STUTTGART, Germany — The Pentagon on Sunday ordered the home of U.S. European Command to stop reporting the number of coronavirus infections within its military community in a move that could reverberate across all U.S. forces.

The Army in Stuttgart said it can no longer release the number of coronavirus cases based on a Defense Department directive that cited operational security concerns.

“DOD will release numbers through their official platforms,” the Army in Stuttgart said in a statement.

The decision comes amid a spike in infections within the military and concerns that the combat readiness of the force could be put at risk by the fast-moving virus.

In Stuttgart, home to EUCOM and U.S. Africa Command headquarters, 80 infections were reported as of Sunday morning, by far the most of any American military base overseas. In all, there are at least 125 coronavirus infections within the military in Germany alone, based on a Stars and Stripes tally of infections.

SEE VIRUS ON PAGE 5

In Stuttgart, Army says DOD to give virus data

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

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Such concerns came into focus last week when the USS Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier was forced to pull into port in Guam because of a coronavirus outbreak among its sailors.

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A woman wearing a face mask walks by graffiti painted on the shutter of a closed restaurant in Athens on Monday during a lockdown order by the Greek government to control the spread of the coronavirus.

THANASSIS STAVRANIDIS/AP

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2 cadets found dead on campus within 48 hours

BY HEATHER BENIT
Stars and Stripes

Two cadets who were due to graduate from the Air Force Academy in May were found dead in their rooms on campus last week.

The first death occurred Thursday, the academy said in a statement released after an online briefing for staff and cadets, most of whom left campus just over two weeks ago as the institution stepped up its fight against the coronavirus.

Two days later, officials told the community in another online briefing that a second cadet had been found dead in his room at the Colorado Springs, Colo.-based academy, several cadets and an alumnus told Stars and Stripes, asking not to be named because they were not authorized to comment.

The first death was not caused by the coronavirus or foul play, the academy said in a statement, providing no further details about it. No official statement has been released about the second death.

Neither cadet has been identified, but several other cadets and an alumnus said both of the deceased were male “firsties” from squadrons 7 and 8. They would have graduated and been commissioned as second lieutenants in May.

Because both deaths “happened behind closed doors,” academy officials “want cadets with the doors open more,” said an alumnus with knowledge of the situation.

The only cadets remaining on campus are graduating seniors and a handful of others, including international students, who couldn’t head home when most of the nearly 4,000 cadets at the academy were dismissed in mid-March. The unprecedented move was taken to allow seniors to be housed in individual rooms, where they can follow social-distancing guidelines, which are considered

SEE CADETS ON PAGE 4
Companies having to resort to virtual layoffs

Associated Press

How do you tell employees you are laying them off when a pandemic prevents you from meeting with them in person?

Some companies have taken to video conference platform Zoom to bear bad news remotely.

Electric scooter rental startup Bird recently announced on a web-based call that it was cutting 30% of its staff.

Bird CEO Travis VanderZanden said that the company notified employees on a live Zoom meeting because everyone is working from home during the pandemic.

“Video was turned off which we thought was more humane,” he tweeted Friday after the firm’s layoff-by-teleconference approach drew considerable backlash on social media.

Instead of seeing fellow employees’ reaction to the bad news, there was a slide presentation explaining the decision, the company said.

But “in retrospect,” VanderZanden added, the company should have first made one-on-one calls to the hundreds of affected workers.

Bird, a dockless electric scooter sharing company, was founded in September 2017, and is based in Santa Monica, Calif. Bird operates in over 100 cities in Europe, the Middle East, and North America.
North Korea has ‘dropped interest’ in US nuke talks

By Kim Gamel and Yoo Kyong Chang
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea warned on Monday it has lost interest in nuclear talks with the United States, a day after the communist state test-fired what it called “super-large” multiple rocket launchers.

The challenges came as the North has stepped up military activity in recent weeks in what experts say is a bid by the regime to tighten its grip on power amid the coronavirus pandemic and to try to raise the stakes in negotiations.

The North accused Secretary of State Mike Pompeo of “slander” for remarks last week in which he urged the international community to remain united in coaxing the North back to the negotiating table and in continuing to apply pressure on its nuclear and missile programs.

State-run media said Pompeo was going against the will of President Donald Trump, who professes a good relationship with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and sent a letter earlier this month offering help in fighting the coronavirus.

“This makes us misjudge who is the real chief executive in the U.S.,” according to the statement attributed to a new foreign ministry official in charge of negotiations with Washington.

“The reckless remarks made by Pompeo seriously impaired the signboard of dialogue put up by the U.S. president as a decoy to buy time and create the environment favorable for himself,” KCNA reported, adding the North had “dropped the interest in dialogue with further conviction.”

“If the U.S. bothers us, it will be hurt,” KCNA added, without elaborating.

North Korea has expressed increasing frustration since talks stalled after Trump and Kim failed to reach an agreement during their second summit in February 2019 in Vietnam.

Kim said in a New Year’s message that his country was no longer bound by the suspended moratorium on nuclear and missile testing.

He also promised that the North would unveil “a new strategic weapon” soon, raising fears it would launch an intercontinental ballistic missile that Trump has signaled would be a red line.

KCNA reported earlier Monday that the North had successfully test-fired “super-large” multiple rocket launchers on Sunday in a step toward operational deployment.

South Korea’s military said Sunday that two short-range ballistic missiles had been fired by the North, flying more than 140 miles, with a maximum altitude of nearly 20 miles before splashing into the sea off the eastern coast.

It was the fourth such launch this month as the communist state presses forward with efforts to develop its weapons program despite coronavirus concerns.

But unlike the other three, Sunday’s test was overseen by defense and munitions officials, not Kim Jong Un.

The test by the North’s Academy of Defense Science was “to verify once again the tactical and technological specifications of the launch system,” which is to be delivered to army units, KCNA said, adding it had been “conducted successfully.”

North Korea, which largely sealed its borders and quarantined thousands of people after the virus first appeared in China late last year, claims it has had no coronavirus cases.

U.S. and South Korean officials have expressed skepticism considering the North’s shared border with China and poor health infrastructure.

“North Korea can’t help but have COVID-19 cases, but it’s hiding them by acting as if there is no problem domestically,” said Moon Kyeon Sik of the Korea Defense and Security Forum. “These are its camouflage tactics.”

Moon also noted that Trump has not responded to the recent military activity, including artillery drills.

“Washington has had an indifferent reaction to Pyongyang’s launches, and Seoul is lukewarm to them too, so I believe the effect of Kim’s appearances has diminished,” he said.

Local governments will issue orders starting Wednesday, according to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

Business owners and smokers could both face fines for violating the law. Smokers at nonsmoking restaurants are first warned by the restaurants, but if they keep violating the law they could face fines of up to $2,780, she said.

Local governments will issue warnings to businesses that fail to comply with the new regulations. After several warnings, they could face fines up to $4,600, Nagahama said.

Tokyo will implement a tougher smoking ban at city establishments starting Wednesday. The city added conditions to the transitional measure set in the health promotion law, said Tomoyuki Miyakawa, the city’s health promotion division official.

For example, restaurants and bars in Tokyo are exempt only if they are run by the owner or the owner and his or her family, he said.

Suit says firm billed DOD for ads never aired in Afghanistan

By J.P. Lawrence
Stars and Stripes

An information operations contractor billed the Pentagon millions of dollars for pro-U.S. television and radio ads that never aired in Afghanistan, a whistleblower complaint filed by the firm’s former president alleges in a recently unsealed lawsuit.

The Leonie Group, also known as Leonie Industries, served as the Pentagon’s top propaganda producer in Afghanistan from 2008 to 2015, with $120 million in contracts, claims it has had no business with the defense department.

The lawsuit, filed last July, alleges Leonie Industries had no way to verify its work was ever seen by the Afghan people.

Once the company started to monitor its programs at the urging of the U.S. military in 2014, it found less than 75% of its TV ads and 43% of its radio ads aired, court documents said.

The company’s vice president, Charles Owens, said in an email he could not comment on the pending litigation.

The lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia by Scott Kreller, Leonie’s former president.

Kreller alleges he was fired in February 2017 after he refused to submit a final psychological operations invoice to the U.S. military for $4.5 million, most of which double-billed the government.

Kreller, who worked for the company as its global operations director from 2011 until he was made president in 2016, said he was pressured for several months to submit the claim.

Kreller’s complaint falls under the False Claims Act, which allows private citizens to file suit on behalf of the government.

The government in February chose not to join the suit, a court filing said. The government intervenes in fewer than 25% of cases, a 2012 Justice Department memo said.

Federal backing adds the Justice Department’s resources to the case but also adds restrictions to lawyers for the whistleblower.

Kreller’s lawyer, Brendan J. Klaproth, said Friday that they intend to continue pursuing the case.

Founded in 2004, Leonie’s website says it specializes in strategic communications, information systems support, intelligence and operations research.

The military has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on psychological operations in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001. These efforts have aimed to convince Iraqis and Afghans to back the U.S. and coalition missions.

The contracts given out during the surge of U.S. troops to Afghanistan from 2009 to 2012 were rife with abuse, said Thomas Johnson, who could not comment on the specifics of the Leonie case, but who worked on propaganda efforts in Afghanistan after 9/11 and was based in Kundahar as a counterinsurgency adviser to U.S. forces.

“I’m not at all surprised at this lawsuit,” said Johnson, now a professor at the Naval Postgraduate School. “We gave out millions of dollars in many different areas, including information operations, where we just didn’t have any oversight,” he said.

Japan’s smoking ban inside restaurants, bars takes effect this week

By Hana Kusumoto and Aya Ichihashi
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — People will no longer be allowed to smoke in most restaurants and bars in Japan starting Wednesday, according to a government ministry.

The ban, which includes heated tobacco but not e-cigarettes, protects 88% of the population, according to a health ministry document explaining it.

Smokers at nonsmoking restaurants and bars in the capital Tokyo are exempt only if the establishment is run by the owner or the owner and his or her family.

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare said Friday it expects more than 20,000 establishments to follow the new rules.

Local government officials are to issue orders and fines as needed.

Businesses can also set up nonsmoking rooms, where eating and drinking are not allowed, or a separate room where smoking heated tobacco only is allowed while eating and drinking, the ministry’s website said.

Staff members 19 years old or younger are not allowed to serve smoking areas, said Okinawa prefectural government spokesman Naoko Nagahama.

Business owners and smokers in Japan can both face fines for violating the law. Smokers at nonsmoking restaurants are first warned by the restaurants, but if they keep violating the law they could face fines of up to $2,780, she said.

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Twitter: @jplawrence3

Twitter: @kimgamel

chang.kyong@stripes.com
Syrian forces: ISIS detainees found after riot

By Chad Garland
Stars and Stripes

A Syrian militia group said no alleged Islamic State prisoners had escaped, contrary to initial reports, after the group quelled a prison uprising with the help of aircraft from the U.S.-led coalition forces.

The U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, which operate the prison in the northeastern Syrian town of Hasakeh, sent counterterrorism forces to put down the riot and secure the facility late Sunday, said Kino Gabriel, a spokesman for the Kurdish-led militia group.

“ISIS terrorists managed to sabotage and remove the internal doors of the cells, create holes in the dormitory walls, and control the upper two floors,” Gabriel said in a statement Monday. “We confirm that there are no escapees among the detainees, and that the situation in the detention center is completely under control.”

Earlier, SDF members searched for prisoners thought to have escaped, said Mustafa Bali, an anti-ISIS coalition spokesman in a Twitter post shortly after the riots began.

Four prisoners were caught at the facility’s perimeter with the help of surveillance aircraft from the U.S.-led coalition, the London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported, citing sources on the ground.

Overnight, the town was “heavy overflight” of coalition warplanes, reported the Rojava Information Center, a Syria-based collective of news agencies and journalists. On Monday afternoon, the coalition was “back to normal operations,” the anti-ISIS coalition’s military spokesman, told Stars and Stripes in a text message.

The attempted prison break started after inmates held up blankets with messages to the U.S.-led coalition and human rights organizations scrawled on them, Rojava said on Twitter, citing an official statement. Counterterrorism forces stormed the building Monday after waiting until daybreak, the center later reported.

The fact that the rioters wrote messages to human rights organizations suggested the intent may have been linked to concerns over prison conditions and fears of the coronavirus pandemic, the center said. The prison is located in an area where Turkish-backed militias are accused of cutting off the water supply to more than 450,000 people for more than a week.

The coalition does not staff the prisons in northeast Syria, which have struggled to contain the roughly 12,000 ISIS-linked captives. The SDF does not have the capacity to investigate them and give them trials, and European countries have been reluctant to take back their share of the roughly 2,000 foreign recruits held in the camps.

The SDF said the prisoners in the region also hold tens of thousands of women and children who lived under the terrorist group’s “caliphate,” which lost its final territorial stronghold little more than a year ago in the town of Baghouz.

As Turkey invaded northern Syria last fall and President Donald Trump ordered the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the border region, the Kurds warned that they would not have the capacity to both defend themselves and secure the prisons. Prison guards left their posts to fight on the front lines, October, and more than 100 prisoners with alleged ISIS ties reportedly escaped.

“The longer ISIS prisoners are held in SDF prisons, the greater the potential for them to organize breakouts,” the Lead Inspector General for Operation Inherent Resolve said in a January report, citing Pentagon officials.

ISIS leaders have repeatedly called on supporters to attack the detention camps and free the prisoners. The group’s ranks have been filled by fighters freed in prison breaks stretching back more than a half-decade, the Washington Post reported.

The U.S.-backed Kurdish militia’s suppression of Sunday night’s riots “confirm the ability of the SDF to secure ISIS terrorists,” Gabriel said, but he called for more support from the international community “in order to provide maximum protection to detention centers and camps that contain ISIS terrorists and their families.”

Despite losing its territorial control, the group continues to fight an insurgency in both Iraq and Syria.

The attempted prison break Sunday came as the coalition pulled out of a third Iraqi base in a month. Officials have cited success against the terrorist group for enabling the withdrawal.

On Monday, the coalition handed over its compound at a fourth base, the Nineveh Operations Command in Mosul, to the Iraqi military said online. The city, formerly ISIS’s Iraqi capital, was liberated from the terrorists in November 2017.

“We are fighting two adversaries, mental resilience and COVID-19,” one of the seniors said in a

US soldiers with premature twins medically evacuated from S. Korea

By Matthew Keeler
Stars and Stripes

OSAN AIR BASE, South Korea — A dual military family living at the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak in South Korea has been medically evacuated to the United States after their twin boys were born 10 weeks premature.

Newlyweds Spc. Cody McFall, 21, and Pvt. Cheyenne Evans, 20, both military police with the 188th Military Police Company at Camp Walker, along with their sons Parker and Laine, flew out of Osan Air Base on Monday afternoon. A U.S. Army Medical Center equipped with a neonatal intensive care unit is getting them to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, where the boys will receive care hard to come by in Korea.

“The twins each weighed less than 2½ pounds when they were born last month at Daegu’s Yeoungnam Army Community Hospital, McFall said.

South Korea has relatively few coronavirus cases, but an outbreak that began in mid-February in Daegu, a city of 2.5 million about 150 miles southeast of Seoul, is the country’s 9,661 cases so far have been in the city that surrounds Camp Walker.

“If we had been in the United States, I could have flown to Walter Reed, the military had to ensure that none had been infected with the new coronavirus, formally known as COVID-19,” McFall said.

“These infants have been in an ICU since they were born and exposed to COVID-19 is essentially zero,” Hudak said. “As far as the parents, they have been in quarantine for about three weeks and we also have tested them and their infants to make sure that they do not have COVID-19. We finished that test over the week-end before this mission was given its final green light.”

The Air Force’s 18th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron out of Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, and Hawaii’s Air National Guard 154th Wing from Hickam Air Force Base lifted off for the approximately 18-hour trip to Joint Base Andrews, Md.

“The capabilities of that NICU on the aircraft are exactly the same as any NICU in the States that is in a fixed facility,” said Maj. Phillip Strawbridge, chief of medical staff for Osan’s 81st Medical Group. “We just put it in the air in the back of a C-17.”

“The C-17 is a robust platform for doing air medical evacuations, especially for critically ill people,” Strawbridge added. “It has the power built in, it’s got oxygen and medical gas built in, so we don’t have to bring a lot of equipment on there.”

Evans said she and her husband — who were compassionately reassigned to the military police detachment at Fort Meade, 25 miles from Walter Reed — will be monitored twice a day for coronavirus symptoms and will be required to wear face masks and sanitized scrubs inside Walter Reed’s NICU.

“We can see the boys as much as we want to now,” McFall said. “That’s a blessing to me.”

Cadets: Amid virus concerns, USAF Academy worries isolation is causing negative effects

FROM FRONT PAGE

key in stopping the spread of the coronavirus

No positive cases had been reported at the academy when the lower classes were dismissed, but since then, two of the seniors who stayed behind have been diagnosed with the virus, academy leadership said Friday.

In addition to being isolated in their rooms, seniors are barred from leaving the campus and several academy traditions have been stripped away, both by the need to adapt to life with the virus and because of leadership change.

“We are fighting two adversaries, mental resilience and COVID-19,” one of the seniors said in a blog post, using the acronym for the coronavirus disease.

The seniors who remain at the academy are “being asked to adopt a deployment-like intensity with our personal development during what was supposed to be the most enjoyable and exciting time of our cadet careers,” he wrote.

But, he added, “Beyond any grieving, beyond any ‘bad day,’ beyond any sort of excuse there might be to want to give up and go home, that just isn’t an option for our class ... we must do whatever it takes to hit that finish line because our Air Force needs us.”

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Virus: DOD to provide count of cases

FROM FRONT PAGE

Meanwhile, the military in Japan also has begun to record coronavirus infections. After about a half dozen cases emerged last January, commanders ordered troops on the island to shelter in place.

In South Korea, similar measures have been taken. The situation was serious enough that Gen. Park Homin, the top commander on the divided Korean Peninsula, said he was willing to impose strict new health measures that could jeopardize military readiness.

“This morning we went to barebones operations because we have only in the headquarters, everybody basically shelter in place, only go out for the essentials,” Abrams said Friday.

Col. Jason Condrey, garrison commander in Stuttgart, advised his military community of 28,000 Americans that he no longer would be providing updates on infection numbers, which is something the garrison has done regularly since cases began to emerge.

“I can’t do that any longer,” Condrey said in a Facebook post Sunday night.

Since cases emerged in Stuttgart, the military has taken a range of measures to curtail the virus’ spread. In addition to closing numerous services, the garrison ramped up testing with a drive-through site and a steep effort to sample community members without symptoms.

“The virus is likely everywhere,” Condrey said Sunday.

Navy to send nearly 450 medical personnel to Texas, La.

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON—About 450 Navy medical personnel are helping to Texas and Louisiana to assist with state efforts to combat the coronavirus outbreak, U.S. Northern Command announced Monday.

The sailors are from a medical unit out of Jacksonville, Fla., and are heading to the Dallas-Fort Worth area and New Orleans, said Air Force Maj. Mark Lazane, a spokesman for NORTHCOM. They have been put on “prepare to deploy” orders and are expected to leave in a few days, according to a NORTHCOM statement.

The personnel could move to other places as needed, Lazane said.

New Orleans has 1,350 confirmed cases of the coronavirus and 73 deaths, according to Johns Hopkins University. Dallas has 488 confirmed cases and 10 deaths from the virus and Tarrant County, which includes Fort Worth, has 139 cases and one death.

On Monday, the Navy’s USNS Comfort hospital ship arrived in New York Harbor to help local hospitals overwhelmed by the worst coronavirus outbreak in the country. The Navy medical staff aboard will be caring for non-coronavirus patients who are referred to the ship by local hospitals. The other Navy hospital ship, the USNS Mercy, arrived in Los Angeles on Friday and has started to accept patients.

kenney.caitlin@stripes.com
Twitter: @caitlinmkenney

Longtime German employee 1st known death in US Army Europe

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — A longtime German employee of the 21st Theater Sustainment Command died of complications related to the coronavirus over the weekend, the command said Monday, marking the first publicly announced death from the virus in U.S. Army Europe.

The man worked at Rhine Ordnance Barracks in Kaiserslautern and spent more than 30 years with Theater Logistics Support Center Europe, 21st TSC officials said Monday.

His age was not provided by the command.

The man’s positive results came Friday after he was tested for the virus two days earlier, the 21st TSC statement said. He died Saturday at the Westpfalz Klinikum, a hospital in Kaiserslautern.

“Our hearts are heavy today losing one of our own,” Helmut Haufe, the support center’s general manager, said in a statement. “While he dedicated more than 30 years of his life in service to the U.S. Government, he so much more — a husband and friend to many in the community. We mourn that we will no longer be able to share in his spirit for life.”

The employee last worked March 20. The Army is working to determine whom the employee had recent contact with and taking measures to ensure isolation in order to prevent further spread of the virus, the 21st TSC statement said.

The virus takes on average of five to six days, and as many as 14 days, to cause symptoms after infection, according to the World Health Organization.

“This is truly a tragic loss and our condolences go out to the family, friends, and co-workers of our employee,” Maj. Gen. Chris Mohan, the 21st TSC commander, said in a statement. “The 21st TSC and U.S. Army Europe remain committed to protecting our service members, their families, and our civilian co-workers.”

It’s unknown how many U.S. military personnel in Europe, including local national employees, have confirmed cases of the virus.

Most bases and commands had been reporting positive cases through the weekend until the Pentagon ordered military units to stop reporting numbers of confirmed infections.

The Defense Department “stated fairly clearly that for operational purposes, we’re not going to provide specific information to installations” about numbers of positive cases, 86th Airlift Wing Command Chief Master Sgt. Ernesto Rendon said Monday.

Base leaders at Ramstein said Monday that their numbers would continue to be reflected in the totals included in the broader Kaiserslautern community, as reported by Germany.

At Sunday evening, 115 people in the Kaiserslautern area were confirmed to be infected with the virus — 54 in the city and 61 in the surrounding county, local German officials said.

Svan.jennifer@stripes.com
Twitter: @chadgarland

Special pay issued for some isolated troops

BY CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

Service members could receive extra money for hardships caused by coronavirus quarantines, self-isolation or restricted movement, under new Defense Department pay guidance.

The guidance, which was issued last week, also clarifies benefits for troops and families affected by a Pentagon stop-movement order that halted temporary duty and permanent change of station travel.

Commanders have “broad authority to exercise sound judgment in all cases,” the guidance states, but it strongly encourages them to consider authorizing tele-work if traditional remote work isn’t possible, it says, commanders still may assign troops to their homes or to government lodging as alternate duty locations.

A new category of special pay, known as Hardship Duty Pay-Restriction of Movement, or HDP-RM, would provide service members $100 a day for up to 15 days each month if they are ordered to self-isolate at their permanent duty station, but can’t do so at their own homes or in government-provided quarters, could receive $100 a day for up to 15 days each month.

A soldier relaxes in his room on the Hohenfels Training Area, Germany. Under new hardship duty pay, troops who are required to self-isolate but can’t do so at home or in government-provided quarters, could receive $100 a day for up to 15 days each month.

The benefit is taxable and a service member would be allowed to keep any excess if the pay exceeds their actual expenses. But they would not be reimbursed for the difference if the lodging cost exceeds the $1,500 a month maximum.

Service members receiving Basic Allowance for Housing or Overseas Housing Allowance, but who are ordered into self-isolation in government-funded lodging elsewhere will continue to receive housing allowance benefits at their normal rates, the guidance states.

Under the guidance, troops who are separated from their families during a military move may receive Family Separation Housing Allowance, authorizing two payments to cover the cost of housing at two locations. Troops may also qualify for a monthly $250 Family Separation Allowance in such cases, or in circumstances where the travel suspensions keep them apart.

If service members and families are required to self-isolate or quarantine after arriving at a new duty location, they could be eligible for a per diem, or a combination of per diem and temporary lodging pay, may be authorized, depending on the circumstances.

The authorities and flexibility outlined in the document are intended “to promote, rather than to restrict, possible solutions” to support troops and families as the situation evolves.

Garland.chad@stripes.com
Twitter: @chadgarland

Top front page

Robert Abrams, the top commander in Stuttgart, announced Monday the 21st Theater Sustainment Command died of complications related to the coronavirus over the weekend.

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“The virus is likely everywhere,” Condrey said Sunday.
Navy hospital ship arrives to assist NYC

NEW YORK — A Navy hospital ship with 1,000 beds arrived Monday in New York City as officials pressed for more federal help. Mayor Bill de Blasio on Sunday called President Donald Trump’s suggestion that thousands of medical masks are disappearing from New York City hospitals “insulting” to front-line medical workers.

The USNS Comfort arrived Monday morning in New York City to help relieve the coronavirus crisis gripping the city’s hospitals.

The Comfort, which was sent to New York City after 9/11, will be used to treat non-coronavirus patients while hospitals treat people with COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo said the hospital ship will relieve stress on city hospitals as the massive vessel pulled into a cruise ship terminal off Manhattan. In addition to the 1,000 beds, the Comfort has 12 operating rooms that could be set up and running within 24 hours.

The ship’s arrival comes as New York state’s death toll from the coronavirus outbreak climbed Sunday above 1,000, less than a month after the first known infection in the state.

Most of those deaths have occurred in just the past few days. New York City, the epicenter of the U.S. outbreak, reported Sunday that its toll had risen to 776.

The total number of state-wide deaths isn’t expected to be released until Monday, but with at least 250 additional deaths recorded outside the city as of Sunday morning, the state’s total fatalities was at least 1,026.

De Blasio and others criticized Trump for suggesting with no clear evidence that thousands of medical masks are disappearing from New York City hospitals.

At a Sunday briefing, the president told reporters they should be asking, “Where are the masks going? Are they going out the back door?”

Report: 2 sailors aboard Reagan tested positive

BY CAITLIN DOORNbos Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A major U.S. news broadcaster reported over the weekend that two sailors aboard the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan tested positive for coronavirus.

It was unclear Monday whether those cases, which were reported by Fox News on Saturday citing unnamed U.S. officials, are among three Yokosuka sailors confirmed positive Thursday and Friday.

When asked Thursday whether the first sailor to test positive was assigned to the Ronald Reagan, U.S. Forces Japan officials declined to comment.

The Navy — which previously identified some installations and ships that experienced coronavirus cases — pivoted on Friday to revealing servicewide case numbers only. The change follows a policy “not to disclose specific operational or readiness details of units,” according to emails Friday from Lt. Cmdr. David Levy of Naval Forces Japan and Lt. j.g. Rachel McMarr of Pacific Fleet.

The Navy will no longer provide specific details that include “specific positive cases, numbers of Sailors in quarantine, or how many Sailors have been tested onboard specific installations,” Levy wrote.

Instead, the Navy is总ing up the numbers of sailors, dependent contractors and testing positive worldwide and publishing them daily on its website. As of Sunday, the service reported 134 sailors, 31 civilians, 23 dependents and 12 contractors had tested positive.

Despite the policy, Yokosuka officials announced two of its three positive cases on Friday evening, though they declined to name the ships or units to which the patients are assigned.

The Yokosuka base entered a three-day lockdown Monday to mitigate spread of the virus following the three positive test results announced last week. Base commander Capt. Rich Jarrett instructed non-essential personnel to stay home and instructed residents to shelter in place “until further notice.”

One of those cases originated in the United States, where that sailor is believed to have contracted the virus before returning to Japan on March 15. The sailor then started the 14 days of restricted movement required for all service members returning from overseas during the pandemic, but developed symptoms around day 10, USFJ officials told Stars and Stripes.

“Medical personnel will conduct daily medical screenings in person for personnel executing their observation period on board the Ronald Reagan,” Capt. Pat Hannifin, the carrier’s commander, wrote in the notice.

The goal was to “preserve our personnel readiness,” according to the notice.

“Our focus remains putting to sea on time, with no degradations to warfighting or redundancy,” Hannifin wrote. “Your health and personnel readiness is a crucial component to Reagan’s ability to sail any waters and meet any challenge at sea.”

Navy officials did not immediately respond Monday to questions about whether the Ronald Reagan is still restricting sailors undergoing observation to shipboard quarters.
Hundreds at Louisiana church flout COVID-19 gatherings ban

BY STACEY PLAISANCE
Associated Press

CENTRAL, La. — Hundreds of worshippers attended services at a Louisiana church Sunday, flouting a ban on large gatherings, angering neighbors and seemingly turning a deaf ear to their governor, who once again warned that hospitals could soon be overwhelmed with new cases of the coronavirus.

An estimated 500 people of all ages filed inside the mustard-yellow and beige Life Tabernacle church in Central, a city of nearly 29,000 outside Baton Rouge.

Assistant ministers and worshippers who stood outside the front doors and in the parking lot of Life Tabernacle told news reporters to leave, saying cameras would not be allowed on the property and they had been told not to talk to the news media. They went inside without further comment.

Across the street, Paul Quinn and other neighbors took pains to stay 6 feet apart from each other as they stood in a driveway and commented on their opposition to the services being held.

"Other congregations are using the internet, Skype, and other safe ways to congregate. Why can’t they? What makes them so special?" Quinn asked. "I wish state police would come out and do something.

"If they get out of church and go to the grocery store, it’s a serious health hazard. They don’t know how many people they’re affecting, and they don’t seem to care. That’s a problem."

Briefly commenting Sunday in the church’s parking lot, Timothy Spell, father of Pastor Tony Spell, said Life Tabernacle has a right to assemble, is not forcing anyone to attend services, is not breaking any laws and will continue to hold services at the church.

More than 3,500 Louisiana residents have been diagnosed with the coronavirus, and more than 150 of them have died, according to state figures released Sunday. Deaths included that of the first federal prison inmate, a man with “serious preexisting conditions” who was being held in Oakdale, La., the general prison inmate, a man with “serious preexisting conditions” who was being held in Oakdale, La., the general prison inmate, a man with “serious preexisting conditions” who was being held in Oakdale, La., the general prison inmate, a man with “serious preexisting conditions” who was being held in Oakdale, La., the general prison inmate, a man with “serious preexisting conditions” who was being held in Oakdale, La., the general prison inmate, a man with “serious preexisting conditions” who was being held in Oakdale, La., the general prison inmate, a man with “serious preexisting conditions” who was being held in Oakdale, La., the general prison inmate, a man with “serious preexisting conditions” who was being held in Oakdale, La., the general prison inmate, a man with “serious preexisting conditions” who was being held in Oakdale, La.

Trump defends pushing guidelines to the end of April

WASHINGTON — Siding with public health experts’ dire projections, President Donald Trump on Monday defended his decision to extend restrictive social distancing guidelines through the end of April, while bracing the nation for a coronavirus death toll that could exceed 100,000 people.

"The worst that could happen is you do it too early and all of a sudden it comes back," Trump said during a nearly hour long call-in interview with "Fox & Friends" as members of his coronavirus task force fanned out across other morning shows and outlets to warn the virus’ spread was only just beginning.

Trump said a day after Trump made a dramatic course reversal and announced that he would not be moving to ease the guidelines he last set the economy back up and running by Easter, as he said last week he hoped to do.

In the face of stark projections from his team and searing images of overwhelmed hospitals in his native New York City, Trump instead extended to April 30 the social distancing guidelines, which had been set to expire Monday. Many states and local governments already have tighter controls in place on mobility and gatherings.

Trump’s impulse to reopen the country, driven by pleas from business leaders, met a sober reality check from health experts, including Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government’s top infectious disease expert, who on Sunday said the U.S. could experience between 100,000-200,000 deaths and millions of infections from the pandemic.

That warning hardened a recognition in Washington that the struggle against the coronavirus will not be resolved quickly as Trump expressed a longing for normalcy.

"If we don’t have not been a good idea to pull back at a time when you really need to be pressing your foot on the pedal as opposed to on the brakes," Fauci said on CNN on Monday, describing how he and Dr. Deborah Birx, the coronavirus task force coordinator, had convinced Trump to reconsider.

Americans are now being asked to prepare for at least another 30 days of severe economic and social disruption, with schools and businesses closed and public life upended.

On Monday, Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan issued a new stay-at-home directive that said Marylanders may only leave their homes for essential work, to get food or prescriptions or for other "absolutely necessary" reasons.

"We are no longer asking," Hogan said.

The order took effect at 8 p.m. Monday. The governor said the ban includes restrictions on traveling outside of the state and riding public transportation.

Camp Humphreys hit with fifth coronavirus case

The contractor was tested on Sunday and the results came back early Monday. He is in isolation at his off-base residence as directed by the Korea Centers for Disease Control, according to a press release.

He last visited Camp Humphreys on Friday, it said, adding that U.S. military and KDCC officials are conducting contact tracing to determine if anybody else may have been exposed.

Garrison commander Col. Michael Tremblay said 27 people who worked with the contractor and six others who came in close contact had been sent home for self-quarantine.

His workplace and a convenience store he had visited were thoroughly cleaned. USFK didn’t identify where he worked but said it wasn’t at Eighth Army headquarters.

By Kim Gamel
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — Another American contractor working at Camp Humphreys tested positive for the coronavirus on Monday, the fifth confirmed case at the largest U.S. base in South Korea, officials said.

Camp Humphreys, the largest overseas Army garrison and home to the main military headquarters on the divided peninsula, has been partially locked down since Friday after three people who worked at Eighth Army headquarters tested positive last week.

The new infections raised to 13 the total number of cases affiliated with U.S. Forces Korea, including two soldiers. The increase came as South Korea has seen its overall pace of infections slow, with only 76 new cases reported Monday, down from a high of 909 on Feb. 29.

By Stacey Plaisance
 Associated Press

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Japan cases spike after Olympics delay

By Mari Yamaguchi
Associated Press

TOKYO — Before the Olympics were postponed, Japan looked like it had coronavirus infections contained, even as they spread in neighboring countries. Now that the games have been pushed to next year, Tokyo's cases are spiking, and the city's governor is requesting that people stay home, even hinting at a possible lockdown.

The sudden rise in the number of virus cases in Tokyo and the government's strong actions immediately after the Olympic postponement has raised questions in parliament and among citizens about whether Japan understated the extent of the outbreak and delayed enforcement of social distancing measures while clinging to hopes that the games would start on July 24 as scheduled.

With the Olympics now off, many are voicing suspicion that the numbers are rising because Japan suddenly has no reason to hide them.

“In order to make an impression that the city was taking control of the coronavirus, Tokyo avoided making strict requests and made the number of patients look smaller,” former Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama said in a tweet. “The coronavirus has spread while they waited.”

Experts have found a rise of untraceable cases mushrooming in Tokyo, Osaka and other urban areas — signs of an explosive increase in infections.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said Saturday that Japan is now on the brink of a huge jump in cases as it becomes increasingly difficult to trace and keep clusters under control.

“Once infections overshoot, our strategy ... will instantly fall apart,” Abe warned. “Under the current situation, we are just barely holding up.” He said a state of emergency is not needed just yet, but that Japan could at any time face a situation as bad as in the United States or Europe.

There was less of a sense of urgency displayed recently when many people visited parks for cherry blossom viewing, and Abe was only hinting at an Olympic postponement. But in a phone call with International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach last Tuesday, Abe agreed to postpone the games until 2021 because of the coronavirus pandemic.

A day later, Koike asked Tokyo residents to stay home weekends until mid-April, saying confirmed cases of the coronavirus had shot up to 41 in a day from 16 earlier in the week. On Saturday, Tokyo reported 63 new cases, another single-day record.

Koike said that infections in Tokyo were on the brink of an explosive increase and that stronger measures, including a lockdown, could be needed if the spread of the virus doesn't slow.

"Is this just a coincidence?" Maiko Tajima, an opposition lawmaker from the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, said during a parliamentary session last Wednesday, citing Tokyo's sudden spike.

Health Minister Katsunobu Kato said there is "absolutely no relationship" between the Olympic postponement and the number of confirmed cases. Abe cited experts as saying a big reason for the recent rise in the growing number of cases that can't be linked and a jump in infections from abroad. The prime minister told people to be prepared for a long battle.

A day after Koike's warning, Abe convened a new task force under a recently enacted special law that would allow him to declare a state of emergency in specific areas, including Tokyo.

Japan's strategy has been to focus on clusters and trace infection routes rather than testing everyone. A guideline issued Saturday still says that tests will be conducted per clinical doctors' advice. Experts set a high bar for testing eligibility, allowing them only for those linked to clusters or those with symptoms because they fear massive testing will fill up beds that are needed for patients in severe need, and cause a collapse of medical systems.

City at center of China's virus pandemic gradually revives

Associated Press

WUHAN, China — Shopkeepers in the city at the center of the virus outbreak in China were reopening Monday but customers were scarce after authorities lifted more of the anti-virus controls that kept tens of millions of people at home for two months.

"I'm so excited, I want to cry," said a woman on the Chuhe Hanjie pedestrian mall who would give only the English name Kat. She said she was a teacher in the eastern city of Nanjing visiting her family in Wuhan when the government locked down the city in late January to stem the spread of the coronavirus.

Some 70% to 80% of shops on the mall were open but many imposed limits on how many people could enter. Shopkeepers set up disinfectors for hand washes and checked customers for signs of fever.

Wuhan's bus and subway service has resumed, easing curbs that cut most access to the city of 11 million people on Jan. 23 as China fought the coronavirus. The train station reopened Saturday, bringing thousands of people to what is the manufacturing and transportation hub of central China.

"After two months trapped at home, I want to jump," said Kat, jumping up and down excitedly. "I want to revenge shop."

That will be a welcome sentiment to officials who are under orders to revive manufacturing, retailing and other industries while also preventing a spike in infections as people return to work.

"Travel controls on most of Hubei province, where Wuhan is located, were lifted on March 23. The final restrictions preventing people from leaving Wuhan are due to end April 8."

China had suffered 3,186 coronavirus deaths, including 2,547 in Wuhan, as of midnight Sunday, according to the National Health Commission. The country had a total of 81,470 confirmed cases.

Automakers and other manufacturers in Wuhan have reopened but say they need to restore the flow of components before production returns to normal levels. Some are waiting for employees who went to their hometowns for the Lunar New Year holiday and were stranded when plane, train and bus services were all but cut off to Hubei province.

Some parents were on the street with their children but traffic was light.

"We've only prepared a little stock," said the owner, Li Zhen. "Most people are still afraid of the virus."

A poster at the entrance to the pedestrian mall who would give only the English name Kat said, "Wuhan We Are Coming Back. Thank You."

A store employee waits for customers at a re-opened retail street in Wuhan in central China's Hubei province on Monday.
Spain has most infections; Moscow put on lockdown

By Arizt Parra and David Rising

MADRID — Bells tolled in Madrid’s deserted central square and flags were lowered in a day of mourning Monday as Spain raced to build field hospitals to treat an onslaught of coronavirus patients. In the U.S., the government’s top infectious-disease expert warned that smaller cities are about to see cases “take off” the way they have in New York City.

Moscow locked down its 12 million people as Russia braced for sweeping nationwide restrictions. And in Britain, there was some good news: Prince Charles, the heir to the throne who tested positive for the coronavirus, has ended his period of isolation and is in good health, his office said.

Three-quarters of a million people around the world have become infected and over 35,000 have died, according to a running tally by Johns Hopkins.

Experts say those figures — and those in every other country — are much lower than the true numbers, because of limited testing, counting irregularities and mild cases that have been missed. Many coronavirus deaths in Spain and Italy are not even counted.

“Spain and Italy make up more than half the world’s death toll from the virus that has upended the lives of billions and devastated world economies. Their hospitals have been buckling under the weight of caring for so many desperately ill patients at once. Italy has by far the most reported virus deaths, at nearly 11,000. At least six of Spain’s 17 regions were at their limit of intensive care unit beds, and three more were close to it, authorities said. Crews of workers were frantically building more field hospitals.

Nearly 15% of all those infected in Spain, almost 13,000 people, are health care workers, hurtling hospitals’ efforts to help the tsunami of people gasping for breath.

In hard-hit Madrid, flags were lowered to half-staff for an official mourning period. During a minute of silence for the dead, Madrid’s Puerta del Sol square was empty as bells tolled.

“Some patients in the [intensive care unit] were at their limit of intensive care unit beds,” said Dr. Luca Richeldi, a lung specialist. “Not even the most elderly patients are being accepted.”

In a situation unimaginable only a month ago, Italian officials were cheered when they reported only 756 deaths in one day. The country said the number of deaths has dropped about 10% a day since Friday.

“Despite the pain we are feeling, we are seeing a light at the end of the tunnel,” Dr. Federico Mocchegiani, president of the Italian College of Radiologists, said.

Prisoners in Iran; Netanyahu tested, to enter self-quarantine

By Amir Vahdat and Aron Heller

TEHRAN, Iran — Prisoners in southern Iran broke cameras and caused other damage during a riot, state media reported Monday, the latest in a series of violent prison disturbances in the country, which is battling the most severe coronavirus outbreak in the Middle East.

Israel meanwhile announced that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will enter self-quarantine after an aide tested positive for the virus. His office says the 70-year-old leader has undergone tests and will remain in quarantine until his results are confirmed.

Iran has more than 600 infections and 40 deaths from COVID-19, the illness caused by the coronavirus, including 117 fatalities in the last 24 hours. The Health Ministry said more than 3,500 people are in critical condition, while around 14,000 have recovered.

Israel has reported more than 40,000 infections and 2,757 deaths from COVID-19, the illness caused by the coronavirus, including 117 fatalities in the last 24 hours. The Health Ministry said more than 3,500 people are in critical condition, while around 14,000 have recovered.

Elsewhere Monday, Jordan began releasing thousands of prisoners who were quarantined for the last two weeks at five-star hotels in the Dead Sea in order to prevent the spread of the virus.

More than 4,200 Jordanians and 1,500 foreigners have been held at the hotels. The Jordanians will be sent home, and are requested to remain at home for another 14 days.

Travelers with other nationalities will be released on Tuesday. It was not immediately clear where they would go, but authorities said they would be in contact with their embassies and the Foreign Ministry.

Jordan has reported 259 infections and four deaths from the virus. At least 18 people have recovered.

Jordan halted all flights and closed its borders on March 17. It later imposed an indefinite round-the-clock curfew before providing limited times for people to shop for basic goods on foot.

In Egypt, the government extended the closure of museums and archaeological sites, including the Pyramids and the Sphinx at Giza, until at least April 15. Authorities still plan to light up the pyramids on Monday night in an expression of support for health workers battling the virus.

Egypt has reported more than 600 infections and 40 deaths from the virus.
Instacart workers seek strike as jobs get busier and riskier

**By Alexandra Olson and Curt Anderson**
Associated Press

NEW YORK — A possible strike by Instacart workers highlights the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on the grocery delivery business. Delivery workers are worried about their safety as they try to meet a surge in demand for online groceries.

A group called the Gig Workers Collective called for a nationwide walkout Monday. They’ve been asking Instacart to provide workers with hazard pay and protective gear, among other demands. Instacart said Sunday that it would soon provide workers with a new hand sanitizer upon request and outlined changes to its tip system. The group said the measures were too little too late.

While some workers have said that they intend to join the strike, at least a dozen have stopped filling orders already for fear of getting the virus — other, newer workers are content to have a paying job at a time of mass layoffs in other industries. The San Francisco-based delivery app is trying to hire 300,000 more workers — more than doubling its workforce — to fulfill orders it says have surged by 150% year-over-year in the past weeks. The company said that 50,000 new shoppers joined its platform in just the past week. Some customers are waiting days to receive orders.

Instacart, which already has a workforce of over 200,000 contracted workers who make multiple trips a day to various grocery stores to deliver and fulfill orders that customers make through the app. It also directly employs about 20,000 part-time workers who are assigned to a single store, collecting groceries that are subsequently delivered to clients by a contracted Instacart worker.

Chloe Grozidna, a part-time Instacart in-store shopper assigned to a Mariano’s grocery store in the Chicago area, said that workers are seeing “a lot of apocalypse orders” from customers hunkered down in their homes. Panic shopping has cleared out the shelves, meaning that she often has to replace a customer’s orders with a lesser item or notify them that it’s not available.

Grozidna, who makes $13 an hour and doesn’t get tips, said that the crowds of fellow Instacart shoppers have made it tough to keep a safe distance while racing to fulfill orders.

Among their demands, the strike organizers want hazard pay of $5 an hour and supplies of hand sanitizer, wipes and cleaning supplies free of charge. On Sunday, the company said that it had contracted with a third-party manufacturer to make a hand sanitizer spray that workers can request at no cost via a website starting Monday, with shipments beginning in a few days.

Data show online grocery orders jumping even before some cities and states imposed “stay at home” orders. During the week of March 2, Instacart, Amazon and Walmart grocery delivery services each saw at least a 65% sales increase compared to the same time last year, according to estimates from Earnest Research.

Instacart has started offering bonuses of between $25 and $200 for its hourly employees dependent on hours worked until April 15. It also announced a month-long extension of a temporary policy giving 14 days of paid leave to workers who are diagnosed with the coronavirus, or have been ordered to isolate themselves.

The strike organizers demanded that the policy be extended to workers with a doctor’s note verifying a pre-existing condition that could make them more vulnerable to the virus. They also demanded that Instacart raise the tip default in its app to 10% from the current 5%. Instead, Instacart announced Sunday that it would change the default to the amount the customer last tipped, saying tips have increased considerably during the virus crisis.

While such low-wage jobs put people on the front lines of the pandemic, many people are applying as layoffs surge in retail, restaurant, hospitality and other industries.
Cookie Monster, Elmo help remind kids to wash hands

From wire reports

NEW YORK — Elmo, Rooster and Cookie Monster are doing their part to help keep kids safe as the coronavirus pandemic grinds on.

The beloved Sesame Street Muppets are featured in some of four new animated public service spots reminding young fans to take care while doing such things as washing hands and sneezing.

One of Elmo’s signature songs, the toothbrush classic “Brushy Brush,” has been updated to “Washy Wash.” Rooster pops up in another of the 30-second spots to remind kids to “wash hands now” before eating, playing sports or using the bathroom.

The new content on Sesame-Street.org/caring builds on last week’s launch of Sesame Workshop’s Caring for Each Other initiative to help families stay physically and mentally healthy during the health crisis. The overall project ranges from messages of comfort to learning activities in reading, math and science.

“As families around the world adjust to their new realities, parents and caregivers are looking for help in creating new routines, staying healthy and fostering learning at home while little ones are out of school,” Dr. Rosemarie Truglio, senior vice president of curriculum and content at Sesame Workshop, said in a statement.

Florida

FORT LAUDERDALE — Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis was scheduled to visit a testing site at Hard Rock Stadium in South Florida on Monday as the state’s confirmed coronavirus caseload approaches 5,000. Many residents spent their first weekend under “Safer at Home” orders.

The number of confirmed cases in Florida jumped by 912 Sunday, topping 5,000. Many residents spent their first weekend under “Safer at Home” orders.

Teachers and students across Florida, which has some of the largest school districts in the country, were set to begin virtual schooling Monday after spring break ended in many areas of the state.

Illinois

CHICAGO — Celebrity chef Rick Bayless launched an effort to help restaurant workers who have been laid off during the coronavirus pandemic.

One of the award-winning Chicago chef’s restaurants that’s currently closed, Frontera Grill, will host an operation paying laid-off workers to make 30-pound boxes of food, including produce, bread and meat. The boxes will be available at a number of Chicago restaurants throughout the city.

“This project can touch the lives of laid-off workers,” Bayless said in a news release.

The plan is to process 800 boxes each week. The effort is being funded by a $250,000 anonymous gift in partnership with US Foods, a Rosemont-based food distributor.

Kansas

TOPEKA — All 2.9 million Kansas residents were under a stay-at-home order Monday imposed by Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly as the numbers of confirmed coronavirus cases and COVID-19-related deaths continue to grow.

It helped Kelly’s case with the Republican-controlled Legislature that the exceptions in her order for “essential” outside-the-home activities include religious worship and buying, selling and manufacturing guns and ammunition. Other exceptions allow people to buy food and get medical care.

The Legislature’s top seven leaders, five of them Republicans, have the power to revoke her order, but no one spoke against her stay-at-home directive during a meeting of top lawmakers Sunday. That allowed the order to take effect Monday. It is to remain in force until at least April 19.

“You always want to balance your safety with rights,” said House Speaker Ron Ryckman Jr., a Republican from Olathe in Johnson County, which has more than 100 confirmed cases. “We’re continually trying to thread a needle.”

Maine

AUGUSTA — Maine’s largest electric utility is donating 6,000 masks to the Maine Emergency Management Agency to be used to protect front-line medical workers from the coronavirus.

Central Maine Power’s parent company, Avangrid, rounded up 3,000 surgical masks and 3,000 N-95 respirators that were sent to the MEMA offices Monday, CMP said.

“Given the growing shortage of masks and other protective gear faced by medical facilities across Maine, we have an opportunity and an obligation to help,” said David Flanagan, CMP’s executive chairman.

The state is concerned about the adequacy of supplies to contain COVID-19, which has claimed three lives in Maine. More than 250 people have tested positive for the virus in Maine.

Nevada

RENO — Several alcohol distributors in Nevada unable to make liquor under current coronavirus shutdowns are turning their attention to another product to help soothe customers.

They’re combining their key ingredient — ethanol, which kills germs — with aloe vera or other chemicals to make hand sanitizer.

Seven Troughs in Sparks is already turning out sanitizer, 175 gallons last week, most of which is going to Renown Hospital, as well as to first responders.

Tom Adams, owner of Seven Troughs, said that hand sanitizer is a critical supply.

“We’ve been asked by our community health partners to produce as much ethanol as we can to go into hand sanitizers,” Adams told the Reno Gazette-Journal.

West Virginia

MORGANTOWN — Members of a church group gathered food upon their return to West Virginia after becoming stuck in Honduras for two weeks during a mission trip.

Sixteen members of the Morgantown Church of Christ arrived back home Friday, The Dominion Post reported.

The mission trip that was supposed to last a week turned into 14 days when the new coronavirus pandemic prompted the Honduran government to shut its borders.

The church group boarded a plane Thursday afternoon. Church elder Richard Moore said that he was surprised no one mentioned checking the health of the group members, who will self-quarantine for 14 days.

Health care workers, other passengers and flight crew on a Southwest flight from Atlanta to New York’s LaGuardia Airport hold their hands in the shape of a heart before the plane pushed back from the gate at Hartford-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. There were about 30 health care professionals, all from Atlanta-area hospitals, who were headed to New York to help with the coronavirus outbreak.

Florida

ORLANDO — As many movie theater screens around the country go dark amid the coronavirus pandemic, John Watzke said that his theater is doing just fine. In fact, business is booming for this time of year.

The Ocala Drive-In, one of just a small handful of drive-in theaters still open (even during normal times) in Florida, is providing a bright spot for film lovers during this unprecedented time.

“For this time of the year, I’ve seen a very big increase in attendance,” said Watzke, who owns the drive-in. “I just feel like people need some form of normalcy in their life.”

Even though visitors are coming in droves and his theater is keeping the projectors on for Florida films, Watzke knows this isn’t business as usual.

“I’ve taken my parking spaces down to approximately half. I’ve taken every other space and roped it off,” he said. “When you park now, instead of being two feet away, we have a 10- to 12-foot buffer zone between every vehicle.”
Sanders says he's staying in. Dems fear 2016 repeat

Serial killer ‘Grim Sleeper’ dies at 67

Man hurt in Hanukkah stabblings has died

Ariz. officer killed, 2 hurt in shooting
**Philippines grounds company’s aircraft after deadly blaze**

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — Philippine aviation officials on Monday grounded all aircraft belonging to a company that owns a plane that caught fire while taking off from Manila’s airport, killing all eight people on board.

All of Lionair Inc’s aircraft will remain grounded during the investigation of the burning of its Westwind 24 plane late Sunday, they said. The plane had been used earlier to transport medical supplies for the coronavirus outbreak.

Lionair, a Philippine-based charter company, is not related to Lion Air, an Indonesian low-cost airline.

The twin-engine aircraft was on a medical evacuation mission when it caught fire. The two passengers — from the U.S. and Canada — and six Filipino flight crew and medical personnel died when the Tokyo-bound plane burst into flames on the main runway, airport general manager Ed Montreal said.

The fire prompted the closure of the airport’s main runway and caused one international flight to be diverted.

The aircraft’s cockpit voice recorder has been recovered by investigators, officials said.

Lionair has not issued any statement about the accident. It leases executive jets, helicopters and turbo-propeller planes for domestic and foreign travel, including medical emergency flights. It was not immediately clear how many aircraft the company operates.

The Department of Health said Monday that Lionair has helped transport medical supplies, including ones used to fight the coronavirus outbreak, from Manila to central and southern provinces. The pilot and crew of the plane that caught fire at the airport had transported medical supplies to four provinces before they perished, Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said.

Startup seeks to use drones to aid hospitals against virus fight

**By IRA BOUDWAY**

Bloomberg

In early March, a hospital in Rwanda needed blood urgently for a patient with a leg injury. The patient’s blood type was in stock and the nearest supplies were at least a half day’s drive away.

So the hospital called upon a drone operated by Zipline Inc., which dropped the blood by parachute within an hour.

Zipline, a California startup founded in 2014, makes hundreds of deliveries per week to hospitals and clinics in Rwanda and Ghana. Its drones launch from a distribution hub, which operates a network of clinics and clinics in Rwanda and Ghana. Its drones launch from a distribution center, carrying blood, medicine, and other supplies, a few pounds at a time. The fixed-wing, battery-powered planes cruise at 60 mph, navigate by GPS and can fly up to 100 miles round trip. Wires snap them from the sky upon return.

Each distribution hub has a fleet of about 30 and can supply an area of 8,000 square miles, delivering up to two tons of freight over the course of a week. Since it began service in 2016, Zipline has flown over a million miles and made more than 60,000 drops.

The company already was planning to launch a service in the United States before the coronavirus outbreak began. It’s on schedule to open a distribution center in North Carolina later this year to help Novant Health, which operates a network of clinics, health centers and hospitals, deliver medicine and supplies to rural and suburban clinics.

But as the pandemic begins to strain the U.S. medical supply chain, Zipline is looking into ways to deploy sooner and at a wider scale.

“If ever there were an urgent need for medical drone delivery, that time is now,” said Justin Hamilton, global head of communications at Zipline. “We’re among the tens of millions of people currently housebound in France due to the COVID-19 outbreak there. “Our first priority is serving customers in Ghana and Rwanda,” said Hamilton. “But we recognize these are extraordinary times and are open to exploring how we can help the United States and countries around the world respond to the pandemic and its after-effects.”

The company, Hamilton said, is talking with federal, city and state leaders about how it might help. Any deployment will need a go-ahead from the Federal Aviation Administration, which only recently has started to grapple with how to integrate unmanned aircraft into U.S. airspace.

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**Dutch museum says van Gogh painting stolen**

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — A painting by Dutch master Vincent van Gogh was stolen in an overnight smash-and-grab raid on a museum that was closed to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, police and the museum said Monday.

The Singer Laren museum east of Amsterdam said that “The Parsonage Garden at Nuenen in Spring 1884 “ by the Dutch master was taken in the early hours of Monday. By early afternoon, all that could be seen from the outside of the museum was a large white panel covering a door in the building’s glass facade.

Museum General Director Evert van Os said the institution that houses the collection of American couple William and Anna Singer is “angry, shocked, sad” at the theft of the painting.

The value of the work, which was on loan from the Groninger Museum in the northern Dutch city of Groningen, was not immediately known. Police are investigating the theft.

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From The Associated Press

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**Startup seeks to use drones to aid hospitals against virus fight**

By IRA BOUDWAY

Bloomberg

In early March, a hospital in Rwanda needed blood urgently for a patient with a leg injury. The patient’s blood type was in stock and the nearest supplies were at least a half day’s drive away. So the hospital called upon a drone operated by Zipline Inc., which dropped the blood by parachute within an hour.

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From The Associated Press

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‘Googly-Eyed Jesus’ mural reappears

ME SOUTH PORTLAND — A pine tree that partially obstructed the view of a Maine church mural referred to as “Googly-Eyed Jesus” was removed.

The section of the mural on Holy Cross Church in South Portland that was obstructed depicted Christ looking towards the heavens with his eyes rolled back during the crucifixion, Bangor Daily News reported.

The mural became controversial 20 years later when some locals and parishioners said it was “creepy” and asked for it to be removed. Others disagreed and John Laberge, who created the mural in 1990, refused to change the mural and said he would fight attempts to have it removed. The tree appeared sometime after.

Monseignor Michael Henchal told the Portland Press Herald in 2016 that the tree was planted before he oversaw the parish and that no one on his staff knew how or when it was planted.

Blaze engulfs historic church, topples steeple

MD BALTIMORE — Baltimore firefighters battled a four-alarm blaze that sent flames shooting through the steeple of a church that traces its origins back more than 150 years.

Photos of the fire posted by the Baltimore City Fire Department on Twitter showed orange flames coming from the top of the steeple of the Urban Bible Fellowship Church. Firefighters used a ladder trucks to spray water at the blaze, but flames eventually caused the top of the steeple to tumble down. A school next door also was damaged.

The Fire Department said no injuries were reported. The fire took four hours to put out.

College to close after 174 years, low influx

IL JACKSONVILLE — A central Illinois college will close down later this year due to declining enrollment and other financial challenges.

The State Journal-Register reported the chairman of the MacMurray College board of trustees said the four-year liberal arts college in Jacksonville will close at the end of the spring semester. Charles O’Connell said there was no viable path forward for the college, and cited rising costs and an insufficient endowment as factors.

The board spent more than a year exploring potential new sources for capital, but were unable to solve the serious financial difficulties facing us, O’Connell said.

Court: Law protecting vets applies to custodian

MI DETROIT — Wayne State University is not immune to a Michigan law that grants job protections to veterans, a federal appeals court said.

The court affirmed a decision that requires Wayne State to hire Charles Rudolph, a custodian who was accused of missing assignments and fired in 2015.

Rudolph, a U.S. Army veteran, sued the university, saying he was entitled to a hearing under a law that gives protections to veterans who work for public employers. An arbitrator agreed that Rudolph’s rights were violated and said he should be reinstated.

Near crash with trooper leads to drug bust

DE GEORGETOWN — Authorities in Delaware said that a driver who sped through a yield sign and nearly caused a crash with a state trooper was then arrested on drug charges.

The Delaware State Police said in a news release that the arrest happened in the Georgetown area.

Authorities said a trooper was approaching an intersection and heading eastbound when a car was coming north at a high rate of speed. The news release said the driver passed through a yield sign and drove into the path of the trooper, who avoided a collision by hitting the brakes.

The trooper then pulled over the driver and noticed the smell of marijuana. In the vehicle, troopers said they found 39 grams of cocaine along with marijuana, anti-anxiety pills and drug paraphernalia.

Police said Keon D. Hopkins, 29, of Millsboro, was driving and Megan L. Bedo, 40, of Millsboro, was the passenger.

Men rob woman while taking care of baby

FL KISSIMMEE — Two men were taking care of a baby when they robbed a woman who was using an ATM at a Florida convenience store, authorities said.

Jefferson Feliciano, 19, and Kevin Serrano, 18, were arrested earlier this month and charged with robbery without a weapon, child neglect and petit theft, according to an Osceola County Sheriff’s Office news release.

Deputies were flagged down at a Kissimmee Wawa, where a woman told them she had been getting money from an ATM inside the store when a young man grabbed the cash and threw her to the ground. Deputies determined the man had fled on foot to the ground. Deputies determined the man had fled on foot and hopped into a black Toyota Scion.

Detectives located the vehicle several hours later and found it to be occupied by Feliciano, Serrano and a 1-year-old child. Investigators said both teens admitted their involvement in the robbery and acknowledged that the child was in the vehicle during the theft.

Missing 4-year-old girl found in woods with dog

AL AUBURN — Rescuers found a 4-year-old girl, who had been missing for two days in woods in a rural area of east Alabama. The girl was found in good condition with a dog at her side.

Lee County Sheriff Jay Jones said searchers found Vadie Sides after two days of searching in rural roads.

Old military target washes up on beach

NC KILL DEVIL HILLS — A device that looks like an old mine washed up on North Carolina’s Outer Banks. But police said it’s nothing to worry about.

Police in Kill Devil Hills said in a statement that it appears to be some kind of “anti-submarine” target and not an explosive device.

The spherical object is covered in barnacles and was painted with the words “inert” and “target.” Police said it’s filled with concrete.

Kill Devil Hills police said the U.S. Navy would be coming to retrieve it.

Police seek man who destroyed taro patch

HI WAINIHA — An unidentified man took a backhoe to a taro patch in northern Kauai, damaging a staple of the traditional Hawaiian diet, a local food supply and an attached water line affecting water service in the region, authorities said.

The Kauai Police Department has yet to find the man accused of property damage in Wainiha, the Garden Island reported.

Witnesses told police they saw a man taking down the fence and tearing up dirt and plants on the property using a backhoe.

This is the first time the taro patch has been damaged since a land debate conflict was settled in 2019. The property was purchased by the state, adding that some of those plants were also destroyed.

From wire reports

Spring bike ride

Jeff Reimann and his daughters Silvia, 7, and Mira, 4, and their pumi breed dog, Renny, take advantage of the region’s trend toward more moderate, spring-like temperatures, with a cargo bike ride through Vilas Park in Madison, Wis.
Eugene Sheffer Crossword

ACROSS
1 Earth orbiter
5 Jazz phrase
9 Mac alternatives
12 Split
13 Notion
14 Parking place
15 Abandoned city
17 Eggs
18 Blue shade
19 Spud
21 Did yard work
24 Treaty
25 "May It Be" singer
26 "Recognize my voice?"
30 Depot (Abbr.)
31 Like some mouthwash
32 Author Fleming
33 Emergency phone services
35 Queue after Q
36 Oodles
37 Appointments
38 Psychoanalysis pioneer
40 New Age pianist
42 Grazing land
43 Accelerated career path
48 Earth Day mo.
49 -- Bator
50 Lotion additive
51 Spinning toy
52 Turkish money
53 Put up, as curtains
22 Aware of
23 Dodge City lawman
24 Favorites
26 Seed-removing machines
27 French article
28 Ahhor
29 Burden
31 Aware (of)
34 Singer Rawls
35 Gung-ho
37 "Spring ahead" hrs.
38 Level
39 Seized vehicle
40 Russian ruler
41 Sicillian volcano
44 "The Greatest"
45 Carte lead-in
46 Bamboozle
47 Beer barrel

DOWN
1 PTA session
2 La-la lead-in
3 Spanish gold
4 Lipton rival
5 Ms. Hayworth
6 Pedestal occupant
7 Hardly any
8 Daydream
9 Surprise development in a novel
10 Inlet
11 Rating unit
16 Slugger Williams
20 Rm. coolers
21 Netting

Answer to Previous Puzzle

A   G   U   A   A   G   O   A   E   R
R   E   S   T   E   D   U   P   T   R   A   M
F   L   A   T   R   A   T   E   D   D   I   N   E
A   R   M   N   I   A   C   I   N
B   O   R   I   S   S   C   W
A   L   A   N   T   E   S
A   L   A   N
T   A   I   G   U   L   C   S
O   U   T
F   L   A   N   N   E   L
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3-31 CRYPTOQUIP

Q   O   S   X   B
E   R   Y   E
W   T   E   T   K   O   Q   E
Q   W   O   M   B   V
V   L   K   O   S   F
E   R   B
E   O   W   B
R   B
X   Y   W   B
E   T
Y
Q   E   T   J
0
Q   L   J   J   T   Q   B
R   B
F   K   O   S   S   B   V
E   T
Y
R   Y   M   E

Yesterday’s Cryptoquip: TRENDY COFFEE DRINK THAT INCLUDES MINUSCULE PIECES OF FLAKY, TRANSPARENT MINERAL: MICA MOCHA.
Today’s Cryptoquip Clue: W equals M

The governor has just declared a state of hilarity.
Our children are watching us closely as we cope

BY MICHELE L. NORMIS

The Washington Post

A pity little exercise made the rounds on Twitter recently that went something like this: Your quarantine name is the last thing you ate plus the last name of the author of the book you were reading. And you can trick yourself into thinking you're eating more.

I have indeed become my mother. This is a good thing, especially now. She is what sociologists call a “depression baby,” born in 1931, just as the nation crashed into rubble, and raised by parents who were trying to find their footing in a world of bread lines, broken banks and rationing.

The brass bed my mom was growing up with stayed her life. Years later, almost everything that came in our house had a dress part: The brown paper bags and the coffee tins. The pantyhose and toothpicks. The little wire twisty and the bag they came in, when she wasn’t making her own bread.

Some of this was instinctive but much of it was behavior learned literally sitting at her side. Growing up with my mom was scary and fun, but it’s the stuff we remember best:

- Her joy at the kitchen sink
- How to make our hands smooth
- Saying no

While it is proper to remember that some of the most prominent figures high and low played vital roles, there are indications that COVID-19 has a minimal impact on children and adolescents. Many parents certainly are not immune from the nation’s sudden plunge toward uncertainty, grief and financial instability. A generation fed on a steady diet of dystopic fantasy in movies, video games and kid lit is now caught in a real-world drama from which there is no escape. The choices and rebukes and right and wrong, all of which the medical professionals who are begging for masks and protective material so they can save our lives while protecting our own.

Every parent remembers when a child stumbles or takes a bad fall on a bike. Before the child decides whether to open their mouth and wail to the heavens, there is the moment of impact, when the adult jumps to the child’s side and there is no resistance: to be held by an adult, as if to ask, “Am I OK?”

In that moment, the adult holds the key. Calm may not take away the sting, but it can dial down the response. We are all learning how to communicate with our selves and each other? It continues with the way we order our steps: How did we educate ourselves about something no one really understands? Did we parrot what the president said? We were never taught how to deal with a bull’s eye: “I am at fault.”

Our kids are watching us reinvent ourselves — or not — and if we are fortunate we get to see each other and the world. It is an optimistic view that we all can’t see, but the times we are living in are difficult.

Our children are watching us closely as we cope.
Looking at the news

A weekly sampling of U.S. editorial cartoons

TIM CAMPBELL/Washington Post News Service

LISA BENSON/Washington Post Writers Group

WALT HANDELSMAN/Tribune Content Agency

JACK OHMAN/Washington Post Writers Group
Musician Prine in critical condition

John Prine, the Maywood, Ill., postman and Army mechanic who went on to become one of the most revered American songwriters of the past half century, is in critical condition “after a sudden onset of COVID-19 symptoms,” his official Twitter feed reported Sunday afternoon.

Prine “was hospitalized on Thursday. He was intubated Saturday evening, and continues to receive care, but his situation is critical,” said the note “From the Prine family” on the @JohnPrineMusic Twitter feed.

Prine, 73, has battled cancer twice, in the late 1990s and the early 2010s, and just last month received a lifetime achievement award at the Grammys.

His 2018 album “Tree of Forgiveness,” his first of original material in 13 years, included guest appearances by Jason Isbell, Brandi Carlile, the Black Keys’ Dan Auerbach and夏川りか, and earned wide critical praise.

The week before the singer’s diagnosis, his wife, Fiona Whelan Prine, said she had tested positive for coronavirus and said a test on her husband was indeterminate.

“We wanted to let you know,” the family Twitter post said, “and give you the chance to send on more of that love and support now.”

Country singer Joe Diffie dies

Country singer Joe Diffie, who had a string of hits in the 1990s with chart-topping ballads and honky-tonk singles like “Home” and “Pickup Man,” has died after testing positive for COVID-19. He was 61.

Diffie announced March 27 he had contracted the coronavirus. Diffie’s publicist, Scott Adkins, said the singer died Sunday due to complications from the virus.

Diffie, a native of Tulsa, Okla., was a member of the Grand Ole Opry for more than 25 years. His hits included “Honky Tonk Attitude,” “I prop Me Up Beside the Jukebox (If I Die),” “Bigger Than the Beastes” and “If the Devil Danced (In Empty Pockets).”

His mid-’90s albums “Honky Tonk Attitude” and “Third Rock From the Sun” went platinum. Eighteen of Diffie’s singles landed in the top 10, with five going No. 1.

Other news

• The Television Academy has adjusted its calendar for the Emmy Awards following disruption from the coronavirus. June 5 will be the new entry deadline, nominations will be voted on from July 2-13 and nominations will be announced July 28. Final voting will take place from Aug. 21-31. But the academy stressed that there are no changes to the Sept. 20 Emmy telecast or the Sept. 12 and Sept. 13 Creative Arts Emmy ceremonies.

• Popular Japanese comedian Ken Shimura, who drew inspiration from the American comedic icon Jerry Lewis, has died from the coronavirus, becoming Japan’s first known celebrity victim of the disease. He was 70. Shimura, who attracted fans of all generations with his slapstick comedy and funny faces, died on Sunday, according to his agency, Izawa Office.

• Actor John Callahan, known for playing Edmund Grey on “All My Children” and also starring on other soaps including “Days of Our Lives,” “Santa Barbara” and “Falcon Crest,” died last week. He was 66. His ex-wife and former “All My Children” costar Eva LaRue announced his death on a social media account March 28. The two, who played a married couple on the show, have a daughter, Kaya. Callahan starred on “All My Children” from 1992 to 2005.

Other

Celebs send love

iHeart Living Room Concert raises funds, lifts viewers’ spirits

A week and a half ago, actress Gal Gadot posted an Instagram video of her and some famous friends earnestly singing a cover of “Imagine” — and it promptly got destroyed by the internet. While intended to uplift fans during the coronavirus crisis, most viewers just saw a bunch of tone-deaf wealthy stars (literally and figuratively) with no idea of what it’s like to be truly struggling right now.

On Sunday night, once again, a group of celebrities got together to try to lift people’s spirits with Fox’s “iHeart Living Room Concert for America.” Only this time, it seemed to work — positive responses poured in on social media, many along the lines of “I didn’t know how much I needed to see something like this.” Air- ing in place of the non-postponed iHeartRadio Music Awards, the hourlong special was hosted by Elton John and featured performances by A-list musicians from their respective homes.

“We know that your concerns are a mile high, but we hope this bit of entertainment can feed and fuel your soul,” John said during the introduction. “And maybe bring you some strength and fuel your soul,” John said during the introduction. “And maybe bring you some strength and fuel your soul.”

The celebrities were careful to strike the right tone, and they repeatedly thanked first responders and everyone on the front lines fighting the pandemic.

One highlight was Billie Joe Armstrong of Green Day, who was distracted from the start as a tiny adorable dog wandered in the room and jumped on the couch. “Hope you don’t mind if my dogs are here,” Armstrong said. During his acoustic version of “Boulevard of Broken Dreams,” he chewed gum and attempted to get his attention from his furry companion.


While there were a few eyebrow-raising moments — the Backstreet Boys, singing from five different homes, pieced together “I Want It That Way.” Tim McGraw, who had earbuds in as he listened to his band perform from various places, sang “Something Like That.” Mariah Carey appeared to have a fan blowing her hair back as she was accompanied by off-site backup singers and a piano player for “Always Be My Baby.”

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Tokyo Games set for July 23-Aug. 8

Same time slot instead of spring allows 'more room for the athletes to qualify'

By Stephen Wade
Associated Press

TOYO — The Tokyo Olympics have a new schedule that allows more room for the athletes to qualify.

“Tokyo 2020” — the name of the Olympics event — has been pushed back until 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

This year’s games were scheduled to open on July 24 and close on Aug. 9. But the new once a year delay will see the rescheduled closing ceremony on Aug. 8.

There had been talk of switching the Olympics to spring, a move that would clash with the blooming of Japan’s famous cherry blossoms. But it would also clash with European soccer and North American sports leagues.

The idea was a spring Olympics was considered but holding the Games later gives more space to complete the many qualifying events that have been postponed by the virus outbreak.

“We have to do more for the athletes to qualify,” Mori said.

After holding out for weeks, local organizers and the IOC last week postponed the Tokyo Games under pressure from athletes, national Olympic bodies and sports federations. It was the first postponement in Olympic history, though there were several cancellations during wartime.

The Paralympics were rescheduled to Aug. 24-Sept. 5.

The new Olympic dates would conflict with a scheduled world championships in track and swimming, but those events are now expected to also be pushed back.

“The IOC has had close discussions with the relevant international federations,” organizing committee CEO Toshiro Muto said. “I believe the IFs have accepted the games being held in the new time span.”

Muto said the decision was made Monday and the IOC said it was based on consultations with all international sports federations and was based on three main considerations: to protect the health of athletes, to safeguard the interests of the athletes and Olympic sport, and the international sports calendar.

“These new dates give the health authorities and all involved in the organization of the Games the maximum time to deal with the constantly changing landscape and the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic,” the IOC said. “This is a crazy show,” Coker said.

Coker would like for mixed martial arts fans to catch on to his style of cage fighting in the promotion he runs through Bellator’s app or its YouTube channel. But live fights, right now in this climate? Hard pass.

Bellator has postponed all fights until Sept. 24. The UFC is also waiting for the green light to go.

“Things can change, but we’re still optimistic for a fall start of our season,” Coker said.

“I feel like there’s a possibility everything will be fine by the end of April,” Scott Coker Bellator president
The biggest party crashers in tournament history, not just because of their seeding but also because they were in only their second season of Division I eligibility.

“It helped everybody’s career with what they wanted to do next in life,” said Brett Comer, the point guard who led lobs to guys like Chase Fieler and Eric McKnight for an array of electrifying dunks that introduced the team and then-16-year-old school to Fort Myers to an enraptured audience coast to coast.

Three days after the last of Dunk City’s 148 dunks that season, coach Andy Enfield was hired at Southern California and his salary went from $157,000 a year to well over $1 million.

Sherwood Brown — the team’s leading scorer and Atlantic Sun player of the year — was invited to seven NBA tryouts before beginning his pro career overseas. Without Dunk City, NBA teams probably wouldn’t have taken notice of the player who showed up at FGCU as a walk-on.

Fellow starters Fieler and Bernard Thompson continue to make nice living overseas, and McKnight also has played professionally.

Comer was in the NBA G League before a knee injury ended his career. He’s now director of player development at Dayton, where he got his first assistant coaching job. He said he’s convinced name recognition helped him get hired by Flyers coach Anthony Grant.

Michael Fly, who just finished his second season as head coach after succeeding Joe Dooley, was one of Enfield’s assistants in 2013. He and current assistant Joey Cantens are the last links to the original Dunk City. Since 2014, the Eagles have won or shared six Atlantic Sun regular-season or tournament championships and made two NCAA appearances.

“I’m not a head coach and we don’t win as many championship games as we have here without that (2013) team,” Fly said. “It’s changed a lot of our lives for the better.”

The Dunk City Effect, as it’s called, accounted for a 35% increase in freshman applications following the NCAA run and boosted enrollment to about 15,000.

The surprise NCAA run opened with the Eagles taking down Georgetown 78-68, a game highlighted by a Comer-to-Fieler lob dunk that took the steam out of the Hoyas’ comeback bid in the last 2 minutes and inspired a rap song.

FGCU then beat seventh-seeded San Diego State 81-71, and reporters and network morning shows began invading the Fort Myers campus to see what Dunk City was all about. It was a major distraction for the upstart Eagles in the days before their Sweet 16 game against Florida.

“I think we ran out of gas,” Comer said. “We weren’t used to the amount of media coverage we had. We were going to do as much media stuff as we could to promote the school, promote the brand, which is good for everybody. When it got to the game, it wore us down.”

The Eagles got out to a double-digit lead against the third-seeded Gators. But Florida made adjustments and won 62-50.

Seven years later, Dunk City branding is all over campus. “It’s made the follow-up acts feel different,” Enfield said. “It helped everybody’s career with what they wanted to do next in life.”

A shot with 5 seconds left to give the Midshipmen a 71-70 win. The Vikings didn’t return to the tournament until 2009.

1997 Chattanooga: Coach Mack McCarthy liked to talk barbecue as much as basketball, maybe more, and the moment never seemed too big for a loose and confident team that was a 14 seed and started two walk-ons.

The Rams started with a flurry, taking control early in a first-round win over Georgia. They beat Illinois by double digits after getting the vibe the Illini never seemed too big for a loose and confident team that was a 14 seed and started two walk-ons.

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Coaches find ways to support athletes feeling adrift

By Janie McCauley
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Morgan Coppoc finds herself in a situation similar to so many other college athletes across the country, hundreds of miles away from campus and lost without her routine and her tennis teammates at Georgia.

Still, she is regularly hearing from her coaches for individual check-ins as well as receiving updates for the entire team, including the latest details about the coronavirus pandemic. The school counseling office also keeps in contact with Coppoc, at home in Tulsa, Okla., to offer sessions by phone that she would have typically attended in person.

“This whole situation has been hard to process and still feels so surreal,” Coppoc said. “I have been experiencing many emotions across the spectrum. First, I was in denial. It was impossible to accept the gravity of what was happening. I even refused to unpack my clothes once I was back home in Oklahoma. I was scared. Now I’m 13 hours from campus and my closest friends, teammates and coaches.

Leaders in college athletics are doing their best to adapt in real time to help athletes such as Coppoc. Coaches are making efforts to keep teams emotionally close when they’ve suddenly been scattered across the country — and in many cases the world. Regular video calls and group texts have replaced face-to-face interactions as they embrace new ways to help athletes cope with the crisis that has also taken away the sports they loved, the camaraderie they trained for and the camaraderie of daily practices and team meals. Providing comfort and security is important to ensure people know where to turn for a sense of some normalcy. That’s general human nature but I think it is heightened with young people,” said Rick Dickson, the former Tulane athletic director who guided the school’s athletic department through the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

“Never thought I would advise anyone of COVID-19. It cannot be a ‘one-time here’s what to do’ plan. It has to be this kind of ongoing process,” Dickson said. “That’s why we’re FaceTiming a lot so we can look in their eyes. The biggest thing I’m missing is even in the offseason they come up and sit on the couch in my office. That interaction is gone and that’s probably the most vital interaction we have all year.”

Communication specialists and mental health professionals are encouraging coaches and others to allow these young men and women to go through the stages of grieving as needed as they adjust after the unexpected disappearance of the seasons they trained for and the camaraderie. Dickson also shared his experiences with the NCAA as it established guidelines on mental health and moving forward when things change by the minute because of COVID-19.

Betsey Butterick, a San Diego-based communication specialist and a former college basketball player and coach, recently held a free webinar to help coaches and administrators develop strategies for the days ahead. She encouraged the roughly 500 participants to identify forms of self-care and how that looks for each person and noted “when in doubt, start with gratitude.”

With the absence of traditional senior sendoffs or end-of-season banquets that allow everyone to be together perhaps once a lifetime, she said coaches can get creative: establish new team awards, hold virtual celebrations, share a book the whole team can read and discuss, or let players prepare a practice plan or new drill.

She was among those who said athletes might go through something comparable to the grieving process.

“It is very similar to grieving,” said longtime University of San Francisco baseball coach Nino Giarratano. “We are in contact daily trying to help them academically, athletically and keeping their spirits up.”

Musselman is trying to keep things light amid all the uncertainty. Last week, he posted a video of himself running around, clapping and hollering while coaching drills in an empty gym. In another, he held a news conference with nobody there.

“His players remain his top priority. He is daily trying to help them academically, athletically and keeping their spirits up. His players remain his top priority.”
Duke holds on

Butler comes up one bucket short as Krzyzewski wins his 4th national title

By Eddie Pells
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS
The ball went sailing while the buzzer went off. Where it landed would be the difference between a shining moment for one team, a tear-stained loss for another.

Butler forward Gordon Hayward barely missed a 3-pointer at the buzzer that would have given his team a championship win. He shot off-balance from 15 feet, took the ball at the top of the key, spun and worked his way to the baseline, but was forced to throw up an off-balance fadeaway from 15 feet.

He missed, but Duke's title wasn't secure until Hayward's desperation heave bounced out.

Memorable, indeed, for the way both teams battled, never giving an inch, or giving in on a single possession. And memorable for the way it ended.

Tiny Butler, on a mission to write a sequel to "Hoosiers," had two chances to win it in the last 4 seconds. Hayward's more traditional attempt a fadeaway, a last-second shot. I don't know if he missed.

"It's the best one I've been involved in of the night," he said.

Nobody figured this would be easy, and it wasn't. The win was going to happen against Butler, the 4,200-student private school that sent millions of bracelets to the paper shredder while earning a right to make the 5-mile drive from its historic home, Hinkle Fieldhouse, where they filmed "Hoosiers," to the Final Four.

Krzyzewski is now 4-4 in title second place on the all-time list, tying him with Adolph Rupp for most memorable March Madness championship.

That's like a lifetime down the road. It was most pointed when Lance Thomas took down Hayward hard to prevent an easy layup with 5.07 left. The refs reviewed the play and decided not to call it flagrant one of a hundred little moments that could have swung such a tight, taut game.

They won because that last shot didn't go in.

"Speechless. It's the best feeling in the world," Smith said.

They won with a mean streak.

It was the closest margin of victory in a Final Four since Michigan defeated Seton Hall 80-79 in 1989.

"We came up one possession short in a game with about 145 possessions," said Butler's 33-year-old coach, Brad Stevens.

"It's hard to stomach when you're on the wrong end of that." Nobody led by more than six.

Good teams only become great in Coach K's mind when they win in a Final Four, and though the members of this group may not end up with lottery-pick money in their pockets, they'll have a national title forever.

"That's like a lifetime down there. But now, the Blue Devils are standard-setters," said Andre Dawkins.

They were a perfect ending for Duke, which won a different way this season, on a team that had no superstars.

Teams with megamoney from power conferences aren't the only ones that win in big-time college sports. Nothing proved that better than the Bulldogs in their run through this year's NCAA tournament.

In the true team fashion that has defined "The Butler Way," the Bulldog scoring was distributed almost perfectly even. Hayward and Shelvin Mack had 12 each. Matt Howard, coming off a concussion in the semifinal win over Michigan State, finished with 11, and two-point-a-game scorer Avery Jukes kept Butler in it with all 10 of his points in the first half.

"Hate losing," Hayward said.

"It's one of the worst feelings personally that I have, is losing. So it's great for us to be here, but that's not what we wanted to do. We wanted to win.

They weren't alone.

They captured America's attention, and its heart, and came close to writing the unthinkable sequel to "Hoosiers." In the movie, the winning team is tiny Hickory High, and Jimmy Chitwood hits the game-winner at the buzzer to strike a blow for the little guys.

Thankfully, that movie is still available on DVD.

This game might be, someday.

"My congratulations and empathy are with the Butler team, who played winning basketball," Krzyzewski said. "And, yeah, to me, it was a game that we won, but they didn't lose."
If not for those magical eight days seven years ago, Florida Gulf Coast might still be that upstart school trying to create an identity in the Sunshine State, never mind nationally.

Dunk City changed everything.

The high-flying Eagles and their showstopping offense earned their place in NCAA Tournament lore when, as a No. 15 seed in the South Region, they upset Georgetown and San Diego State in Philadelphia to reach the 2013 Sweet 16. Their run ended when, emotionally drained, they lost their regional semifinal to Florida.

No team seeded so low has gone so far. They remain

**SEE UNDERDOG ON PAGE 21**

By Eric Olson

Associated Press

Top: Florida Gulf Coast’s Sherwood Brown, center, celebrates with teammates after upsetting San Diego State 81-71 in an NCAA tournament game on March 24, 2013. No. 15 “Dunk City” advanced to their regional semifinal before losing to Florida. Left: Sister Jean Dolores-Schmidt, chaplain of the Loyola-Chicago basketball team, gestures during a rally in Chicago. Loyola made a run to the Final Four as an 11 seed.