting the country to raise its security alert status to the highest level.

It was the third attack in two months in France that authorities have attributed to Muslim extremists, including the beheading of a teacher. It comes amid a growing furor over caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad that were republished by the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo — renewing vociferous debate in France and the Muslim world over the depictions that Muslims consider offensive but are protected by French free speech laws.

Video footage showed the attacker running out of Notre Dame Basilica and screaming “Allah Akbar!” over and over, according to witnesses. He was first arrested, but in a re-arrest made in kidnapping of journalists in Afghanistan

NEW YORK — An Afghan man has been brought to the United States to face charges that authorities have attributed to Muslim extremists, including the beheading of a teacher. It comes amid a growing furor over caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad that were republished by the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo — renewing vociferous debate in France and the Muslim world over the depictions that Muslims consider offensive but are protected by French free speech laws.

The attacker was wounded by gunfire and hospitalization after the killings at the Notre Dame Basilica, less than a half-mile from the site in 2016 where another attacker played a role in a Bastille Day crowd, killing dozens of people.

Shots punctuated the air and witnesses screamed as police stationed at the grandiose doors to the church appeared to fire at the attacker inside, according to videos obtained by The Associated Press. Hours later a blowup at the scene saw emergency vehicles and police tape lining the wide Notre Dame Avenue leading toward the plaza in front of the basilica.

France’s anti-terrorism prosecutor’s office opened an investigation into the attack, the third one since a trial opened in September for people linked to the 2015 attacks at Charlie Hebdo and a kosher supermarket by gunmen who claimed allegiance to Islamic State and al-Qaida. The trial is nearing its end, with a verdict planned for Nov. 13, the fifth anniversary of another series of deadly Islamic State attacks in Paris.

Thursday’s attacker was believed to be acting alone, said two police officials, who were not authorized to be publicly named.

In Avignon on Thursday morning, an armed man was shot to death by police after he refused to drop his weapon and a flash-ball shot failed to stop him, one police official said. And a Saudi state-run news agency said a man stabbed a guard at the French consulate in Jiddah, wounding the guard before he was arrested.

German authorities for help in his arrest and escape a few weeks after their Nov. 10, 2008, kidnapping. Ludin and Rohde.

Both made a dramatic escape from a Taliban-controlled compound in Pakistan’s tribal areas more than seven months after their Nov. 10, 2008, kidnapping. Their driver, Asadullah Mangal, was the third kidnapping victim and escaped a few weeks later.

Also charged in the indictment was Timor Shah, who was described as the head guard of the hostages, and Akhund Zada, who the indictment said was among six armed guards who forced the hostages to hike from Afghanistan to Pakistan. Neither were in custody.

“Journalists risk their lives bringing us news from conflict zones, and no matter how much time may pass, our resolve to find and hold accountable those who target and harm them and other Americans will never wane,” Assistant Attorney General for National Security John C. Demers said.

Afghan officials: 8 inmates dead after Herat prison riot

KABUL, Afghanistan — Rioting at a prison in western Afghanistan has left at least eight inmates dead, provincial officials said Thursday.

The violence erupted Wednesday night at the prison in the city of Herat, the capital of western Herat province, according to Mohammad Rafiq Shirzai, a spokesman for the provincial health department.

He said 12 others — eight inmates and four prison guards — were wounded in the outbreak that holds around 2,000 prisoners. It wasn’t immediately known if there are any Taliban at the penitentiary.

The rioting erupted after guards cleared partitions created by the prisoners, which the guards then immediately destroyed.

One of the eight fatalities had gunshot wounds, Shirzai said, adding that the incident is under investigation.

According to a provincial official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media, the prisoners torched one prison block. Farhad and Shirzai could not confirm that.

Rundown Afghan prisons have occasionally seen rioting, with inmates seeking better conditions in the overcrowded facilities, many built with poor construction.

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DANIEL COLE
Associated Press

NEW YORK — An Afghan man has been brought to the United States to face charges in the 2008 gunpoint kidnapping of a journalist for The New York Times, an Afghan journalist and a driver in Afghanistan, federal authorities announced Wednesday.

The charges against Haji Najibullah, 42, were in a six-count indictment unsealed in Manhattan federal court.

He briefly appeared at a hearing conducted electronically because of the coronavirus, where a U.S. magistrate judge ordered him detained after his court-appointed lawyer, Mark Gombiner, declined to seek bail. Gombiner did not respond to a message seeking comment.

A prosecutor said Najibullah was brought from Ukraine to the U.S. on Tuesday to face charges including hostage taking, conspiracy and kidnapping. Authorities did not say where or when he was first arrested, but in a release they thanked Ukrainian authorities for help in his arrest and transfer. If convicted, he could face life in prison.

The kidnapping victims were not identified by authorities, but the description matched the kidnapping of the journalist, David Rohde, who worked for the Times, and an Afghan journalist, Tahir Ludin, as they were heading to interview a Taliban leader.

A French policeman stands guard near the scene of the knife attack at the Notre Dame church in Nice, France, on Thursday.
**VIRUS OUTBREAK**

**Merkel warns of ‘difficult winter’ as cases climb**

Associated Press

BERLIN — Chancellor Angela Merkel told Germans to expect a “difficult winter” as the number of newly reported coronavirus cases in the country hit a new high Thursday, placing France prepared to resume life under a new lockdown and some experts urged the Spanish government to take more aggressive action to control the latest wave of infections.

Speaking to Parliament a day after she and the governors of Germany’s 16 states agreed upon new, far-reaching restrictions to curb the spread of the virus, Merkel said the country faces “a dramatic situation at the beginning of the cold season.”

Germany’s disease control agency said local health authorities reported 16,774 new positive tests for COVID-19 in the past day, pushing the country’s total since the start of the outbreak close to the half-million mark. The Robert Koch Institute also recorded 89 additional deaths, taking the country’s total in the pandemic to 10,272, a number that is one-fourth the death toll in Britain.

“The winter will be difficult, four long, difficult months. But it will end,” Merkel told lawmakers. “We have already seen over the past eight months how we can learn and help each other.”

Under the restrictions going into effect Monday, restaurants, bars, sports and cultural venues will be shut for four weeks, along with beauty parlors and brothels. Groups of at most 10 people, from a maximum two households, will be permitted to meet in public and all non-essential journeys will be discouraged.

Schools, kindergartens, stores and places of worship will remain open, prompting some to call the measures a “lockdown light” compared to the more severe shutdown Germany saw in March and April.

Merkel said authorities had no choice but to drastically reduce social contacts as three-quarters of infections in Germany now are no longer traceable.

“If we wait until the ICUs are full, then it will be too late,” she said.

The long-time German leader said democratic debate about the virus restrictions was important, but she blasted some critics who have claimed the German government was exaggerating the threat of the virus.

“Lies and disinformation, conspiracies and hatred damage not just the debate but also the battle against the virus,” she said. “It’s not just democratic debate that depends on our relationship to facts and information, human lives depend on it.”

Opposition leader Alexander Gauland of the far-right Alternative for Germany responded to Merkel’s speech by accusing the government of “wartime propagandists” and likened the pandemic to motorized traffic, arguing that society accepts a certain number of car deaths too.

Germany’s finance and economy ministers planned to announce details of further funding for businesses affected by the new measures Thursday.

Wealthy Germany has been able to mobilize massive financial aid for people and companies, dampening the economic blow of the pandemic. Still, there has been anger over the new measures, particularly from restaurant owners who had set up heated outdoor seating areas and made other preparations to operate in line with public health regulations, only to be told they aren’t allowed to serve customers for a month.

While France announced a second, full nationwide lockdown Wednesday, many countries have hesitated to take such drastic measures for the second time in a year, wary of the pain that caused the economy.

The British government has resisted calls for a national lockdown, despite significantly higher 14-day infection rates than Germany.

Britain’s communities secretary, Robert Jenrick, said Thursday that the virus is “very concentrated in some places,” insisting that it was right to target restrictions on those areas with the worst outbreaks.

In Spain, authorities have been imposing incremental restrictions on free movement, nightlife and social gatherings, but they have refrained from a strict stay-at-home order like the one that curbed the first wave of infections but scarred the economy.

But with officials predicting that current levels of infection will put hospitals under a serious shortage of intensive care beds next month, some experts are already calling for a full lockdown.

Some Spanish regions, namely Catalonia and La Rioja, have already ordered bars and restaurants to close, while most of the rest have imposed curfews limiting nightlife.

Extra subsidies have not accompanied the restrictions, prompting loud protests in Barcelona this week by hospitality business owners who banged pots, waved cocktail shakers and chanted “We want to work.”

Pablo Casado, who leads Spain’s conservative opposition, praised the leaders of France and Germany on Wednesday for showing leadership “addressing the nation in a brief and concise way to lead the response to the pandemic.”

Spain has officially recorded more than 1.1 million COVID-19 cases, although authorities say the true figure, including missed cases, could be at least three times higher. The death toll is at least 35,000.

**USFK reports eight more cases, raising total to 259**

Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — Eight more troops and civilians affiliated with U.S. Forces Korea tested positive for the coronavirus after flying to South Korea from abroad over the past week, the military said Thursday.

Meanwhile, USFK commander Gen. Robert Abrams, who was quarantined after returning to the South from the United States nearly two weeks ago, tweeted that he had received negative results on a mandatory exit test, allowing him to end the quarantine on Friday.

The latest cases raised to 259 the number of coronavirus patients affiliated with USFK since late February — most traveling to South Korea for new assignments or returning from the United States. Only 26 of the cases, including three soldiers, were locally transmitted.

In a bid to contain the respiratory virus, USFK has implemented a strict arrivals process that includes an initial coronavirus test, a two-week quarantine, then a second coronavirus test required before exit.

Four service members arrived at Osan Air Base on government-chartered flights from the U.S. on Sunday and Tuesday, while two contractors and two military dependents arrived at Incheon International Airport on commercial flights on Oct. 23 and Tuesday, USFK said in a press release.

All eight received positive results on their initial test and have been transferred to an isolation facility on Camp Humphreys, the main Army base in South Korea.

**Space Force’s second in command tests positive**

Stars and Stripes

Another high-ranking U.S. military leader has become infected with the coronavirus, according to a statement Wednesday from the U.S. Space Force.

Gen. David Thompson, the service’s vice chief of space operations, tested positive Wednesday after “learning that a close family member, with whom he had contact,” had contracted the virus, the statement said.

In accordance with established COVID policies, General Thompson is self-quarantining and working from home,” it added. COVID-19 is the respiratory disease caused by the coronavirus.

Thompson presided over a swearing-in ceremony for Space Force recruits last week in Baltimore, according to Military.com. His diagnosis comes less than a month after two other high-ranking military leaders became infected with the coronavirus. The Marine Corps’ assistant commandant, Gen. Gary Thomas, tested positive on Oct. 7, days after it was announced that the Coast Guard’s vice commandant, Adm. Charles Ray, was infected. The pair had attended a meeting together the previous week.
Pelosi scolds White House on virus talks

WASHINGTON — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi issued a scolding assessment of COVID-19 relief talks on Thursday, blaming Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin for failing to produce answers to her demands for Democratic priorities as part of an almost $2 trillion aid package.

Pelosi lobbed her latest public relations volley with a letter to Mnuchin that blames Republicans for the failed talks, which ground on for three months only to crater in the final days before the election. Where the talks go after the election is wholly uncertain.

Pelosi says remaining obstacles to an agreement include more than half a dozen big-ticket items, including a testing plan, aid to state and local governments, funding for schools, jobless benefits and a GOP-sought shield against coronavirus-related lawsuits.

Republicans, who say Pelosi has been unyielding in the talks, will control the White House and the Senate until January regardless of the outcome of Tuesday’s election, and have pressed for a more targeted aid package that offers huge sums of Pelosi’s desire.

They say items like refundable tax credits for the working poor and families with children are a giveaway. Pelosi has slapped back that some of the unemployed are living on tips, and charge that Pelosi has slow-walked the negotiations to deny President Donald Trump a victory before Election Day.

Pelosi’s letter to Mnuchin comes as markets are reeling from a coronavirus surge across the country and Washington’s failure to agree on another virus relief package.

“As the coronavirus surges and the stock market plummets, we are still awaiting the Trump Administration’s promised responses on multiple items of critical importance,” Pelosi wrote. “Your responses are critical for our negotiations to continue.”

The California Democrat has played hardball in the talks and has for months demanded a $2 trillion-plus COVID-19 rescue deal that’s larger than the landmark $1.9 trillion CARES Act that swept through Congress in March. Legislation has twice passed the House, but the GOP-held Senate has been gridlocked.

The White House shot back that Pelosi is uninterested in compromising on major issues.

“I don’t think this recovery depends on the assistance package, per se, but I do think unemployment assistance, (Payroll Protection Program) small business assistance, helping the schools — that could have helped a lot and it’s not going to happen,” said White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow on Fox News. “The Democrats have been completely intransigent.”

Recent weeks of secretive talks have been accompanied by optimistic talk from Pelosi and at times from her administration counterparts — but no results. Meanwhile, many Senate Republicans have broken with Trump, who was eager for a deal that would have let him issue another round of $1,200 direct payments in his name. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell advised Trump against a deal before the election, warning it would divide Republicans.

Pelosi said Thursday that she is confident that Joe Biden will win the White House and said that wrapping up COVID relief legislation in the lame-duck session would help get a Biden administration off to a quick start, but she brushed aside any suggestion that she would need to display more flexibility to get any measure signed by Trump.

“I want a bill for two reasons. First and foremost, the American people need help. They need real help,” Pelosi told reporters. “And second of all, we have plenty of work to do in a Joe Biden administration.”

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Pelosi: US economy still 10.7 million jobs short of its pre-pandemic level

FROM FRONT PAGE

And growth is believed to be slowing sharply in the final three months of the year to a roughly 3% annual rate.

With Congress having failed to agree on any further stimulus this year, millions of unemployed Americans who will lose all their jobless benefits in the coming weeks and months will likely pull back further on spending. Without another round of loans from the government, many small companies will also go out of business.

Thursday’s report from the Labor Department said the number of people who are continuing to receive unemployment benefits fell more than 700,000 to 7.7 million. The decline shows that some of the unemployed are being recalled to their old jobs or are finding new ones. But it also indicates that many jobless Americans have used up their state unemployment aid — which typically expires after six months — and have transitioned to a federal extended benefits program that lasts an additional 13 weeks.

The still-uneven number of jobless claims underscores that a full recovery from the pandemic recession remains far off. Job growth has slowed for three straight months, leaving the economy still short of its pre-pandemic level. The unemployment rate remains high at 7.9%.

Layoffs have continued at some large companies. Boeing said Wednesday that it will now cut 30,000 jobs by the end of next year, almost one-fifth of its entire workforce, up from an earlier announcement that it would shed 19,000.

Home and auto sales have emerged as bright spots in the economy and have helped strengthen U.S. manufacturing. But the pandemic recession, unlike previous downturns, has done much more harm to in-person services and cost the jobs of millions of workers at restaurants, bars, gyms and theaters.

Those businesses have suffered from government shutdown orders, some of which might now be revived as the virus resurges.

In a sign of caution, Americans boosted their savings over the summer, banking a big chunk of the $1,200 checks that had gone to most individuals and a now-expired $600-a-week federal jobless benefit. Both were contained in a $2 trillion stimulus package that Congress approved in the spring.

Some research suggests that by September, unemployed Americans had spent about two-thirds of what they had saved. If so, the jobless will likely cut their spending in the coming months and weaken growth.

Americans are already showing concern about the economy. Consumer confidence slipped in October after having risen sharply in September. The outlook for the economy over the next six months fell particularly hard, according to the Conference Board, a business research group.

With roughly 20 million Americans unemployed, the pandemic recession is still causing hardship for many families. One-quarter of all adults say their family’s financial condition worsened in September compared with February before the pandemic, according to a survey by the Urban Institute. One in seven say that they or a spouse or partner has lost a job during the downturn.
NEW ORLEANS — Zeta sped across the Southeast on Thursday, leaving a trail of damage and more than 2 million homes and businesses without power in Atlanta and beyond after pounding New Orleans with maximum sustained winds of 60 mph about 50 miles west of Ashleyville, N.C.—unusual even in a region accustomed to hurricanes and their aftermath.

Hundreds of schools canceled classes or planned to open late across from the Gulf Coast to the Carolinas.

The latest punch from a record hurricane season left people shaken. Will Arute said it sounded like a bomb went off when part of a large oak snapped outside his home in New Orleans, and part of the tree crashed into his car and a corner of his home.

“I did not anticipate this to happen. It was pretty intense along the eye wall when it went through here,” he said.

Mackenzie Umanzor did not prepare much because the last hurricane to threaten her home in a few weeks ago in D'Iberville, Mississippi, did little damage.

Philadelphia police pledge better response after Black man’s death

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Philadelphia police pledged to release 911 tapes and police body camera footage “in the near future” in the shooting death of a Black man with a history of mental health problems, a death that prompted protests, widespread vandalism and an overnight curfew days before his strength “just gave out,” Switzer said. About 25 miles west in Long Beach, a large boat was washed up on the beachfront highway.

In Louisiana, a 55-year-old man was electrocuted by a downed power line in New Orleans, a coroner said. In Georgia, authorities said a man was killed when high winds caused a tree to fall onto a mobile home in Cherokee County.

Power outages were reported across Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia, according to the website PowerOutage.us. Georgia had the most outages before dawn with more than 1 million customers in the dark.

“Police bodies are deployed anyway in Atlanta, but commit- teed to dodge downed trees and navigate their way past sig- nals with no power. Trees blocked roads, and navigate their way past traffic lights and navigate their way past traffic lights,” the Georgia Department of Transportation said.

Northwest of Atlanta in Marietta, many stoplights were out and police directed traffic at busy intersection. One residential street was covered by mix of campaign signs, amber and gold leaves, and limbs tossed by the storm. A few streets away, Billy Murdock was out picking up branches in his yard.

“These big old trees, they were swaying. It bothers you,” Murdock said. “It’s the worst storm I’ve seen in Atlanta.”

The storm raged onshore Wednesday afternoon in the small village of Cocodrie, La., and the Category 2 storm moved swiftly across the New Orle- ans area.

Zeta is the 27th named storm of a historically busy Atlantic hurri- cane season — with more than a month left to go. It set a new re- cord as the second-worst storm to make landfall in the continental U.S. in a single season.

Ex-DHS official says he wrote ‘Anonymous’ critique

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A former Trump administration official who penned a scathing anti-Trump op-ed and book under the pen name “Anonymous” revealed himself Wednesday as a former chief of staff at the Department of Homeland Security.

The official, Miles Taylor, came forward six days before Election Day to critique President Donald Trump as “a man without character.”

He said he hoped other former administration officials would “find their conscience when they wake up tomorrow” and speak up, too.

Taylor has been an outspoken critic of Trump’s in recent months and has repeatedly denied the president’s characterization of himself as the author of the column and book under the pen name “Anonymous” revealed himself Wednesday as a former chief of staff at the Department of Homeland Security.

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Taylor said he didn’t want to stay anonymous earlier because the story would have disappeared within 48 hours.

“No one would pay attention and they wouldn’t care,” he said.

Taylor’s piece was published in September 2018 by The New York Times, infuriating the president and setting off a frantic White House legal in- vestigation to try to unmask the author.

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Biden shuns ‘false promises’ of fast virus fix

The pandemic’s consequences were escalating, with deaths climbing in 39 states and an average of 800 people dying daily nationwide — up from 714 two weeks ago. Overall, about 227,000 Americans have died. The sharp rise sent shock waves through financial markets, causing the Dow Jones Industrial Average to drop 900-plus points.

Trump, who frequently lauds economic growth figures for the summer quarter, due Thursday, would be strong, declaring during a rally in Bullhead City, Ariz., "This election is a choice between a Trump super-recovery and a Biden depression."

As Trump spoke, an Air Force fighter thundered nearby and released a flare to get the attention of a non-responsive private aircraft that was flying in the restricted airspace. North American Aerospace Defense Command said the plane was escorted out by the F-16 "without further incident." Trump was at first caught off guard but later cheered the fighter, proclaiming, "I love that sound" as it roared overhead.

The president also condemned violence that occurred during some protests in response to the police shooting of Walter Wallace Jr., a Black man, in Philadelphia saying Biden stands "with the rioters and the vandals."

But Biden said in Wilmington, "There is no excuse whatsoever for the looting and the violence."

Bullhead City is just across the border from Nevada, a state Trump was hoping to flip during Election Day next Tuesday. A Trump rally last month in Nevada attracted thousands and led to the airport that hosted it being fined more than $5,500 for violating pandemic crowd restrictions.

Rather than curb his crowd, Trump moved just across the border and used his rally Wednesday to scoff at Democratic leaders in states like Nevada for trying to enforce social distancing rules.

The weather was far milder than during a Tuesday night Trump rally in Omaha, Neb. After Trump left that one, hundreds of attendees at Eppley Airfield spent hours waiting in the cold; transportation to cars parked far away. Several people were taken to hospitals amid concerns about exposure.

Trump paints apocalyptic portrait of life under Biden

WASHINGTON — The suburbs wouldn’t be the suburbs anymore, the economy would sink into its worst depression ever and police departments would cease to exist. Even America’s older adults would be left to figure out how to get by without heat, air conditioning or electricity.

This is the apocalyptic version of American life that President Donald Trump argues would be the dire consequence of turning life under a Democrat Joe Biden.

"He’ll bury you in regulations, dismantle your police departments, dissolve our borders, confiscate your guns, terminate religious liberty, destroy your suburbs,” Trump said in one of many over-the-top pronouncements about Biden in the campaign’s final weeks. "This election makes his warning about the fate of suburbia as he showcases his own decision to end federal regulations that govern the placement of low-income housing in the suburbs.

Campaign rhetoric can often become heated and hyperbolic as candidates scrap for every last advantage before the votes are counted.

Experts say instilling fear in one’s opponent is usually the primary motivating factor behind such talk as candidates seek to give voters a reason to put a checkmark next to their name on the ballot.

"It’s a fear and fear based on a particular kind of ignorance that only works if your hearers have that particular kind of ignorance," Robin Lakoff, professor emerita of linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley, said of Trump’s claims about Biden.

Trump made fear — particularly the fear of immigrants — a major theme of his 2016 campaign. Now, he is giving voters a reason to put a checkmark next to his name on the ballot.

Trump's campaign argues that Biden would be the first one in presidential history to only work if your hearers are already disposed to believe whatever it is he says.

T R A N S P A R E N C Y  D I S C L O S U R E

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Best bike balance

A cyclist, who gave his name as Leboy, balances a basketball on his head while riding in Brooklyn on Tuesday in New York.

The approximate value of hockey gear that police say a man stole from a rink in Chandler, Ariz., last year. They said Clayton Wayne Davis, 40, is accused of stealing a 14-foot trailer containing the gear for Ice Den Chandler on Aug. 11, 2019. Video surveillance showed the tattooed suspect and his pickup truck, police said. They said the trailer and all the gear that belonged to a youth hockey team were recovered in Phoenix the next day. An anonymous tip led police to arrest Davis last week in Scottsdale.

$200K

HARLEY-DAVIDSON is jumping into the hot market for electric bicycles.

The electric bikes have a small motor and a battery that generates power assistance beyond just pedaling.

The Serial 1 bikes are designed and developed in Milwaukee and are manufactured in Taiwan. They are expected to hit the market early next year. Prices have not yet been disclosed.

Walter McCreary, who was restrained by officers and later shot his way out of the van. As officers were hanging onto his van, a struggle ensued in which McCreary took the gun out of the officer's holster and fired one shot.

Cyclist who balanced a basketball on his head while riding in Brooklyn on Tuesday in New York.

The Denver museum said the fossil will be on display in the laboratory window as part of the Prehistoric Journey Exhibit, and photos and discoveries are expected to be shared on social media.

Police: Student beat man and recorded it

Taurean Davis, of Kennesaw, is wanted for aggravated assault with a firearm, kidnapping and false imprisonment for the Wednesday incident. Police are looking for Davis, but advise people not to approach him, as they believe he is armed.

The victim told police that Davis left him naked outside and took his phone, posting video of the incident on the victim's own social media account.

Developer drops plans for large wind farm

EDEE RENEWABLES had planned to build 24 turbines in the Town of Jefferson near the Illinois border. The wind farm, one of only a handful under development in Wisconsin, would have been the sixth-largest in the state, with a capacity of 65 megawatts.

Participating landowners have received letters notifying them that EDF Renewables was terminating its lease agreements. The developer did not say why.

The project was expected to generate about $250,000 a year in tax revenue for the town and county in addition to some $300,000 a year in rent for participating landowners, the State Journal reported. It also generated opposition from some residents who feared it would affect property values and health.

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Kristin Chenoweth discusses voicing a mouse from her closet for ‘The Witches’, making Zemeckis laugh, why it’s OK to scare kids

By Ellen Gray
The Philadelphia Inquirer

When the Kimmel Center shut down this spring, on March 12, Kristin Chenoweth had been thinking about bringing her famous panel of witches to concert tour to the Philadelphia venue. It was scheduled for March 13.

“I was devastated. Philly is one of my favorite places to play,” said the Tony- and Emmy-winning singer and actress. Chenoweth can be heard now in Robert Zemeckis’ adaptation of Roald Dahl’s “The Witches,” which premieres Oct. 22 on HBO Max.

The actress who originated the role of Glinda in Broadway’s “Wicked” is the voice of Daisy, a mouse who plays a pivotal role in the live-action film, which stars Anne Hathaway as the Grand High Witch and Octavia Spencer as the woman who’s determined to stop witches from turning all the world’s children into mice.

Speaking by Zoom from Vancouver, where she’s filming an as-yet-untitled musical comedy series for Apple TV+ with “Saturday Night Live’s” Cecily Strong, Chenoweth talked about working from costumes on two coasts, why it’s OK for children to be a little scared, and what she did to make Zemeckis laugh during filming.

“This interview has been edited and condensed.

Chenoweth: ‘The Witches’ scratch that particular itch playing Malificent in ‘The Descendants.’

Chenoweth: ‘The Descendants’ scratched that itch. And the thing about Glinda (in ‘Wicked’) that I don’t know that people really remember is that she wasn’t so nice. So ‘wicked’ could really apply to her, too. And this is getting to play a mouse. Living in New York, I had a few in some apartments. And let’s just say we weren’t friends.

How did you record your part? My boyfriend and I decided my closet for sound with towels and blankets. And the studio sent us a mic and a computer and another iPhone, so they could hear another view and so the animators and CGI artists could watch and maybe be inspired by me and so many things I do, and so Zemeckis can direct and we can talk. And we did it. I did my whole role in my closet in New York City.

What was it like to be directed by the man who directed ‘Forrest Gump’ while you’re playing a mouse from your closet?

I was nervous. I’m being really honest. And there was an ad-lib I did and I know it made him laugh. There’s a scene where we’re running down the street and I ad-libbed “Run, Forrest, run!” Just because I had to do it once.

Laughter is an easy way to get people to relax, especially me. I’ve had to work with unusual cameras that I haven’t seen before, from Caroline Burnett to Julie Andrews, to Dolly (Parton) and Reba (McEntire). It can be intimidating, but laughter breaks it.

You’ve done voice work before, but for animation. Was this any different? Well, every role is different, but I’ve never recorded anything in my closet. Usually I’m inspired by my shoes. I don’t go in my closet to work, but I guess we’re getting used to things, aren’t we? I just did a song, a single with the country music star Ty Herndon called “Orphans of God.” And I sang it in my closet in L.A.

What’s it like working in Vancouver? Canada has got it down. It’s very safe. We have COVID tests every other day whether we work or not. And we are masked up when we go to set, with hair and makeup ready. And it’s a period piece for me. So let’s just say I can’t have anything messing it up and I wear, like, a cone.

And the first day I wore it, I said, “I feel like I’ve been spayed!”

Where do you stand on stories for children, like ‘The Witches’ that even some adults find frightening?

The idea of temptation, and courage, is all over this film. And then of course, love and safety. But I don’t think it’s fair for us to prepare our kids, our young generation, for what life has to bring now. This is a great opportunity for parents to say, “See, you can be lured in by a key piece of candy and later as an adult, I can be lured in by bad business partners, or drugs, or that.” It’s life. We will just soften ourselves to death where no one can handle anything that we don’t (tell scary stories). But I think we do it very carefully and very wisely here.

Kristin Chenoweth
IMAGE GROUP LA, FREEFORM

Performers for CMA Awards announced

Associated Press

Eric Church, Miranda Lambert, Maren Morris, Luke Combs and more are set to take the stage at the CMA Awards in November.

The country music awards show promised that the genre’s biggest stars will be together in one room again for the first time since the COVID-19 outbreak started. The show will air on ABC on Nov. 11 from the Music City Center.

“The show will feel a bit more intimate this year, we look forward to hosting our nominated artists and their guests as we celebrate the best of country music in a fully safe and physically distant environment,” said Country Music Association CEO Sarah Trahern in a statement.

Lambert, the leading nominee with seven nods including entertainer of the year, will perform “Settling Down” from her album of the year-nominated record “Wildcard.” Fellow entertainers of the year will perform “Cold As You,” and Morris will sing her hit nominated song “The Bones.” Co-hosts Reba McEntire and Darius Rucker will perform a tribute collaboration together, while Rucker will also perform his new single “Beers & Sunshine” with Lady A.

Gabby Barrett will be joined by pop singer Charlie Puth for a duet on her nominated song “I Hope.” Thomas Rhett will perform “Be a Light,” with McEntire, Hillary Scott of Lady A and Christian artist Chris Tomlin.

Other performers announced are Ashley McBryde, Rascal Flatts and Florida Georgia Line.


‘The Masked Singer’ gets spin-off show

Associated Press

Fox’s hit series “The Masked Singer” is getting company with “The Masked Dancer,” a chance for celebrity contestants to show off their moves in disguise.

Actor and comedian Craig Robinson (“The Office,” “Hot in Cleveland”) will host the series, with Ken Jeong, Paula Abdul, Brian Austin Green and Ashley Tisdale judging.

Contestants won’t be performing solo. Masked partners and back-up dancers will be joining them for a range of music and dance styles, including hip-hop, salsa, jazz and tap, the network said Friday.

Filing has begun on the series, which will debut in December, Fox said. A date and guest judges are yet to be announced.

Fox Entertainment executive Rob Wade described host Robinson as “a huge dance fan” and lauded the panelists as the right blend to “lead our awesomely weird masked masks into a whole new genre.”

Clint Eastwood to direct ‘Cry Macho’

Warner Bros. has announced that production of a new Clint Eastwood film is set to take place in New Mexico.

The 90-year-old Oscar winner will lead star in the film “Cry Macho,” the Albuquerque Journal reported. No other cast member has been announced.

Production is scheduled from Nov. 4 through Dec. 16 in the Albuquerque area, according to the casting agency.

The film is based on the book of the same name by Richard Nash. Eastwood will play a one-time rodeo star and horse breeder in 1978 who takes a job from a former rival to drive his young son home. The film follows their journey from rural Mexico to Texas.

Khloe Kardashian positive for coronavirus

Khloe Kardashian says she had tested positive for the coronavirus.

The reality star confirmed she was diagnosed Wednesday in a sneak-peek clip of “Keeping Up with the Kardashians.” The bedridden Kardashian spoke in the video with a hoarse voice.

Kardashian said her symptoms included coughing, shaking, vomiting and headaches along with cold and hot flashes. She said she had remaining sensation while coughing.

Other news

■ Outlaw country singer-songwriter Billy Joe Shaver, who wrote songs like “Honky Tonk Heroes,” “I Been to Georgia on a Fast Train” and “Old Five and Dimes Like Me,” has died. He was 81.
Eugene Sheffer Crossword

ACROSS
1 Astern  54 — the Great (kidnippet)
8 Wagers  55 Mountain pass
12 401(k) alternative  24 "My treat"
13 Maja painter  25 Spruced up
14 Twistable cookie  26 Fuzzy fruit
15 Sign painter, at times  27 It takes the cake
17 Persia, today  28 Oboe insert
18 Wood applications  29 Misery
19 Heavy weight  32 Disappoint
21 JFK’s predecessor  33 Fable writer
22 Snorkeling site  35 Bearded
26 Seoul setting  36 Antelope
29 Drench  37 Code name?
30 Chemical suffix  38 Overact
31 Currier’s partner  39 Reach
32 Parcel of land  40 Small pastry
33 Mater lead-in  41 Pogo stick sound
34 Pint-sized  42 Drain blockage
35 “Gosh!”  43 Olympian queen
36 Stopwatch button  44 Half
37 Use a tab key  45 Flushed
38 Some fridges  46 11 Junior
40 Wet dirt  47 Rebel Turner
41 Geological periods  48 16 Ocean motions
45 Gambling mecca  49 When doubled,
48 One of eight  50 Earl Grey, for one
50 Coup d’—  51 23 Monet’s supply
51 “Huh?”  it’s a dance
52 Acapulco gold

DOWN
2 Feels unwell  52 Appointment
3 Worry  53 "My treat"
4 Order of business  54 — the Great (kidnippet)
5 Wood applications  55 Mountain pass
6 Sailor’s "yes"  36 Antelope
7 Small pastry  37 Code name?
8 Pogo stick sound  38 Overact
9 Goof up  39 Reach
10 Earl Grey, for one  40 Small pastry
11 Junior  41 Pogo stick sound
12 JFK’s predecessor  42 Drain blockage
13 Maja painter  43 Olympian queen
14 Twistable cookie  44 Half
15 Sign painter, at times  45 Flushed
16 Chemical suffix  46 11 Junior
17 Persia, today  47 Rebel Turner
18 Wood applications  48 16 Ocean motions
19 Heavy weight  49 When doubled,
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50 Coup d’—  51 “Huh?”
52 Acapulco gold

Answer to Previous Puzzle

URLS  BIDS LVI
COOT ASEA AIR
LARACF RBE
ARISES YIKES
IN NERDS
GALS BOD OPEL
ASA RUE UMA
BURB INN CRI
GAMES BY
CRETE PUMPED
AAS LARRYBIRD
ITS OHIO ASIA
NEE NIPS LACY

10-30  CRYPTOQUIP

"Typewriter?" Just be grateful you have a steady Shakespearean role.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: OLD WEST PIONEERS' CONESTOGAS THAT WERE OUTFITTED WITH LOTS OF CABINETS: CUPBOARD WAGONS.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Z equals Y
Germany ready to offer US a new deal

BY ANDREAS KLUTH

Germany and the United States are closest allies in Western Europe, sharing a history of joint struggles for freedom. But the relationship has become strained, with President Donald Trump’s trade wars and unilateralism fueling mistrust on both sides. If the new administration of President-elect Joe Biden seeks to mend things, Germany will have to hold up its side of the bargain.

The notion that Europe’s biggest economy is now Trump-leaning is a myth. It is true that the Berlin government under Chancellor Angela Merkel tried to balance Trump’s crude nationalism with the more sophisticated approach of German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas. But it is also clear that the Biden administration has a new chance to redefine the transatlantic relationship. It is time for Germany to lead.

For over a century, the United States has had a special bond with Germany. It was the U.S. (and Britain) who stood by the democratic West during Germany’s rise in the 1930s. It was the U.S. who, after World War II, helped to rebuild Germany and to lay the foundations for a democracy that stood for freedom and peaceful coexistence. Today, the bond between the two countries is more important than ever.

But the relationship is under pressure. Germany has been critical of the U.S. decision to withdraw from Afghanistan, and of the proposed military budget cuts. The U.S. has been critical of Germany’s failure to meet its NATO defense spending targets.

The transatlantic relationship is facing a serious test. The new administration in Washington has the opportunity to build a new relationship with Germany that is based on mutual respect, trust, and cooperation. This can only happen if the United States changes its approach to Europe and recognizes the importance of the relationship.

Germany has a crucial role to play in redefining the transatlantic relationship. It can show that it is committed to the alliance and to the values that it stands for. It can demonstrate its willingness to work with the United States to address the challenges that face the world.

Andreas Kluth is a columnist for Bloomberg Opinion. This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.
What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross-section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editors are provided by The Associated Press and other state and local newspapers.

Stop real (and claimed) foreign interference in the election

The Washington Post

Less than a week away from the 2020 presidential election, the United States finds itself in almost the opposite predicament as four years ago: under foreign interference, we’re in danger of imagining more of it than exists — and that in a country that already has many problems.

Adversaries from Russia to China are now reassuring our democracy, a reality that should come as no surprise to anyone who sees foreign interference. The good news is that this time, our government is paying attention. Influence operations on social media sites are getting caught before they can gain much ground. The hack-and-leak experts have dreamed so far from the ground up; even if investigators were to find a link between the Kremlin and the dubious Hunter Biden laptop story published by the New York Post, the tale hasn’t cast the U.S. political system into distrusting our democracy at every turn.

The untrustworthiness of mail-in ballots.

The attackers’ intention, officials worry, is to meddle, including Ukrainian lawmaker Andriy Derkach for acting as a Russian agent to launder disinformation through U.S. social media. Cross-checking Derkach’s story, President Joe Biden, this step, in turn, empowered platforms like Google and Facebook to kick the criminals off their sites. The State Department has revoked the visas of similar actors. U.S. Cyber Command and the National Security Agency now have preventive measures in place. Bots are also being kept from the Web to prevent ransomware attacks and other nefariousness on Nov. 3.

The State Department is coordinating with officials in all 50 states and D.C. to secure their infrastructure and spot intruders — which may have helped ward off what some experts worry could have happened to Pennsylvania, which was stopped during the spring. Most concerning are hospitalizations, which are up by about 40% since mid-September though are still 30% or so below spring and summer peaks. Most hospitals have ample capacity to treat virus patients while continuing elective procedures, which were stopped during the spring.

Some hospitals report being swamped, but resources can be deployed to areas that need the extra beds. In El Paso, where COVID patients make up 40% of hospital beds (about twice the summer peak), Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has announced an alternate care site and the feds are sending critical-care personnel.

Wisconsin has set up a field hospital in the Milwaukee suburbs to treat patients who aren’t severely ill but may still need medical support. As of Monday that hospital was treating four patients. Hospitalizing patients with moderate illness can prevent communities from becoming overwhelmed by the long-term damage and can turn deadly.

Governors seem to have learned from mistakes during earlier waves, including New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s failure to use field hospitals set up by the feds in New York City. Abbott was slow to deploy reserve hospitals, but the state did not encounter overwhelming numbers this summer though has responded more swiftly in El Paso.

Death rates have also fallen tremendously as treatments have improved. This includes therapies like Gilead’s antiviral drug remdesivir and Regeneron’s antibody cocktail, but also medical protocols such as prone positioning, low-flow oxygenation in lieu of invasive ventilation, and anticoagulation to treat the blood clots that cause it.

The Department of Homeland Security and the National Security Agency are preemptively keeping malicious bots and the National Security Agency has revoked the visas of similar actors. U.S. Cyber Command and the National Security Agency now have preventive measures in place. Bots are also being kept from the Web to prevent ransomware attacks and other nefariousness on Nov. 3.

The expensive, star-infused lineup is perhaps the most striking feature of the Dodgers. Talent and determination, which bought the team after Frank McCourt put it into bankruptcy, have spent over the years. Just before the season started, they opened the cash spigot, paying $215 million for the newly arrived outfielder Mookie Betts, a game-changer at the plate and in the field. Betts, who starred for the Boston Red Sox when they beat the Dodgers in the 2018 series, scored what proved to be the winning run in the Game 7 classic.

The expensive, star-infused lineup is one thing the Dodgers had in common with the city’s other titleholder, the Lakers, who won the NBA championship a little more than two weeks ago after missing the playoffs for seven agonizing years. Another thing they shared was the belief that it was worth the cost; they had built up, each of which cuts across ages, races, ethnicities, incomes and political views.

With all the challenges thrown in our way this year — the pandemic, the recession, the election — fans joy amid the pandemic Los Angeles Times

For the second time in this strange and awful year, Los Angeles has found a reason to cheer.

The World Series championship was won by the Dodgers on Tuesday night in its first 32 years, a drought made all the more frustrating by the near-misses in recent seasons and the promise of an even bigger payday. After the Dodgers made it to the World Series only to lose — and in 2017, to a Houston Astros team that cheated its way to victory. Talent and determination, which bought the team after Frank McCourt put it into bankruptcy, have spent over the years. Just before the season started, they opened the cash spigot, paying $215 million for the newly arrived outfielder Mookie Betts, a game-changer at the plate and in the field. Betts, who starred for the Boston Red Sox when they beat the Dodgers in the 2018 series, scored what proved to be the winning run in the Game 7 classic.

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With all the challenges thrown in our way this year — the pandemic, the recession, the election — Los Angeles Times

Preparing for the upcoming ‘COVID-19 Winter’

The Wall Street Journal

Perhaps what’s worse is coming. Or as Joe Biden warned last week about a third virus wave, “We’re about to go into a dark winter, a dark winter.” He’s playing up the worst case as the election nears, so some context is in order.

Virus cases are increasing, but this is inevitable as cooler weather arrives and Americans go indoors. Cases have also been climbing across Europe, in some countries more than in the U.S. But bad news is that America is better prepared to handle another virus surge, and progress toward a vaccine continues.

The seven-day U.S. rolling case average has nearly doubled from the recent low in mid-September. Cases are more geographically dispersed than in the spring and summer, rising even in states with strict restrictions and mask mandates. This includes New York and its neighbors whose governors were hailed for supposedly controlling the virus. The increase has been most acute in upper Midwest states that weren’t hit as hard earlier. Some of the increase is due to more testing, which is detecting more asymptomatic cases.

Most concerning are hospitalizations, which are up by about 40% since mid-September though are still 30% or so below spring and summer peaks. Most hospitals have ample capacity to treat virus patients while continuing elective procedures, which were stopped during the spring.

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As Wallace continues to walk toward the two officers, they both suddenly open fire, striking him 10 times, according to his father.

Wallace’s mother wails, and cradles his body. According to Walter Wallace Sr., his son was a father with a known history of mental health issues.

Having someone walk toward you with a knife is frightening. But as the agents tried to hold the man, they realized they must be armed. This was an unusual手机, police officers are supposed to be trained in de-escalation and have tools to utilize before they discharge their weapon multiple times.

Again, protests erupted after the shooting. This time the unrest was centered near the corridor of 52nd Street that is still recovering from unrest and police brutality in response to the decision by a Philadelphia grand jury not to charge the two police officers.

Again, officials responded with somber statements. Mayor Jim Kenney said: “I have watched the video of this tragic incident and empathize with the family’s pain. Every time an officer must be answered questions.”

Again, the Fraternal Order of Police immediately condemned the shooting. If the police officers who shot Walter Wallace Jr. in 10 times indeed did nothing wrong according to PPAP use-of-force protocols — which are up by about 40% since mid-September though are still 30% or so below spring and summer peaks — then that state of policing in Philadelphia is even more dire than we thought. It also makes it more urgent to explore non-policing responses to behavior and mental health crises, as other evolved nations and cities do.

Dodgers, Lakers brought LA fans joy amid the pandemic

Los Angeles Times

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With all the challenges thrown in our way this year — the pandemic, the recession, the election — Los Angeles Times

Police shooting of Black man likely a policy failure to

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Again a Black man is killed by police this time a 27-year-old Walter Wallace Jr. from West Philadelphia.

On Monday afternoon, Philadelphia police officers arrived at the 6100 block of Passyunk Avenue and encountered Wallace with a knife. Wallace “advanced toward the officers,” according to a police spokesperson.

A video taken by a bystander shows Wallace walking toward police officers who are pointing their guns at him. Wallace’s mother and another man try to hold him back in an effort to defuse the situation.
**Auto racing**

**College football**

AP Top 25 standings

<table>
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<th>Rank</th>
<th>Avg</th>
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Race statistics

- **New England Patriots**
  - Win: 11-2-0
  - Loss: 9-8-0
  - Points: 383
  - Average yards: 312.5
  - Average points: 20.8
  - Record: 10-4-0

- **Washington Football Commanders**
  - Win: 11-2-0
  - Loss: 9-8-0
  - Points: 382
  - Average yards: 305.9
  - Average points: 20.7
  - Record: 10-4-0

- **Carolina Panthers**
  - Win: 10-3-0
  - Loss: 9-8-0
  - Points: 368
  - Average yards: 304.2
  - Average points: 19.3
  - Record: 10-4-0

- **Dallas Cowboys**
  - Win: 11-2-0
  - Loss: 9-8-0
  - Points: 367
  - Average yards: 302.9
  - Average points: 20.3
  - Record: 10-4-0

- **San Francisco 49ers**
  - Win: 11-2-0
  - Loss: 9-8-0
  - Points: 362
  - Average yards: 292.3
  - Average points: 20.2
  - Record: 10-4-0

- **Seattle Seahawks**
  - Win: 11-2-0
  - Loss: 9-8-0
  - Points: 359
  - Average yards: 288.6
  - Average points: 19.9
  - Record: 10-4-0

- **Los Angeles Rams**
  - Win: 10-3-0
  - Loss: 9-8-0
  - Points: 355
  - Average yards: 287.4
  - Average points: 19.8
  - Record: 10-4-0

- **Arizona Cardinals**
  - Win: 11-2-0
  - Loss: 9-8-0
  - Points: 353
  - Average yards: 286.8
  - Average points: 20.2
  - Record: 10-4-0

- **Denver Broncos**
  - Win: 11-2-0
  - Loss: 9-8-0
  - Points: 352
  - Average yards: 285.9
  - Average points: 20.1
  - Record: 10-4-0

**Scores**

1. **Kansas State (12-3)**
2. **Texas Tech (12-3)**
3. **Baylor (12-3)**
4. **Texas Christian (11-4)**
5. **Texas (11-4)**

**Tennis**

Vienna Open

**Scores**

1. **Andrey Rublev**
2. **Denis Shapovalov**
3. **Alexander Bublik**
4. **Marin Cilic**
5. **Stefanos Tsitsipas**

**Soccer**

MLS Eastern Conference

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<th>Team</th>
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<th>Games</th>
<th>Wins</th>
<th>Draws</th>
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MLS Western Conference

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**College football**

Los Angeles Rams at Miami Dolphins

1. **Tom Brady**
2. **Van Jefferson**
3. **Cam Hilton**
4. **Yannick Ngakoue**
5. **Trent Williams**

**NBA**

Los Angeles Lakers vs. Miami Heat

1. **Anthony Davis**
2. **LeBron James**
3. **Fisheye" Nathan Adrian"
4. **Eric Bledsoe" Nathan Adrian"
5. **Brook Lopez" Nathan Adrian"

**NFL**

San Francisco 49ers vs. Arizona Cardinals

1. **Jimmy Garoppolo**
2. **Deebo Samuel**
3. **Jimmie Ward**
4. **Landry Jones**
5. **Jalen Hurts" Nathan Adrian"
Several days late, Kyle Busch gets his first win of the year

BY STEPHEN HAWKINS
Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — Out of contention to defend his NASCAR Cup title, Kyle Busch at least extended his season winning streak to 16 with his first victory of 2020. He also denied a needed victory for Martin Truex Jr., his penalized Joe Gibbs Racing teammate who still has a chance to be one of the four drivers to be the new champion.

“I feel like crap,” Busch said. “But I got a win.”

Busch won the NASCAR playoff off-race at Texas that finished Wednesday, three days after it started. He was 0.468 seconds ahead of Truex, and had just enough fuel left to do a celebratory burnout on the frontstretch before needing a push from a tow truck to get to the No. 18 Toyota to Victory Lane.

“If it was one more lap, the 18 was probably going to run out of gas,” said Truex, who led 53 laps. “So, I mean, it just was one of those things ... how close can you get without winning?”

It was 12th top-three finish this season for Truex, whose only win came at Martinsville — NASCAR's oldest and shortest track where the next race is Sunday. He also won there last fall.

Truex had to go to the back of the field when the Texas race started Sunday because of an illegal spoiler and lost crew chief James Small for the extended time in Texas. The 2017 champion and runner-up the last two seasons was also docked 20 points, a crucial penalty since he was already below the cutoff line for the top four before that.

A win would have taken care of that.

“Coming here we had a lot of confidence and we had a strong run,” Truex said. “This time of year, second is great, it’s just not good enough.

There are spots for three other drivers to join Joey Logano for a run at the championship in the season finale Nov. 8 at Phoenix. Kevin Harvick, Denny Hamlin, Brad Keselowski are above the cutline going to Martinsville. Alex Bowman and Chase Elliott are both 42 points behind the cut-off, while Truex is 53 back and Kurt Busch 98.

The 57th career victory for Logano secured his spot in the three-race round of eight.

The Rockets beat Oklahoma City in the first round of the play-off bubble in Florida this year before losing to the champion Los Angeles Lakers in five games, the third second-round exit in D'Antoni's four seasons. The former Phoenix coach decided not to return when his contract expired.

The 46-year-old Silas is the first significant hire for Rafael Stone, who was promoted to GM by organization owner Ryan Smith, to fill the role of Daryl Morey as GM and president of basketball operations.

Raptors’ Davis charged with assault

NEW YORK — Toronto Raptors rookie Terence Davis was arrested in New York on charges including assault after police say he hit his girlfriend in the face.

The incident occurred Tuesday night at a luxury high-rise in midtown Manhattan, where a 20-year-old woman told police she went to visit her boyfriend and the two got into a verbal dispute, a police spokesperson said.

Davis then hit the woman in the face, hurting her eye, and grabbed her phone and broke its screen, Detective Sophia Mason said in a statement.

According to a criminal complaint, the woman’s son was standing next to her when Davis hit her, causing the son to fall.

Davis was arraigned Wednesday on misdemeanor charges of assault, attempted assault, endangering the welfare of a child, criminal mischief, aggravated harassment and harassment.

In other NBA news:

The majority interest of the Utah Jazz is being sold to technology entrepreneur Ryan Smith, sources told The Associated Press.

The Jazz said Wednesday that “definitive agreements” have been struck with Smith on the sale of the team, Vivint Arena, the team’s G-League affiliate and management of a Triple-A baseball club. Part of those agreements call for the team to remain in Utah.

Smith is a co-founder of the Utah-based firm Qualtrics.

The Philadelphia 76ers are in advanced negotiations with Morey to become president of basketball operations as part of their front-office overhaul that began after an underachieving season, multiple people with direct knowledge of the negotiations told The Associated Press.

The deal is expected to be finalized as early as this weekend, according to the people who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity Wednesday because it has not been made official.
Top pick Villanova, rest of Big East warily watch virus

By Doug Feinberg

NEW YORK — Jay Wright and his fellow Big East coaches know it will take a huge effort from everyone to make the college basketball season work this year and actually stage an NCAA Tournament.

Only a few weeks into the start of practice, there already have been some bumps due to the coronavirus. Many more are expected.

Big East coaches got on Zoom calls Wednesday for their annual media day and — while still talking about basketball — the return of UConn — outlined a stark reality facing all of college basketball this season: Coronavirus testing, COVID-19 protocols and the lack of confirmed schedules are dominant features of preparing to play.

“This year, as we’ve all learned, anything can happen,” said Wright, whose Villanova team was the coaches’ pick to win the league. “We’ve been shut down and we all learn it’s not for 14 days. It’s guys get shut down in different increments. Then they have to get heart tests and it could affect your team for 21, 23 days. That’s just part of it. How do you handle all the challenges? There are more than any season in the history of college basketball.”

Dozens of preseason tournaments have already been canceled and a few teams have had to push the pause button because of positive COVID-19 tests.

Minority representation

Five of the 11 Big East coaches are African American, which is one of the highest percentages across college basketball. That fact is not lost on Wright.

“The Big East is at the forefront of having minority coaches at the helm,” Ewing said. “They took a chance on a high school coach (Thompson) and he proved he was up to the task. Even when we won the NCAA championship he was given an opportunity that a lot of people who looked like him weren’t given the opportunity. Great to be sitting here as a head coach at Georgetown.”

Partial schedule

The Big East announced its conference schedule through the month of December with play beginning Dec. 11 with three games. Ackerman hopes to have the rest of the schedule out within a month.

“We broke our schedule into two pieces to take more time to see what makes sense for us in January or February,” Ackerman said. “There are models on the table that best suit our needs and provide the safest environment.”

Bluejay star

Marcus Zagarowski of Creighton was picked as the conference’s preseason player of the year.

Zagarowski’s season ended before the start of the Big East Tournament last March as he was sidelined with a torn meniscus in his right knee.

Rest of the rankings

Creighton received the other two first-place votes from league coaches. It’s the highest preseason position for the Bluejays since they joined the conference for the 2013-14 season. Providence was picked third.

Honoring big John

The Big East will establish an award named for former George Washington coach John Thompson Jr. who will recognize his efforts to fight prejudice, discrimination and advance social change. The award will be given to an individual, team or athletic department.

Thompson died in August.

A dozen players see options declined, will be free agents

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — What figures to be a down and perhaps brutal market for baseball free agents in the offseason following the pandemic began Wednesday when a dozen players were told their contract options had been declined, among them St. Louis Cardinals Gold Glove second baseman Kolten Wong.

The 30-year-old Wong will receive a $1 million buyout. Wong, a first-round pick in the 2011 draft, made his big league debut in 2013 and spent his first eight seasons with St. Louis. Wong hit .265 with a homer and 16 RBIs in 53 games during the pandemic-shortened season, helping the Cardinals make the playoffs for the second straight year. They were eliminated by San Diego in the first round.

“StL will always have a special place in my heart and I will never forget all the amazing people who taught me so much way back then,” Wong said Wednesday in an Instagram post.

Many teams are cutting costs following a shortened regular season played with no fans in attendance due to the novel coronavirus. Many teams already have eliminated front-office staff and many scouts to cut expenses, uncertain what attendance and revenue can be expected in 2021.

Baseball’s labor contract expires after the 2021 season, putting 2022 at risk of a work stoppage. Wong won his first Gold Glove last year. He is a finalist again this season, with the winner announced on Tuesday.

John Mozeliak, the president of baseball operations for the Cardinals, said he spoke with Wong on Wednesday.

“I told him that with some of the uncertainties, we’re just not in a position to do that,” Mozeliak said. “We both agreed to keep the door open, and so as we progress in this, it’s something that we’re not ruling out for a future return.”

Wong is only one year removed from perhaps his best season in St. Louis, batting .285 with 11 homers, 59 RBIs and a career-high 24 steals in 2019. He is a .261 hitter with 53 homers, 281 RBIs and 88 steals in 552 career games.

While leaving open the possibility of Wong’s return, Mozeliak mentioned giving Tommy Edman a shot at second base.

“Not speaking in absolutes, not saying anything’s for sure, but, as we approach this offseason, it’s definitely going to require some creativity, some patience and good timing,” Mozeliak said.

Others cut free included:

Arizona pitchers Mike Leake ($5 million instead of $18 million) and Hector Rondon ($500,000 instead of $4 million).

Washington right-hander Anibal Sanchez ($2 million buyout instead of $12 million salary), outfielder Adam Eaton ($1.5 million instead of $10.5 million), and infielders Howie Kendrick ($2.25 million instead of $6.5 million) and Eric Thames ($1 million instead of $4 million).

Colorado first baseman Daniel Murphy ($6 million instead of $12 million).

Seattle second baseman Dee Strange-Gordon ($18 million instead of $1 million).

New York Mets catchers Wilson Ramos ($1.5 million instead of $10 million) and Robinson Chirino ($1 million instead of $6.5 million) and infielder Todd Frazier ($1.5 million instead of $5.75 million).

About 50 more players would be eligible for free agency if their options are declined by Sunday, among them Chicago White Sox designated hitter Edwin Encarnacion and left-hander Gio Gonzalez; Cleveland first baseman Carlos Santana, catcher Roberto Perez and left-hander Brad Hand; Yankees left-handers JA Happ and outfiefder Brett Gardner; Texas right-hander Corey Kluber; Chicago Cubs first baseman Anthony Rizzo, and Pittsburgh right-hander Chris Archer.

Players already free include: catcher JT Realmuto; infieder DJ LeMahieu; pitchers Marcus Stroman and Masahiro Tanaka, and outfiefder George Springer and Marcell Ozuna; shortstop Didi Gregorius; and designated hitter Nelson Cruz.
Los Angeles Dodgers manager Dave Roberts, left, sits next to third baseman Justin Turner as they pose for a team photo after the Dodgers beat the Tampa Bay Rays 3-1 in Game 6 to win the World Series.
Passing attack showing signs of life at Notre Dame

By John Finferan
Associated Press

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — Five games in and a little over a week away from its showdown with top-ranked Clemson, Notre Dame's passing attack is beginning to show life again heading into Saturday's game at Georgia Tech.

Few expected the Fighting Irish to struggle there, particularly with grad student Ian Book back at the helm after throwing for 3,034 yards and 34 touchdowns in 2019.

While a veteran offensive line has cleared the way for sopho-


moo running back Kyren Williams and the defense has been sound, Book finally looked like his old self last week in a 45-3 victory at Pittsburgh, throwing for 312 yards and three touchdowns in a 12-7 defeat.

“We’re ascending at the right time,” Book said. “I feel like my game is starting to ascend and I need to keep doing the same things.”

Wide receiver Ben Skowronek, a first-year graduate transfer from Northwestern who calls Book his best friend, had touchdown receptions of 43 and 73 yards in the first half at Pitt. The 6-foot-3, 224-pound Skowronek, who totaled 110 receptions for 1,417 yards and eight touchdowns at Northwestern, could sense Book’s frustration following an 11-for-19, 106-yard, no-touchdown performance in a 12-7 victory over the Pittsburgh game. Lenzy, who missed the opener against Duke with a sore hamstring, had six receptions over the next three games before reinjuring the hamstring against Pitt and is doubtful for the Yellow Jackets (2-4, 2-3).

Skowronek himself missed part of the Duke game and all of the South Florida game with a hamstring issue. He now has four receptions for 135 yards.

“We’re gaining some continuity, and I said it many times, I believe in this group,” Kelly said. “I thought when we got continuity with the offensive structure, in particular the passing game, it would look better and it would get better and Ian would feel a lot more confident in getting the ball out on time. We’re getting there.”

Notre Dame again is deep at the tight end position, with four scholarship tight ends and a four-star freshman, Tommy Tremble (11 for 115 yards), senior Brock Wright and junior George Takacs.

Even before the pandemic shut down spring and summer plans, coach Brian Kelly and former Notre Dame’s first-year offensive coordinator, probably knew the passing attack would be a work in progress.

Gone are NFL second-round draft picks Chase Claypool and Cole Kmet, who combined for 109 catches for 1,552 yards and 19 touchdowns in 2019.

The Fighting Irish (5-0, 4-0 ACC) are without Kevin Austin Jr. and perhaps Braden Lenzy.

Austin, who missed his sophomore year because of disciplinary reasons, had surgery in August for a broken foot, returned briefly last year in a 12-7 victory over the Pittsburgh game. Lenzy, who missed the opener against Duke with a sore hamstring, had six receptions over the next three games before reinjuring the hamstring against Pitt and is doubtful for the Yellow Jackets (2-4, 2-3).

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By Anne M. Peterson
Associated Press

The so-called Conference of Quarterbacks has had some considerable turnover at the position heading into the season.

Gone are some of the Pac-12’s big names: Oregon’s Justin Her bert, Washington State’s Anthony Gordon, Arizona’s Khalil Tate and Utah’s Tyler Huntley. Just five quarterbacks who started regularly for conference teams last season are back.

Arguably the top returnee is USC’s Kedon Slovis, who took over last season when starter JT Daniels was injured in the opener. Slovis threw for 3,902 yards with 30 touchdowns and nine interceptions. He was named Pac-12 Freshman of the Year.

“I felt as Kedon progressed throughout that second half of the season and we progressed as a team, we started playing our best ball towards the end of the season last year,” Trojans coach Clay Helton said. “Now, to be able to watch Kedon work with those skill players and see the timing the ball is coming out (with), the accuracy the ball is coming out with, the chemistry of those skill players with him, it’s evident that being in the second year of the system and his comfort level with the kids he’s been working with is clear on the field. It makes you excited as a coach.”

Slovis is considered one of the top QBs in the conference, if not the nation, heading into the pan demic-abbreviated season. The Trojans, who finished 8-5 overall and 7-2 in the Pac-12 last year, are ranked No. 21 in the AP Top 25 despite the fact they haven’t played yet.

“From my perspective, or from the offense’s, we’re just really throwing in a lot of stuff, more nuances from what we did last year and more variations from what we did last year. We can run so many different things from so

Northern California quarterback Kedon Slovis threw for 3,502 yards with 30 touchdowns and nine interceptions and was named Pac-12 Freshman of the Year. He’s the top returning QB in the league.

Southern California quarterback Chase Garbers threw for 1,772 yards and 14 touchdowns with three interceptions in nine games.

With many new faces in the Pac-12 in 2021, the conference’s passing game has undergone a considerable turnover and there is no shortage of talent. Keep an eye on the following quarterbacks heading into the season:

**California**

Chase Garbers threw for 1,772 yards and 14 touchdowns with three interceptions in nine games last year. Although he threw for 291 yards and 21 touchdowns in nine starts last season, Garbers is still learning the ropes as a starter.

**Oregon**

Justin Herbert was named Pac-12 wide receiver of the year last season and led the conference in completions and passing yards last year. Herbert has moved on to the NFL, with the Cincinnati Bengals.

**Stanford**

K.J. Costello went to Mississippi State after a redshirt year last season, where he threw for 2,701 yards and 21 touchdowns with 11 interceptions in 11 games as a freshman. The former Stanford quarterback is back on campus and will compete with backup JT Daniels for the starting job.

**UCLA**

Josh Rosen was named Pac-12 offensive player of the year last season and threw for 2,826 yards and 18 touchdowns with 12 interceptions in 12 starts. Despite his success, Rosen was released by the team prior to the start of the season.

**Washington**

While there are several quarterbacks vying for the starting job, the Huskies are looking for a consistent starter at quarterback after winning the Pac-12 in 2019.

Media members cover the Pac-12 selected Oregon to finish atop the North Division and USC to top the South, and the Ducks to win the league title for the second straight year. Last year the Ducks won their division, the championship and the Rose Bowl to finish 12-2 overall and ranked No. 5.

**New coaches**

There are three new head coaches in the Pac-12, but one, Colorado's Karl Dorrell, isn't exactly new. He was head coach at UCLA from 2003-07. He replaces Mel Tucker, who left for Michigan State. The other two newbies are in Washington: Jimmy Lake is coach of the Huskies and Nick Rolovich has taken over at the Cougars.

Lake was promoted after Chris Petersen retired. Rolovich, who spent the last four seasons as coach at Hawaii, replaces Leach.
By Josh Dubow
Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — San Francisco's secondary has been decimated by injuries. Top edge rushers Nick Bosa and Dee Ford haven't been on the field for weeks. Yet the 49ers defense has still managed to perform at a high level almost every week thanks in large part to the play of middle linebacker Fred Warner.

Warner has been the main reason why his unit hasn't faltered despite starting 22 players on defense while dealing with injuries to the entire starting secondary, as well as several front seven players.

"I've always almost held myself to the highest standard," Warner said Wednesday. "I'm the one in the middle, the one that everybody is looking at every single day, every play. So as long as I'm on point, I know that we can continue to get better and better. I got a great group of guys around me and they make it easy on me for sure."

It's Warner who makes it easier on everyone else with his versatility to excel in coverage, against the run and as a blitzer.

He also has an outstanding ability to diagnose plays and get the Niners into the proper defense no matter the situation.

"He's special. He's special in the sense that he recognizes things that are happening on the football field," defensive coordinator Robert Saleh said. "He recognizes things on tape. You can put a lot on his plate in terms of getting people lined up and making checks and getting us into the right defense. That gives you flexibility as a play-caller and as a coaching staff to know that you can create a defense that's designed to be with different layers of checks, that will help us be in the right defense based on what the offense shows."

The Niners have always belived in Warner ever since he arrived as a third-round pick out of BYU in 2018. He has started every game since entering the league and his teammates believed he was overlooked when it came time for awards last season when he helped San Francisco reach the Super Bowl.

Some have bestowed him the nickname "All-Pro Fred" and his play has gotten others on board with CBS analyst Tony Romo calling him the "best linebacker" during last week's broadcast and saying he was unable to find any flaws.

"He's the quarterback out there," coach Kyle Shanahan said. "The calls he makes, all the confusing things that people do defensively with the motions and change of strengths and how he gets us lined up. When you play zone defense a lot, you better have some good guys inside who look at the quarterback and I think Fred is as good as anyone."

Warner excels at almost every aspect of the position. After playing mostly a nickel back role in college, Warner is one of the best coverage linebackers in the league with the SS 9 rating he's allowed on throws in his direction ranking second best among all linebackers, according to Pro Football Focus. He already has two interceptions, including one last week against New England's Cam Newton.

He's been used as a blitzer during his career until had three sacks last season and generated an impressive nine pressures on his 26 pass rushes this season, according to Sport Info Solutions.

Seattle coach Pete Carroll sees similarities to his do-everything linebacker Bobby Wagner, who has been a big part of the Seahawks success the past decade.

"He's just kind of taken over from the start," Carroll said on a conference call. "He's been such an asset. He's not only performed and so available to make plays because he's such a hard worker and a great reader and an instinctive guy. You can't watch him play and not come away impressed. He just jumps out at you. It's been cool to see him really ascend so quickly."

Streak: Steelers sacked Ravens QB Jackson five times in last encounter

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his legs as he is with his right arm. Asked about the key to keeping Jackson “in check,” Pittsburgh coach Mike Tomlin is still looking for an answer for the 49ers three other teams.

"I wish I had the answer to that," Tomin said. "I wish the National Football League had the answer to that. ‘In check’ is a strong term, one that I choose not to use. We’re just going to play to the best of our abilities, we are going to play within our personality, and we need to be on the details. We need to play fast and play collectively together and hopefully that is enough." It nearly was enough last season, when the Steelers sacked Jackson five times — still the most he’s taken in 28 career starts — and picked off three passes before falling in overtime. While defensive end Cam Heyward took no solace in his group’s effectiveness because Pittsburgh lost, Jackson is wary while playing behind an offensive line that has struggled to protect him. The Ravens have allowed 16 sacks through five games, already closing in on the total (23) it allowed in all of 2019 when Jackson was behind center.

"Their defensive line is great," Jackson said. "Their front four, they like to get off the ball and get to the quarterback. Lot of strip sacks. (Linebacker) T.J. Watt does a great job getting to the quarterback, harassing the running game. I feel our offensive line is going to be ready.

Few have been over the last four years, a stretch in which the Niners have ascended their status as the NFL’s best pass-rushing team. The makeover began when Hall of Fame defensive coordinator Dick LeBeau was let go in January 2015 and longtime outside linebackers coach Keith Butler was promoted. Pittsburgh jumped from 26th in sacks in 2014 to fourth in 2015 and has finished at the top in each of the last three seasons.

It helps to load up on edge rushers, as the Steelers did by taking outside linebacker Bud Dupree in the first round in 2015 and Watt in the same round two years later. That kind of talent can make it easy to create chaos in the backfield. Maybe the most impressive thing about Pittsburgh’s defense is how frequently its rushers are getting home. The Steelers have only finished with one sack in a game nine times during their run while collecting at least five sacks in a game 16 times.

"I think it’s just our level of discipline, understanding rush lanes," Heyward said. "Guys are watching film on their own and then we’re collectively talking about how we want to rush a guy, what we want to do in certain situations. But you’ve got to have that cohesion as a group of guys willing to do that. It can’t just be one guy, one cowboy just trying to do it by himself."

Twenty-six different players have combined for 206 sacks during the streak, from former Defensive Player of the Year as Harrison to Pro Bowl linebacker Watt to journeyman like former defensive end Ricardo Mathews, who had the fifth and final sack of his three-team, seven-year career when he drilled Eli Manning in a 24-14 win over the New York Giants in December 2016.

"It requires a lot of guys not only sacrificing to do what’s good for the team but also just understanding that we have to have our rush lanes and we have to have the ability to cover up those big lanes," Heyward said. "Because if you’re going to get torched if you don’t."
The play that launched one of the most impressive streaks in NFL history began innocently — or maybe menacingly is the better word — with James Harrison in full flight, his No. 92 a blur as he chased down Joe Flacco for a 12-yard loss on a sunny afternoon in Baltimore.

The meeting between the longtime Pittsburgh Steelers linebacker and the former Baltimore Ravens quarterback midway through the third quarter on Nov. 6, 2016, ultimately had little impact on the outcome.

Flacco and the Ravens withstood a late rally to hold off the Steelers for a 21-14 victory best remembered for Pittsburgh kicker Chris Boswell’s botched onside attempt in the final moments.

Still, four years later, not a game has passed in which the Steelers have failed to take down a quarterback.

Pittsburgh extended its streak to 63 and counting after toppling Tennessee’s Ryan Tannehill twice in a 27-24 victory last weekend that pushed the Steelers to 6-0 for the first time in 42 years.

Pittsburgh can move closer to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers’ all-time mark of 69 when it visits the Ravens (5-1) on Sunday with first place in the AFC North on the line. All the Steelers have to do is slow down Baltimore quarterback Lamar Jackson. The reigning NFL MVP is one of the league’s most dynamic players, equally as dangerous