

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Probe into firing of ship's captain urged

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON—Lawmakers on Friday called on the Pentagon's inspector general to investigate the Navy's decision to fire the commander of a coronavirus-stricken aircraft carrier after his letter demanding help was leaked to the news media.

In a letter to the inspector general, Reps. Ted Lieu, D-Calif., and Ruben Gallego, D-Ariz., wrote they were "disturbed" by acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly's decision late Thursday to relieve Capt. Brett Crozier of command of the USS Theodore Roosevelt. Modly said in a hastily called Pentagon news briefing that he had lost trust and confidence in Crozier's ability to command because his scathing four-page letter seeking approval to remove most of the nearly 5,000 crew members aboard the ship was too widely distributed. By Friday, 137 Roosevelt sailors tested positive for the coronavirus.

"Secretary Modly's personnel action looks like retaliation and sends the message that the Navy does not want commanders to speak out to protect personnel," wrote Lieu and Gallego, who are military veterans.

"We request an investigation into whether the action by Secretary Modly was appropriate or legal."

At least 17 Democratic senators signed on to a similar but separate letter Friday demanding an IG probe into Crozier's firing, just two days after the captain's letter to Navy higher-ups leaked to the San Francisco Chronicle, the Reuters news agency reported.

Modly on Thursday told reporters that Crozier had failed to address his concerns properly through his chain of command by distributing his letter to as many as 30 people, including some outside that chain, via a "non-secure unclassified email."

"I could reach no other conclusion that Capt. Crozier had allowed the complexity of his challenge with the [coronavirus] breakout on the ship to overwhelm his ability to act professionally, when acting professionally was what was needed most at the time," Modly told reporters Thursday.

Modly did not accuse Crozier of leaking the letter himself, which he said Wednesday would be the trigger for a decision to relieve the captain of command.

The acting Navy secretary said the de-

cision to relieve Crozier of command was his alone. He even praised the captain as an "incredible man."

"I have no doubt in my mind that Capt. Crozier did what he thought was in the best interest of the safety and well-being of his crew," Modly said. "Unfortunately, it did the opposite. It unnecessarily raised the alarm of the families of our sailors and Marines with no plans to address those concerns."

Crozier left the Roosevelt, docked off the coast of Guam, Friday morning with scores of his sailors cheering him as he walked alone from the ship that he had commanded since November, videos posted Friday to various social media sites showed.

Crozier is expected to be reassigned within the Navy and keep his current rank, Pentagon officials said Friday.

The military's top general in an appearance Friday on Fox News defended Modly's decision to relieve Crozier of command.

Army Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Modly was justified in his decision because the military relies on keeping critical information confined to the chain of command.

## Military recruiters face unique struggle amid virus

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON—Marine Gunnery Sgt. Kevin Meyer does his best recruiting face-to-face. He can look people in the eye, read their body language and get insight into whether they would make a good Marine.

But coronavirus quarantines have shut down most recruiting stations. So Meyer and other recruiters have turned increasingly to social media. And that has its drawbacks.

"They usually won't run away if you're talking to them in person," said Meyer, noting that if they are online or on the phone, they can just hang up. "They just stop responding, and the conversation just ends without a conclusion."

As the coronavirus pandemic worsens and the country turns increasingly to the military for help, America's armed services are struggling to get new recruits as

families and communities hunker down. Recruiters scrounging for recruits online are often finding people too consumed with their own financial and health care worries to consider a military commitment right now.

The services, as a result, could fall thousands short of their enlistment goals if the widespread lockdowns drag on, forcing them to pressure current troops to stay on in order to maintain military readiness.

"This is going to have somewhat of a corrosive effect on our ability to have the numbers of people that we really need," said Maj. Gen. Lenny Richoux, director for personnel for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "The concern, it is growing."

He said the military is watching this day-to-day and knows that it could take "a very long time" to rebuild the force.

To entice prospects, recruiters are shift-

ing to a softer sell, talking more broadly about service to the nation in difficult times. And they're hoping to get a recruiting surge during the peak summer months.

They may also benefit from the exposure the military has gotten as Navy hospital ships, Army field hospitals and National Guard troops roll into communities to provide aid and health care during the crisis. And the military could be a popular option for those facing lingering unemployment because of the pandemic.

But shutting recruiting stations is a problem.

And the lack of in-person contact with recruits hits the Marine Corps particularly hard. The Corps has long excelled in what it calls the kneecap-to-kneecap sales pitch that keeps new Marines linked with their recruiters as they head to boot camp.

# Extremists view outbreak as opportune

Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG — Both the Islamic State group and al-Qaida see the coronavirus as a threat, but some of their fighters also see the upheaval from the pandemic as an opportunity to win over more supporters and strike harder than before.

Messages from the Islamic extremist groups show concern about the virus mixed with bravado, asserting that it is punishment for non-Muslims while also urging followers to repent and take care of themselves.

Al-Qaida suggested in a statement Tuesday that non-Muslims use their time in quarantine to learn about Islam. But in a sharp commentary in its al-Naba newsletter in mid-March, IS urged followers to show no mercy and launch attacks in this time of crisis.

In a commentary Tuesday, the International Crisis Group warned that the pandemic threatens the global solidarity that is key to fighting extremists, “allowing the jihadists to better prepare spectacular terror attacks.”

Though analysts said it was too soon to say which attacks can be blamed on militants

exploiting the coronavirus, Islamic extremists in late March carried out their deadliest assault yet against the military of Chad, a significant contributor to Africa’s growing counterterrorism efforts.

In Egypt, two military officials reported a spike in ISIS attacks in March in the restive northern part of the Sinai Peninsula. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media.

While Syria and Iraq have seen no uptick in attacks by ISIS since the virus spread there, the pandemic has prompted the U.S.-led coalition to halt training activities in Iraq amid a planned pullout from several bases.

There are signs elsewhere that the U.S., British and other militaries are pulling back because of the virus, leaving a possible opening for the extremists.

That’s a danger in Africa’s hot spots of the Sahel, the Lake Chad region and Somalia, where the U.S. military already worried allies in recent months by contemplating cuts to focus on threats from China

and Russia.

A U.S. Africa Command spokeswoman, Lt. Christina Gibson, told The Associated Press that “while the size and scope of some AFRICOM activities have been adjusted to ensure the safety and protection of forces — both U.S. and partner nations — our commitment to Africa endures.” She did not give details but said about 5,200 forces are on the continent.

The British army mission in Kenya, which provides counterterrorism training and other skills, this week announced that all army families are returning to the U.K. because of the virus.

But France’s largest overseas military mission, Barkhane in West Africa’s sprawling Sahel region south of the Sahara Desert, is keeping its 5,100 troops there, the French Defense Ministry said.

African military units, already stretched thin and under attack, are likely to take protective measures as the virus threatens their ranks.

In Nigeria, which has struggled against the Boko Haram extremist group and an asser-

tive ISIS-linked offshoot, the military has called for suspending much of its activities including large gatherings and training.

Some extremist groups are showing signs that, like the rest of the world, they are trying to understand the coronavirus and respond.

In Somalia, the al-Qaida-linked al-Shabab held a rare five-day meeting of its leaders in March that discussed the virus. In a communique, the group recognized its “emergency threat” to the world, including Muslims.

An al-Shabab spokesman later told the AP it was too soon to comment on whether the group would heed a U.N. plea to halt attacks, which have continued, or whether it would allow health workers access to areas it controls.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban have gone even further, putting out videos on disinfection and photos of its fighters handing out face masks and soap. It also has offered security guarantees to any aid group assisting victims of the virus or helping to stop its spread.

## White House tries to narrow stockpile’s role for states

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration on Friday abruptly changed its description of the Strategic National Stockpile and put forward a narrower vision of the role the federal government’s repository of life-saving medicines and equipment should play in supplying states’ needs.

The change comes as the White House already is facing growing anger and worry from governors over federal assistance to fight the coronavirus outbreak. But it conforms with President Donald Trump’s in-

sistence that the stockpile is only a short-term backup for states, not a commitment to ensure supplies get quickly to those who need them most during an emergency, the latest front in a concerted White House effort to try to put the onus for battling the crisis on the states, with Washington meant to play more of a supporting role.

The alteration of the language describing the stockpile was reflected on government websites on Friday, a day after Trump’s son-in-law, Jared Kushner, a White House senior adviser who has taken a

larger role in the coronavirus response, offered a new argument about the supplies.

After saying that states should use their own stockpiles first, Kushner on Thursday said, “And the notion of the federal stockpile was it’s supposed to be our stockpile. It’s not supposed to be states’ stockpiles that they then use.”

Trump, when asked what Kushner meant by “our stockpile” during his Friday news conference, snapped at a reporter, “You know what our means: United States of America ... our. Our. It means the United States of America.”

Until Friday, the federal Health and Human Services website had described the stockpile as “the nation’s largest supply of life-saving pharmaceuticals and medical supplies for use in a public health emergency severe enough to cause local supplies to run out.

“When state, local, tribal, and territorial responders request federal assistance to support their response efforts, the stockpile ensures that the right medicines and supplies get to those who need them most during an emergency.”

# Congress signals more virus aid likely

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In a shift, the top leaders in Congress made it clear Friday there will be another coronavirus rescue package amid the stark need for federal resources to fight the pandemic and economic crisis.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, after days of publicly jousting over what's next, began to outline fresh priorities signaling a potential thaw to the sniping and an opportunity for renewed bipartisan ground.

"There will be a next measure," McConnell said in an interview with The Associated Press.

The Kentucky Republican said health care must be at the "top of the list."

McConnell said Congress should focus on correcting any shortcomings in the just-passed \$2.2 trillion aid bill and rely on health care experts for solutions to "wipe out" the virus.

He said the new package "should be more a targeted response to what we got wrong and what we didn't do enough for — and at the top of the list there would have to be the

health care part of it."

Also striking a new approach, Pelosi said Friday that the next coronavirus aid bill should build on the bipartisan relief bills that Congress has passed so far rather than include broader Democratic agenda items, such as infrastructure and rural broadband access.

That's a noteworthy pivot for the California Democrat, who earlier has pressed goals such as a large public works measure and the restoration of a deduction for state and local tax payments.

"While I'm very much in

favor of doing some things we need to do to meet the needs — clean water, more broadband, the rest of that — that may have to be for a bill beyond that right now," she said during an appearance on CNBC.

McConnell acknowledged that he and Pelosi have "a little different point of view" about the timing of the next package. McConnell maintained he is "not in favor of rushing" into the next phase until they take stock of how the just-passed bill is working and what corrections are needed.

# Guidelines now advise wearing masks

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump announced new federal guidelines Friday recommending that Americans wear face coverings when in public to help fight the spread of the new coronavirus. The president immediately said he had no intention of following

that advice himself, saying, "I'm choosing not to do it."

The new guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention encourages people, especially in areas hit hard by the spread of the coronavirus, to use rudimentary coverings like T-shirts, bandannas and non-medical masks to cover their faces while outdoors.

The president exempted himself from his administration's own guidelines, saying he could not envision himself covering his face while sitting in the Oval Office greeting world leaders.

The new guidance, announced as states are bracing for critical shortfalls like those that other parts of the world

have experienced, raises concern that it could cause a sudden run on masks.

Trump and other administration officials sought to minimize any burden by stressing the recommendations did not amount to requirements and that a variety of homemade coverings were acceptable.

# Scofflaws test patience of California officials

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — As 40 million Californians spend another weekend in the shadow of the coronavirus outbreak, there are signs officials are beginning to lose patience with those who violate stay-at-home and social distancing orders designed to slow the spread of the infection.

Officials had said they want to rely on social pressure to make sure people don't gather in large groups, stay at least 6 feet apart and only leave home to procure essentials such as food or medicine.

But San Diego County Sheriff Bill Gore used stronger lan-

guage when reminding people that state and local distancing measures aren't just recommendations and that scofflaws could face misdemeanor charges carrying up to a \$1,000 fine or six months in jail.

"The days of trying to get voluntary compliance are over," Gore said Thursday. "The message is going to go out to all of public safety here in the county that we will start issuing citations."

Many beaches, parks and hiking trails around the state and most beach parking lots have been closed because they attracted large crowds.

On Thursday, a paddleboarder near the Malibu pier was

taken into custody and cited for a misdemeanor after he allegedly ignored lifeguards' orders to leave the water, authorities said.

"Stay home, shred later," urged a message on the website of the Surfrider Foundation, a conservation group based in Southern California.

Mel Thoman told the Orange County Register that he's stopped body surfing at the Wedge, a popular, often-crowded surfing spot in Newport Beach.

"I'd love to be out there," she said. "It's a health issue, and it's a serious one. I don't think people get that."

The Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office on Friday formed a special team of deputies to enforce the stay-at-home order at county beaches and parks.

In San Francisco, an 86-year-old man was cited for violating the safe-distancing order while leafleting.

In the meantime, LA is cracking down on so-called non-essential businesses that remain open in defiance of the city's stay-at-home orders.

The mayor's office said more than two dozen businesses have been referred to the city attorney for possible prosecution.

"We will find you, we will come after you," Garcetti said.

# Risk to medical staff on front line grows

Associated Press

ROME — Air raid sirens sounded across China and flags flew at half staff in tribute Saturday to victims of the coronavirus pandemic, including the health care “martyrs” who have died fighting to save others.

With the highest number of infections in Europe and their hospitals overwhelmed, Spain and Italy struggled to protect medical staff on the front lines of the outbreak, while 17 medics in Egypt’s main cancer hospital tested positive for the virus.

As the number of infections has grown to more than 1.1 million worldwide, health care systems are straining under the surge of patients and lack of medical equipment like ventilators as well as protective masks and gloves, giving rise to growing concerns about the exposure of hospital personnel.

Italy and Spain, with combined deaths of more than 25,000 and nearly a quarter-million infections, have reported a high percentage of infections among health care workers.

Carlo Palermo, head of Italy’s hospital doctors’ union, fought tears as he told reporters in Rome of the physical risks and psychological trauma the outbreak is causing, noting reports that two nurses had committed

suicide.

“It’s a indescribable condition of stress. Unbearable,” he said. “I can understand those who look death in the eye every day, who are on the front lines, who work with someone who maybe is infected, then a few days later you see him in the ICU or die.”

The number of people infected in the U.S. has now exceeded a quarter-million, with the death toll climbing past 7,000. New York state alone accounts for more than 2,900 dead, an increase of over 560 in just one day. Most of the dead are in New York City, where hospitals are swamped with patients.

World Health Organization director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned African leaders of an “imminent surge” in coronavirus cases on the continent, urging them to open humanitarian corridors to allow the delivery of badly needed medical supplies.

More than half of Africa’s 54 countries have closed air, land and sea borders to prevent the virus’ spread but that has delayed aid shipments. Virus cases in Africa are now over 7,700, and the head of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has warned some nations will have more than 10,000 cases by the end of April.

Eleven Russian military planes carrying disinfection

experts landed in Serbia on Saturday, which Serbian Defense Minister Aleksandar Vulin said shows “that we are not alone.”

The transport followed last month’s deployment of a similar Russian coronavirus task force to Italy and the delivery of medical supplies to the United States. Russian officials have angrily rejected claims that the Kremlin is seeking political gain by providing aid to other countries.

Russia has reported a relatively few 4,700 cases and 43 deaths, and its southern neighbor Georgia said Saturday it has registered its first death from the virus, among 156 confirmed cases of infection.

In China, where the coronavirus was first detected in December, authorities have cautiously lifted restrictions amid dropping numbers of infections. On Saturday it reported just one new confirmed case in the epicenter of Wuhan and 18 others among people arriving from abroad. There were four new deaths for an official total of 3,326.

In the nationwide tribute to the victims, the government singled out the more than 3,000 health care workers who contracted COVID-19 and the 14 reported to have died from the disease. Among them was doctor Li Wenliang, who was threatened with punishment by police after publicizing news

of the outbreak but has since been listed among the national “martyrs.”

As the outbreak spreads in Egypt, the Arab world’s most populous country, the news that 17 health care workers tested positive for the virus at the National Cancer Institute raised fears of what the virus might do to the country’s hospital system.

Maggie Mousa, an anesthesiologist at the institute, tweeted that one of her close friends was infected. She accused top officials of negligence for not imposing restrictions after the first case was detected more than a week ago.

“They refused to take any measures to protect her and isolate the institute,” she said.

Spain’s Health Ministry reported 18,324 infected health workers as of Saturday, representing 15% of the total number of infections in the country. To help boost its ranks of health workers, Spain’s government said that it had hired 356 foreign health workers living in Spain. It has also hired medical and nursing students to help.

In Italy, more than 11,000 medical personnel have been infected — just under 10% of the official total — and some 73 doctors have died, according to the National Institutes of Health and the association of doctors.

## Biden starts search for vice presidential candidate

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Joe Biden said Friday that he will announce a committee to oversee his vice presidential selection process and is already thinking about whom he’d choose to join his Cabinet.

Biden, who holds a significant lead in delegates over Sen. Bernie Sanders in the Democratic presidential primary race but has yet to officially clinch the nomination, also said he’s spoken to Sanders to let him know he’d be proceeding with the vice presidential vetting process. Biden, a former vice president himself, has previously committed to choosing a woman as his

running mate.

Calling Sanders a “friend,” Biden said, “I don’t want him to think I’m being presumptuous” by choosing a running mate. But he added that the vice presidential vetting process “takes time,” so he has to begin this month.

Biden’s comments came in response to a question during a virtual fundraiser about whether he’d be willing to release his full proposed Cabinet at the same time he announces his vice presidential pick. Biden didn’t answer the question directly, but did indicate that there are a number of people who have been helping his campaign with whom he’s discussed whether they’d be

“willing to come into a government if I get elected.”

He did, however, suggest he’s been thinking deeply about the makeup of his potential Cabinet. There are a number of “younger, really qualified people” that Biden said he believes could be future leaders of the party if given more prominent roles. He also suggested he’d prioritize diversity in choosing his Cabinet secretaries, and he wants the lineup to “look like the country.”

“Men, women, gay, straight, across the board, black, white, Asian, it really matters that it look like the country because everyone brings a slightly different perspective,” he said.

# NY governor orders redistribution of ventilators

Associated Press

NEW YORK — New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said he would order the redistribution of critically needed ventilators. New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio called for a national enlistment program for doctors and nurses. And the coronavirus outbreak picked up speed with more deaths and more hospitalizations.

Cuomo said Friday he will sign an order to redistribute hundreds of ventilators to hospitals overwhelmed with coronavirus patients amid a surge in outbreak-related deaths and hospitalizations.

New York state tallied its biggest daily jump yet in deaths — up 562 to 2,935. Almost 15,000 people were hospitalized.

New York City hospitals are filling up with COVID-19 patients, and officials fear they will soon run out of breathing machines for intensive care patients. Cuomo said his executive order will allow the state to redeploy excess ventilators and protective equipment from hospitals and other institutions. He said there could be several hundred excess ventilators.

## Arizona

SEDONA — The Coconino National Forest is closing popular hiking trails and day-sites in the scenic red-rocks area of Sedona in north-central Arizona because of large numbers of hikers and a failure to practice social distancing.

Sites to be closed until further notice include the Bell Road, Cathedral Rock and Courthouse Vista trailheads, forest officials announced.

The announcement said the closures were made in coordination with Sedona and Verde Valley officials concerned about the possible impact on local health and emergency services.

## Colorado

DENVER — Colorado Gov. Jared Polis urged all residents Friday to wear cloth masks each time they leave home, another measure to stem the spread of the coronavirus as the state's death toll from the pandemic surpassed 100.

Briefly donning a multicolored mask during a news conference, Polis cited the widespread use of masks in virus containment strategies effectively employed in South Korea and Taiwan. He called for wearing a homemade mask, fashioned of cloth, or a scarf when running essential errands permitted under the state's shelter-in-place order.

To those immediately scoffing at the idea in online posts, Polis said that "you're only prolonging this for the rest of us and you're costing the lives of your fellow Coloradans."

## Illinois

SPRINGFIELD — Illinois has barred all activities at state parks, fish and wildlife areas, recreational areas and historic sites in another move to stem the spread of the coronavirus.

Colleen Callahan, director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, said that hunters and anglers aren't allowed to receive refunds on state-issued permits or permit transfers due to administrative guidelines under the state wildlife code.

"We understand the problems these laws create for our sportsmen and sportswomen and are reviewing all possible solutions," Callahan said.

## Maine

AUGUSTA — Maine's governor issued an executive order Friday requiring travelers to the state to self-quarantine for 14 days to lessen the chance of transmitting coronavirus.

Gov. Janet Mills, a Democrat, said the order applies to all travelers to Maine regardless of their state of residency. The order also calls on visitors not to come to the state if they are experiencing symptoms of the virus.

The order suspends lodging operations such as hotels and motels starting on Sunday at noon. The order also states that lodging can be provided for vulnerable populations, such as people who are at risk of domestic violence, Mills's office said.

The order lasts until at least April 30.

## Nevada

RENO — State and federal officials are finalizing details of the Nevada National Guard's role in the statewide response to the coronavirus, but they're emphasizing the mission won't include martial law.

Brig. Gen. Mike Hanifan, the guard commander, used social media to dispel a rumor that Gov. Steve Sisolak's activation of the Guard means soldiers will enforce civilian laws.

"Nothing could be further from the truth," he said. "Martial law is defined as law administered by military force. The governor has not handed over law enforcement duties or powers to the Nevada National Guard."

Sisolak activated the Guard for logistical planning and delivery of medical supplies ahead of an expected spike in patients with the respiratory illness.

Duties also likely will include security at testing sites, managing food banks and disinfecting public spaces. Guardsmen also could assist in medical screening, help provide security of federal property and run traffic-control points, Hanifan said.

## Pennsylvania

HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania will stop paying about 9,000 state workers whose offices have been closed as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, officials said Friday.

Paid leave for state employees whose work locations are closed and who are unable to work remotely will end April 10, according to Gov. Tom Wolf's Office of Administration.

About 5,700 of the impacted workers are employed by the state Department of Transportation. About 900 work for the Department of Labor & Industry, about 850 work for the Department of Revenue, and the remainder are scattered across other agencies.

State workers can use paid vacation days, sick leave or compensatory time to continue to receive a paycheck. Otherwise, they will be eligible to apply for unemployment, officials said.

## South Carolina

COLUMBIA — Gov. Henry McMaster directed South Carolina's health department to begin publicly disclosing confirmed COVID-19 cases by ZIP code, a level of information specificity the agency had previously said was not necessary in efforts to temper the outbreak.

Also Friday, Greenville City Council passed a \$100 fine for any essential business still open that does not try to enforce social distancing in its store.

In a tweet, McMaster said the order was effective Friday, noting that he also wanted the state Department of Health and Environmental Control to begin providing "the estimated number of residents who are likely infected and untested" in the same ZIP code.

## Virginia

RICHMOND — Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam is instituting a hiring freeze of state employees and is telling agency heads to look for ways to cut budgets in response to the coronavirus.

Northam chief of staff Clark Mercer told agency heads in a Thursday memo obtained by The Associated Press that a recession is coming and the state revenues will be far below "even our most pessimistic forecast" from last year.

On top of that, Mercer said, the state is having to spend heavily on fighting the virus, including buying medical supplies and on efforts to help vulnerable populations.

"All of this will cost the commonwealth extraordinary sums," Mercer wrote.

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Dentist arrested for arson after office fire

**WA** SEATTLE — A Bellevue dentist was accused of using lighter fluid and accelerant to set fires in his exam and X-ray rooms after being evicted from his office for failing to pay rent, King County prosecutors said.

Mohammad “Matt” Rafie, 53, was arrested at the scene and charged with first-degree arson in connection with the fire at his Bellgrove Medical Park office, the Seattle Times reported.

Bellevue Fire Department believes the fire was intentionally set after discovering three individual fires inside the office and the smell of accelerants.

## Man arrested after standoff in hotel

**TN** CHATTANOOGA — A man wanted in Georgia on felony terroristic threat charges was arrested in Tennessee after barricading himself inside a hotel room, authorities said.

Police said Jim Sanford Hunter, 64, was in the room at a Super 8 Hotel and told authorities he was armed and would hurt the officers if they came through the door.

Police checked Hunter’s record and found he had felony warrants out for his arrest on terroristic threat charges in Gordon County, Ga.

The East Ridge SWAT team was called in along with a negotiator and after three hours, Hunter was taken into custody.

## Video of student in blackface to be probed

**NY** PITTSFORD — A video showing a Nazareth College student in black-

face will be investigated by the student conduct hearing board to determine what action will be taken, school officials said.

President Daan Braveman sent a letter to students, staff, and faculty in which he called the video “offensive” and “troubling.”

## Robbers wore surgical masks in 2 heists

**CA** REDLANDS — Two people were arrested in connection with Southern California robberies in which a gunman and others in a getaway vehicle wore surgical masks, police said.

A gas station was robbed at gunpoint by a person wearing a hooded sweatshirt and a white surgical mask, the Redlands Police Department said in a press release.

A robber in the same clothing hit a 7-Eleven and escaped in a vehicle in which there were two other people wearing hooded sweatshirts and white surgical masks.

Detectives and the department’s Special Enforcement Team served a search warrant at a house and arrested Marcus Taylor, 18, and a 16-year-old boy.

## Bullets enter home, wound 2 girls

**OH** COLUMBUS — Gunfire outside an Ohio home sent bullets into the residence and wounded two young girls sitting on a couch in their living room, police said.

Columbus police said the gunfire reported outside a home on the city’s south side sent rounds into the residence and struck the 8- and 11-year-old girls in their arms.

The victims were taken to Nationwide Children’s Hospital, where they were reported

in stable condition and expected to survive their injuries, police said.

## Police: Man intentionally coughed on customers

**NM** SANTA FE — A Santa Fe man is facing charges after police said he entered a store and intentionally coughed on several people.

The Santa Fe New Mexican reported Edward Babcock was arrested last week following reports he was coughing on customers at a Big Lots store in Santa Fe.

According to a criminal complaint, Babcock, 40, coughed on a woman and her 10-year-old daughter after telling the woman, “It’s on, it’s on.”

Police said the victims all felt Babcock was exposing them to COVID-19.

## Fraud charges dropped against 82-year-old

**VA** PORTSMOUTH — A Virginia judge dismissed felony charges against an 82-year-old preacher accused of defrauding a woman of more than \$50,000 in a fake sweepstakes scheme.

The four counts of obtaining money under false pretenses against Frederick Shmidt were dropped after medical evaluations found worsening dementia left him “severely impaired,” according to Powhatan Deputy Commonwealth’s Attorney Robert Cerullo.

The victim was told she won a \$2.5 million cash prize and a new car, and sent money for taxes and fees to Shmidt, The Times-Dispatch reported, citing court documents. Shmidt was accused of then taking some of the money before passing the rest of the earnings on to others in Jamaica.

## Robber caught on bridge between 2 states

**IA** COUNCIL BLUFFS — An 18-year-old robbery suspect who fled from Iowa officers by running west across a pedestrian bridge over the Missouri River was captured on the Nebraska side, authorities said.

Police said in a news release that an armed man robbed a convenience store just a few blocks from the entrance to the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge. Officers learned when they arrived at the store that a female was accompanying the robber. A few minutes later police were tipped that the two were spotted going onto the 3,000-foot-long bridge.

The female was caught on the Iowa side of the river, police said. The man was captured by Omaha officers on the Nebraska side.

## Woman on phone with 911 shoots intruder

**FL** DELTONA — A Florida woman was on the phone with 911 when she shot and wounded an intruder, authorities said.

Joseph Roberts, 32, was shot in the arm after breaking into a Deltona home, according to a Volusia County Sheriff’s Office news release. He faces four counts of burglary of an occupied dwelling and four counts of criminal mischief.

Roberts had shattered a front window and climbed into the house occupied by a 42-year-old mother, her three teenage children and three of their friends, officials said.

The woman fired one shot, hitting Roberts, and escaped to the backyard with the children. Deputies found Roberts wounded inside the house.

From wire reports

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# NFL medical officer: Nothing assured

Associated Press

Days after the NFL revealed its hopes of conducting a normal regular season and playoffs, its chief medical officer warns that nothing is a certainty during the coronavirus pandemic.

Dr. Allen Sills, a neurosurgeon who has been with the NFL since 2017, says he and other league and team medical personnel have been in constant communication with health officials throughout the country, looking at the same data they are using to make public recommendations. The NFL also has consulted with the other major sports leagues and the players' union.

"We are not doing this in isolation," Sills says. "I think the NFL is in the same place every element of society is. The hope is that soon much more widespread testing is available, which will be an essential part of restarting activities. You follow the science."

The NFL has done that in its revisions to the draft in three weeks, which will be conducted remotely with no public events. It also has temporarily barred teams from using their facilities, meeting in person with free agents and draft prospects.

Beyond the draft, the league must decide on allowing offseason workouts and

minicamps that usually occur in the spring. And then on conducting training camps and the preseason.

None of that is assured.

"We have got to get a much better handle on the actual spread of this virus and how many new cases there are," Sills explains. "How it is transmitted and how we can mitigate it. We have to get to the point that when someone is tested as positive to the virus, that does not mean an immediate quarantine. If that is the case, you can't think about opening up a team sport."

"Like all other parts of society, we're trying to listen to the best advice we can. It's hard to project what will happen in a month, three months or six months. No one knows. We have to do that which is not only in the best interest of the players, but league and team personnel and our fans. That is what is happening. All of our league executives have been in very regular contact with me. Every meeting starts with an update on the current medical situation."

Recognizing the stress accompanying the pandemic, the NFL and the players' union sent a letter to the 32 clubs and each player this week with suggestions on dealing with mental anguish. Among the items it addresses are loneliness; establishing a routine and sticking with it; and staying

in touch with peers and loved ones while practicing social distancing.

Sills emphasizes the importance of remaining physically and mentally sharp.

"I have had regular calls with members of our medical staff and trainers and coaches and front office personnel," he says. "A lot of dialogue and questions back and forth. It is a situation where we and the players association are working hand in hand to make sure we are serving our whole NFL environment as best we can."

"That's not only about this disease but around mental health; we recognize this is a big stress for everyone. Imagine if someone had a pre-existing condition that cannot be treated. These are incredibly difficult times for people with those challenges. We have a lot of resources in these areas."

Along with his NFL duties, Sills is a professor of neurological surgery, orthopaedic surgery and rehabilitation, and the founder of the Vanderbilt Sports Concussion Center. He's been in contact with the NCAA, schools and conferences about their approaches to the coronavirus as well.

The message is the same on all fronts.

"Follow the recommendations from public health officials and infectious disease experts," he says. "We all must do that."

## Bears declare open competition between QBs

Associated Press

The Chicago Bears declared the quarterback competition between Mitchell Trubisky and newcomer Nick Foles an open one on Friday.

General manager Ryan Pace made that clear during a conference call, saying both players are "embracing" the battle that will play out whenever offseason workouts begin.

Coach Matt Nagy stressed that Trubisky will be the first quarterback on the field whenever practices begin. But he planned to give Trubisky and Foles equal time with the starters. He also said both will play in the preseason as part of the evaluation.

"It's going to be equal and we as coaches need to make sure we do the right thing in regard to equal reps, and make sure they're playing with similar or the same players on offense and

going against the same players on defense," Nagy said. "There will be some juggling that we'll have to do. It might be a little different at times on how we do it and how we get to it. But I can promise you this: It's going to be completely fair, it's going to be extremely competitive in a good way. It's going to be a healthy competitiveness."

Pace largely staked his reputation to Trubisky when he traded up a spot with San Francisco to draft him with the No. 2 overall pick in 2017. And the results have been mixed.

Trubisky was selected to replace Jared Goff in the Pro Bowl after his second season. But instead of taking another big step forward last year, he struggled as the Bears stumbled to an 8-8 record and missed the playoffs after winning the NFC North at 12-4 in 2018.

Pace said after the season the Bears remained commit-

ted to Trubisky as their starter, though they weren't ruling out bringing in a veteran to push him. They did just that when they acquired Foles from Jacksonville last month.

On Friday, the Bears indicated he's more than an insurance policy if Trubisky struggles or gets injured.

"Mitch is a competitor," Pace said. "I think when you're built that way, competition brings out the best in you. Matt and I had that discussion with him, and you could feel that in him right away - kind of that, 'OK, hey, let's go, what's best for the team and this is gonna bring out the best in all of us.' I think the key word is just that he embraced the competition."

Pace wouldn't answer if the Bears will pick up Trubisky's fifth-year option for the 2021 season. The deadline is in May, though it would be a surprise if they exercised it consider-

ing he is now in a fight for the starting job.

Foles said he called Trubisky because he thought it was important to introduce himself. He wanted to "get started on the right foot."

"Trust me, I get the situation," Foles said. "Mitch has been there for a couple years, Mitch has been the quarterback, and I'm respectful to that situation."

Foles took 2018 Super Bowl MVP honors with Philadelphia. He led the Eagles past Chicago in the wild-card game at Soldier Field the next year. He's familiar with the Bears' system and worked with Nagy under Andy Reid when they were with the Eagles and Kansas City.

Foles also has something to prove, coming off an injury-riddled season in Jacksonville in which he lost his starting job to rookie Gardner Minshew.

# WNBA postpones season

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The WNBA season will not start on time next month because of the coronavirus pandemic, and when it will begin is unclear.

The league announced Friday it will delay the season for an indefinite period. Training camps were to open on April 26 and the regular season on May 15.

WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engelbert said in a statement Friday the league will “use this time to conduct scenario-planning regarding new start dates and innovative formats.”

“Our guiding principle will continue to be the health and safety of the players, fans and employees,” Engelbert said.

The WNBA, which was set to begin its 24th season and is the longest running professional women’s sports league, will still hold a virtual draft April 17.

Every other major sports league has been put on hold because of the virus. Engelbert told the AP last week that the WNBA could begin its season before the NBA or other sports leagues resume.

“A league of our size and scale is smaller than other big leagues,” she said. “We might be able to tip this season off before some other leagues since we only have 12 teams and 144 players.”

The postponement of the 2020 Olym-

pics gives the WNBA flexibility with its schedule. The league was set to go on a monthlong break in July to allow players to participate in the Tokyo Games which have been postponed for a season.

“We were already scenario planning around what our season would look like if we played games during our month hiatus,” she said. “We have an advantage here to use that time. We’re already looking at arena availability and how to get broadcasts of our game in that period.”

Engelbert said that whenever the WNBA does start, it will follow a strict protocol regarding the health and well-being of players, coaches and fans.

Two WNBA cities are major hot spots for the virus: New York and Seattle. One of the Storm’s homes for the season, the Angel of the Winds Arena, is being used as a coronavirus isolation site.

Seattle Storm CEO and general manager Alisha Valavanis backed the commissioner’s ruling.

“We are grateful for the front line workers who are courageously combating COVID-19,” Valavanis said. “Our league must do its part to keep our communities safe. These decisions are part of something much more consequential than sports. We look forward to coming together to enjoy Storm basketball games when it’s safe for us to gather.”

# US Women’s Open shifts to December

Associated Press

The U.S. Women’s Open in Houston is now scheduled for two weeks before Christmas. The LPGA Tour pushed back the resumption of its schedule until the middle of June and found slots for three tournaments that have been postponed.

Commissioner Mike Whan keeps looking at a dwindling number of dates on the calendar and trying to figure out how it will fall into place, missing one key piece of information brought on by the spread of the new coronavirus.

“Not knowing when our restart button gets pushed,” Whan said Friday.

That was delayed by a month with a chain of events that began with the U.S. Women’s Open announcing it would move from June 4-7 at Champions Golf Club to Dec. 10-13, the latest a major championship has ever been played. The 1929 PGA Championship ended on Dec. 7 in Los Angeles.

The last time an official LPGA Tour event was played entirely in December was the LPGA Tour Championship in 2010. And there could be more.

It’s not as simple as finding open dates and filling them with tournaments. Whan said if a major — the KPMG Women’s PGA Championship outside Philadelphia is next up and still on the schedule for June 25-28 — that would take priority. Of the four events cleared from the schedule Friday, only the Pure Silk Championship at Kingsmill in Virginia will not be rescheduled, instead returning in 2021.

The Women’s Open is the second LPGA major to be rescheduled. The ANA Inspiration in the California desert was to be played this week and now is set for Sept. 10-13.

But it will require some adjustments.

The U.S. Women’s Open was to play all 72 holes on the Cypress Creek course at Champions.

Because of limited daylight in December, and with the USGA wanting to have a full field for its premier women’s event, the opening two rounds would be played on Cypress Creek and the Jackrabbit course.

As for the LPGA Tour, the next event on the schedule now is the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship on June 19-21, the week before the Women’s PGA at Aronimink. Still unknown is whether that’s feasible, especially with perhaps the most global sports league that has prominent members stretched around the world.

# Premier League on indefinite hold

Associated Press

The English Premier League was suspended indefinitely Friday following a meeting of its 20 clubs, who discussed financial painkiller measures including asking players to take a substantial pay cut during the coronavirus outbreak.

Having previously given a tentative return date of April 30, the world’s richest league said the season would not be resuming at the start of May and “will only return when it is safe and appropriate to do so,” and only with the full support of government and medical guidance.

Teams have nine or 10 games left to play in the Premier League, with Liverpool — the leader by 25 points — still needing two more wins to clinch its first title since 1990. The FA Cup is at the quarterfinal stage.

“There is a combined objective for all remaining domestic league and cup matches to be played,” the league said, “enabling us to maintain the integrity of each competition.”

UEFA, in a letter signed by the Euro-

pean Club Association and the European Leagues, has urged members not to abandon their competitions. Halting leagues without approval from UEFA could see teams blocked from qualifying for the Champions League and Europa League as they are determined based on final positions in domestic standings.

The meeting, which was held by video conference, came at the end of a week when Premier League players came under growing pressure to forego some of their salaries to help protect the jobs of club staff. Tottenham and Newcastle are among those to have furloughed non-playing staff during soccer’s shutdown and, on Thursday, British health secretary Matt Hancock called on Premier League players to “take a pay cut and play their part.”

The league said clubs agreed to consult players over a wage deduction or deferral of 30% “in the face of substantial and continuing losses,” adding there would be a meeting Saturday between the players’ union, the league, players and club representatives.