

# STARS AND STRIPES®

Saturday, April 11, 2020

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## Outbreak could deepen pilot shortage

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Air Force leaders are concerned a reduction in flight training could deepen the long-standing pilot shortage in the service if the coronavirus outbreak in the United States drags on for months, a top general said Friday.

The Air Force has continued training its future pilots, designating flight training as mission essential in the early days of the outbreak, Gen. Brad Webb, the service's training chief, told reporters Friday in a telephone news briefing. But the pandemic has forced the service to cut back the size of its undergraduate pilot training courses and cut the amount of time pilot-trainees spend in the cockpit, he said.

The pandemic comes just as Air Force leaders believed they were getting a handle on the pilot shortage.

Gen. David Goldfein, the Air Force chief of staff, told lawmakers last month that the service remained about 2,000 pilots short of the 21,000 that he believes are needed to meet requirements laid out in 2018 National Defense Strategy. That strategy deems preparations for potential conflict with great-power competitors China and Russia should be the military priority over other national security concerns, such as inter-

national terrorism.

Goldfein told the House Armed Services Committee on March 4 that the Air Force was "holding its own" as pilot retention had improved. Nonetheless, he said, the shortage was likely to drag on as the military competes with high-paying commercial airliners for capable pilots.

Webb said it was not yet clear how impactful the pandemic would be on the pilot shortage, but Air Force leaders were looking at that issue and others almost every day.

"It's not helping, obviously," he said

In an effort to reduce the chances of an outbreak of the virus within its flight schools, the Air Force has reduced the size of its pilot-training classes, separating students into small pods of seven or eight students who interact only with themselves and their instructors. Those groups are taking shifts to get flying time, Webb said.

Typically, Air Education and Training Command trains some 3,500 pilots in a year. Webb declined to say how large a reduction he anticipated in 2020 amid the outbreak. The general said he would not tell reporters how much smaller pilot classes are now or provide the number of pilot-trainees who have tested positive for the coronavirus due to security concerns.

The Air Force reported 256 cases of the

virus among its active-duty and reserve troops, as of Friday.

Just like pilot training, the Air Force has reduced class sizes for incoming enlisted recruits attending basic military training and job-specific training courses. Webb said he expected all those training courses to continue because the Air Force could not afford to stop taking in new airmen.

Pentagon officials have acknowledged this week the coronavirus could force leaders to consider an unpopular program used in the past known as stop-loss to keep troops in uniform past the dates they were scheduled to discharge.

Stop-loss was last implemented on a wide scale in the 2000s as the Pentagon sought to keep troops in uniform to fight wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The program allows the military to retain enlisted troops and officers indefinitely, including delaying planned retirements.

Webb said Friday that the Air Force had not reached that point — yet.

"If this were to continue for an extraordinary amount of time — I mean multiples of months — we would probably ... have to continue to assess when we would have to take other measures," such as stop-loss, the general said. "We're not there at this point."

## More troops sent to aid NYC medical personnel

BY ROSE L. THAYER

*Stars and Stripes*

The military is sending more medical personnel directly into New York City hospitals instead of the field hospital built in a Manhattan convention center to adapt to the changing needs of the U.S. community hit hardest by the coronavirus pandemic.

Initially, 300 of the 1,500 doctors, nurses, respiratory therapists and infectious disease specialists from the Army, Air Force and Navy Reserve deployed last week were slated

to work within 11 area hospitals. The rest of the troops were meant to support the 2,500-bed military field hospital built inside the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center.

On Friday, about 400 personnel were operating within those hospitals with another 170 Army reservists expected to join them over the weekend as their credentialing is approved, according to U.S. Army North officials.

"What we've found is while the civilian hospitals are getting to capacity, what they really need is they need that extra

manpower and extra staffing," Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Thomas McCaffery said Friday during a news briefing at the Pentagon.

The announcement comes just two days after a similar field hospital built in Seattle, Wash., opened and closed within three days without ever seeing a patient, The Seattle Times reported.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee ordered Wednesday that a 250-bed field hospital in CenturyLink Field Event Center in Seattle be dismantled and returned to the Federal Emer-

gency Management Agency to use in another state.

McCaffery said this isn't a failure of the states to plan their needs, but rather to be prepared and anticipate what could be a demand for space.

"I'd rather that than be in a situation where we need capacity and it's not there. I'd much rather have it ready to go and, if we need to, reposition it to be somewhere else," he said. "It's a far more superior position to be in than not to have the capacity and there be an extreme need for it."

# US meets with Taliban to discuss violence

BY PHILLIP WALTER  
WELLMAN

*Stars and Stripes*

KABUL, Afghanistan — The U.S.'s top commander in Afghanistan flew to Qatar to hold talks with the Taliban on Friday amid mounting concerns over the country's faltering peace process, officials said.

The meeting between Gen. Austin "Scott" Miller and Taliban leaders came as both sides accuse each other of ramping up violence since signing a peace deal on Feb. 29, which could see all international troops withdraw from Afghanistan in 14 months.

An initial drawdown has al-

ready begun and is expected to see U.S. troop numbers reduce to 8,600 by early July.

"Gen. Miller met with Taliban leadership last night as part of a military channel established in the agreement," a U.S. forces spokesman told Stars and Stripes on Saturday. "The meeting was about the need to reduce violence."

Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen said night raids and other operations in noncombat areas were discussed at the meeting, and Taliban officials "called for a halt to such attacks."

Last Sunday the insurgent group — which continues to claim attacks against Afghan

security forces in rural areas — accused U.S. forces of violating the peace deal by carrying out repeated raids and "brutal drone attacks" across the country.

The U.S. military called the accusation baseless, saying their operations have defended Afghan forces, which is compliant with the agreement.

The U.S.-Taliban deal, which spells out conditions that must be met if foreign forces are to completely withdraw from Afghanistan within 14 months, has been plagued by setbacks since its inception.

Disagreements over the release of thousands of Taliban and Afghan government pris-

oners continue to delay the start of talks between Taliban and government officials.

The prisoner release and the intra-Afghan talks were both supposed to start by March 10 and are key conditions of the peace agreement.

The Taliban have also rejected the delegation chosen by Kabul to participate in the intra-Afghan talks, saying it's not inclusive enough.

An unresolved dispute between incumbent President Ashraf Ghani and his political rival Abdullah Abdullah over who won September's presidential election has also complicated peace efforts.

## Missile defense now being used in Iraq

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — New air defense systems are now protecting American and allied forces at military bases in Iraq where troops have been attacked by Iranian-backed insurgents in recent months, according to U.S. officials.

Patriot missile launchers and two other short-range systems are now in place at al-Asad Air Base, where Iran carried out a massive ballistic missile attack against U.S. and coalition

troops in January, and at the military base in Irbil, said officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive weapons movement. A short-range rocket defense system was installed at Camp Taji.

The military has been gradually moving the defensive systems into Iraq over the last few months to provide more protection for troops that have seen a series of rocket and missile attacks.

Soon after Iran launched a

massive ballistic missile assault against troops at al-Asad in January, questions were raised about the lack of air defense systems at the bases. But it has taken time to overcome tensions and negotiate with Iraqi leaders and to also locate defense systems that could be shifted into Iraq. Prior to the missile attacks, U.S. military leaders did not believe the systems were needed there, more than in other locations around the world where such strikes

are more frequent.

The systems are now operational, as top U.S. officials warn that threats from Iranian proxy groups continue.

Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said Thursday that because of that threat, hundreds of soldiers from remain in Iraq.

Several rockets hit near the site of an American oil field service company in Iraq this week. Americans had already left the location.

## Netflix comedy to poke fun at Space Force

BY THERON GODBOLD

*Stars and Stripes*

Imagine Dunder Mifflin in uniform.

Steve Carell, the painfully inept manager of the long-running mockumentary sitcom "The Office," is leading a crew in a new comedy for Netflix based on the newest of America's armed services, "Space Force."

Streaming is set for takeoff May 29. Carell, who appeared in Comedy Central's "The Daily Show," and in hit movies "The Big Short," "The 40-Year-Old Virgin" and "Anchorman," leads a cast that includes John Malkovich and Lisa Kudrow.

Carell's character, Gen. Mark R. Naird, a decorated pilot with dreams of running the Air Force, finds himself tapped to lead the newly formed

sixth branch of the U.S. armed forces.

"The goal of the new branch is 'to defend satellites from attack' and 'perform other tasks' or ... something," according to the teaser trailer released Wednesday by Netflix. "This is the story of the men and women who have to figure it out."

Carell is co-creator of "Space Force" with Greg Daniels, a writer and producer whose

credits include "The Office," "Parks and Recreation," "King of the Hill" and "The Simpsons."

Netflix, on its website, describes "Space Force" as a new kind of workplace comedy, "where the stakes are sky high and the ambitions even higher." The first season is 10 episodes; its appearance coincides with the disappearance of "The Office" from Netflix.

# NY deaths rise fast, hospitalizations slow

Associated Press

NEW YORK — New York COVID-19-related deaths jumped yet again by more than 700 in a day, while hospitals battling the outbreak reported encouraging news.

Coronavirus deaths in New York jumped by 777 in one day, as the number of people hospitalized stayed relatively flat.

The mix of encouraging and grim news from Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Friday has become familiar as people hospitalized in previous weeks die. More than 3,000 deaths have been recorded since Monday to bring

the statewide count to 7,844.

The number of hospitalizations increased by 290, compared to daily increases of more than 1,000 last week. The number of intensive care patients was actually down slightly for the first time since mid-March. There were 18,569 people hospitalized.

Cuomo said that if the hospitalization rate stays flat, New York might not need the overflow field hospitals they have been scrambling to construct recently.

New York state has about 170,000 confirmed cases, a number that only counts in-

fecting people who have been tested.

On the economic front, Cuomo said testing would have to be ramped up dramatically to put New York back in business, and the state tried to improve its overwhelmed unemployment insurance website.

Cuomo said restarting the outbreak-stalled economy will require a massive expansion of testing to cover millions of workers.

Public health experts hope that mass screening with antibody tests could help identify who might have built up immunity to COVID-19. Cuomo said

the state's health department is developing an antibody test.

The governor said that while the state lab will soon be able to process about 2,000 tests a day, New York has 9 million people needing to get back to work.

"It's not enough if you want to reopen on a meaningful scale and reopen quickly," Cuomo told a state Capitol news briefing. "We need an unprecedented mobilization where government can produce these tests in the millions."

Cuomo said the federal government should use its leverage to scale up testing.

## 2 more sailors aboard the Mercy have tested positive

The San Diego Union-Tribune

SAN DIEGO — Two more sailors aboard the San Diego-based hospital ship Mercy have tested positive for COVID-19, bringing the total cases among its crew to three, a Navy spokesman said.

The Mercy is pier-side at the Port of Los Angeles. Its first case of COVID-19 among its crew was reported by The San Diego Union-Tribune on Wednesday.

The second sailor tested positive Thursday and a third was reported late Friday, said Cmdr. John Fage, a 3rd Fleet spokesman.

"The crewmembers are currently isolated off-ship and will continue to self-monitor," Fage said in an email.

"The ship is following protocols and taking every precaution to ensure the health and safety of all crewmembers and pa-

**'The ship is following protocols and taking every precaution to ensure the health and safety of all...'**

**Cmdr. John Fage**  
3rd Fleet spokesman

tients on board."

The Mercy left San Diego March 23 and arrived in Los Angeles four days later. Its mission is to relieve Los Angeles hospitals by treating patients who do not have COVID-19.

None of the three sailors came into direct contact with patients, Fage said. The Mercy has treated 40 patients in Los Angeles and,

as of Friday, there are 18 on board.

One sailor on the Mercy, who works as a medical corpsman, told the Union-Tribune last week some sailors on board don't think the Navy is doing enough to protect the crew from the novel coronavirus.

"We don't feel like we're being protected — we're being thrown onto the front lines," the corpsman said. "We weren't tested (for COVID-19), and we're treating patients that are old, sick and wounded."

The sailor said medical crews are reusing N95 masks outside the recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — something the Navy denies.

There are more than 1,000 medical crew members on the ship. There are 30 who left the ship because they had come in contact with an infected crew member.

## Thefts at Naval Medical Center lead to staff bag checks

The San Diego Union-Tribune

SAN DIEGO — Sailors and civilian staff at Naval Medical Center San Diego are undergoing random bag checks after a supply locker was recently broken into and raided, a Navy official said.

In addition to the break-in, other supplies also have gone missing from the medical cen-

ter in Balboa Park.

The thefts come as shortages of medical personal protective equipment have been reported at hospitals nationwide, although the Navy says it is not experiencing a shortage of equipment.

"Unfortunately, due to the actions of a few, certain supplies, such as masks and hand sanitizer, have gone missing from

the medical center," said Regina Kowitz, a Naval Medical Forces Pacific spokeswoman.

"The decision to conduct random baggage checks for all who exit the campus was not a decision we made lightly, but felt it was necessary to prevent further loss of supplies needed for the protection of our precious workforce."

Kowitz said the medical

center has adequate supplies of protective equipment for its staff.

The hospital is one of two military medical facilities in San Diego County seeing service members seeking treatment and testing for COVID-19. The other is Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton.

# Europe seeks to curb Easter holiday travel

Associated Press

BERLIN — European countries Saturday sought to keep people from traveling in sunny Easter weather and grappled with how and when to start loosening the weeks-long shutdowns of much of public life. The United States' death toll from the coronavirus closed in on Italy's, the highest in the world.

In Asia, South Korea announced plans to strap tracking wristbands on people who defy quarantine orders. The Japanese government appealed to the public nationwide to avoid bars, clubs and restaurants, broadening a measure announced earlier for seven urban areas, including Tokyo.

In Europe, beautiful weather across much of the continent provided an extra test of people's discipline over the long Easter weekend.

Italian authorities stepped up checks, particularly around the northern Lombardy region, which has borne the brunt of the COVID-19 outbreak. Roadblocks were set up on main thoroughfares in and out of Milan and along highway exits to discourage people from going on holiday trips.

"Don't do silly things," said Domenico Arcuri, Italy's special commissioner for the virus emergency. "Don't go out, continue to behave responsibly as you have done until today, use your head and your sense of responsibility."

He added: "The virus has not been defeated, but we are on the right path; we see the indicators but not the end of the tunnel. In fact, the end of the tunnel is still far away."

In Spain, which recorded its smallest day-to-day increase in deaths in nearly three weeks, of 510, police set up thousands of roadblocks around the country.

In Britain, police were urged to keep a close watch on gatherings in parks and at the seaside on what was set to be the hottest day of the year. Police seized a motorcycle from a rider making a nonessential journey in central England.

The pandemic's epicenter has long since shifted to Europe and the United States, which now has by far the largest number of confirmed cases, with more than half a million. As of Saturday morning, the U.S. death toll of more than 18,700 was just short of Italy's.

"I understand intellectually why it's happening," said Gov. Andrew Cuomo of New York, where deaths rose Friday by 777, to more than 7,800. "It doesn't make it any easier to accept."

Still, New York officials said the number of people in intensive care dropped for the first time since mid-March and hospitalizations were slowing: 290 new patients in a single day, compared with daily increases of more than 1,000 last week. Cuomo said if that trend holds, New York might not need the overflow field hospitals that officials have been scrambling to build.

President Donald Trump said he will not lift U.S. restrictions until conditions are safe but announced an Opening Our Country task force and said, "I want to get it open as soon as possible."

The Easter holidays coincide with mounting hope in Europe of the beginning

of a slow return to normal as rates of infection slow in many cases. At the same time, politicians and public health officials are warning that they must act cautiously or else the virus may flare up all over again.

Some countries are already planning small first steps out of the shutdown. Austria aims to reopen small shops on Tuesday.

Spain is preparing to start rolling back the strictest of its measures Monday, when authorities will allow workers in some non-essential industries to return to factories and construction sites after a nearly complete two-week stoppage.

Health Minister Salvador Illa said the government will distribute reusable masks at subway stations and other public transportation hubs.

"We think that with these measures we will prevent a jump in infections," Illa said.

Italy continued to include all nonessential manufacturing in an extension of its national lockdown until May 3. But Premier Giuseppe Conte held out hope that some industry could re-open earlier if conditions permit.

Arcuri said that the exit from the lockdown will include increased virus testing, the deployment of a voluntary contact-tracing app and mandatory blood tests as Italy seeks to set up a system of "immunity passports."

German officials are set to consider on Wednesday how to proceed after several weeks of restrictions on public life, currently due to expire April 19.

## Virus may have a lasting impact on service industry

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — For years, personal trainer Amanda Tikalsky didn't have to worry much about her job. The U.S. economy's record-breaking 11-year expansion offered security to service workers such as her.

Then came the coronavirus, which closed the Milwaukee athletic club where she worked for 15 years. She scrambled to organize online exercise sessions to keep money coming in. About 25% of her clients made the jump with her.

"It's an adjustment for everybody," she said. "We are used to being face-to-face."

But even when the virus threat is gone, Tikalsky predicts that many customers will continue to exercise from home. The shutdown is also likely to change her own shopping habits. She has a new appreciation for

the ease of buying groceries online.

The pandemic is almost sure to leave a mark on the way people work, shop and socialize, perhaps permanently shifting the way many service industries operate. Consumers will think harder about the health implications of squeezing into crowded restaurants and movie theaters. More businesses will accept the effectiveness of employees who work from home, and the move to online shopping will accelerate.

"We've never had a crisis where we couldn't socially gather with people," said John Gordon, founder of Pacific Management Consulting Group in San Diego, which advises restaurants.

Until March, service workers — from dishwashers to real estate agents — had been enjoying a record winning streak in the job market. U.S. service jobs had risen for a decade.

The sector appeared almost immune to blips in the economy. Not even low-wage competition overseas or automation seemed to threaten service jobs that require direct contact with customers.

Then the virus arrived. It upended the service economy, which accounts for 84% of U.S. private-sector employment. It wiped out 659,000 service jobs in March — 94% of the jobs that vanished last month as the U.S. economy plunged into recession.

It is sure to claim many more. In an interview Monday on CNBC, former Fed Chair Janet Yellen predicted that unemployment rates could climb to Great Depression levels.

But because the economy was in solid shape before the outbreak, she added, the return to normal employment could happen much faster than during the Depression or after the 2007-09 Great Recession.

# Social distancing improves Calif.'s virus forecast

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California's top public health official said for the first time Friday that the coronavirus might not be as devastating as state officials had feared and Gov. Gavin Newsom revealed his administration now is planning for how to reopen the state.

But with Easter Sunday and sunny weather on the horizon, Newsom implored people to stay away from others to not undo the significant progress under his stay-at-home order.

Dr. Mark Ghaly, secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency, said models state officials have created to track the virus had been showing a peak by the middle of next month but the picture has improved as people limited their movement.

California has more than 21,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases and nearly 600 deaths, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University, figures far lower than New York, where the infections have been most prevalent and deadly.

But the key figure for California officials is the number of hospitalizations, especially those people in intensive care, which is an indicator of how many hospital beds, staff and medical equipment the state needs.

On Thursday, ICU hospitalizations rose 1.1% after falling for the first time Wednesday. Overall, 1,145 people were in intensive care statewide, leaving ample open space for new patients.

## Alabama

MONTGOMERY — More than 450 health care workers in Alabama have been infected with COVID-19 as the total cases in the state neared 3,000, the Alabama Department of Public Health said Friday.

The department said that 464 employees in hospitals and doctors' offices have tested positive for COVID-19 since the outbreak began in Alabama. Infections in health care workers accounted for more than 15% of

all cases in the state.

Alabama reached nearly 3,000 confirmed coronavirus cases Friday — increasing by 1,000 over just five days. The virus has been blamed for at least 80 deaths in the state.

## Arizona

PHOENIX — Arizona's two most populous cities imposed restrictions on use of their parks over the Easter weekend as they try to combat further spread of the coronavirus.

The Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department said parks remain open for walking but that facilities such as restrooms and parking lots will be closed over the weekend and that picnicking and grilling will be prohibited.

The department said the Saturday and Sunday of the Easter weekend are traditionally the two busiest days of activity in city parks as families and other groups gather to celebrate.

Tucson police and park personnel will patrol to ensure compliance with closures of ramadas, playground equipment and other park amenities because of the outbreak.

## Colorado

GREELEY — A beef plant in northern Colorado where dozens of employees have tested positive for COVID-19 will be shut down through Tuesday for deep cleaning and to screen additional workers.

Andre Nogueira, JBS USA's CEO, said in a statement released Friday that the company is paying more than \$1 million for thousands of testing kits for workers at the Greeley plant. He said 36 employees have tested positive for the disease.

Weld County's health department said that concerns at the facility include the proximity of workers to each other and employees working while they are sick. If the plant does not comply with the county's public health order, it could be closed, but compliance is the "preferred solution," the statement said.

The first known plant employee to die from the virus,

Saul Sanchez, died Tuesday night, according to his daughter, Beatriz Rangel. The company denied that Sanchez was at work while he was sick or that he contracted the virus while at work.

## Georgia

ATLANTA — Ahead of Easter Sunday, Gov. Brian Kemp urged Georgians to participate in religious services online or by phone — instead of in-person — because of the coronavirus pandemic, as the death toll in the state rose to at least 425 on Friday.

Kemp issued a statewide stay-at-home order lasting through the end of April, but houses of worship are still allowed to hold services as long as congregants remain 6 feet apart. At least one church in Georgia has vowed to continue holding in-person services that buck social distancing requirements.

The number of people hospitalized by the virus in Georgia has increased to over 2,400, according to the latest data Friday from the state Department of Public Health. The state has more than 11,800 confirmed cases, though testing has been limited.

## Kentucky

FRANKFORT — In a preemptive action to prevent an Easter weekend acceleration of the coronavirus crisis, Gov. Andy Beshear warned that anyone attending in-person gatherings will be ordered into quarantine as he announced another single-day high number of virus cases in Kentucky.

The order applies to all mass gatherings and not just worship services.

Under the new tougher action, people seen participating in mass gatherings in Kentucky this weekend will have their license plate numbers recorded by authorities, who will provide the information to local health departments, Beshear said. Health officials will contact each participant and require them to go into quarantine for 14 days, he said.

## Texas

AUSTIN — A federal appeals court Friday partially rescinded a lower-court order that had largely blocked the enforcement of an abortion ban in Texas during the coronavirus pandemic.

By a 2-1 vote, the three-judge panel of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld enforcement of an executive order by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott that includes abortion among non-essential medical procedures banned during the state of emergency.

However, the appeals court allowed the procedure to go ahead if delays would place the pregnancy beyond the 22-week state cutoff for abortions.

In a statement, Center for Reproductive Rights President Nancy Northrup said the appeals court "is unjustifiably forcing women to wait until the eleventh hour to get the time-sensitive, essential healthcare that they are constitutionally guaranteed."

## Washington

SEATTLE — The Washington Supreme Court late Friday told Gov. Jay Inslee to protect the health of inmates in the state during the coronavirus outbreak and gave officials until Monday to detail the steps that have been taken.

Inmates at a Washington prison had asked the justices to order the release of some offenders after almost a dozen people there tested positive for the coronavirus, but state officials had said the process of letting inmates out will take time.

At least six inmates at the Monroe Correctional Complex — the second largest prison in the state — have the disease and officials are awaiting results on 54 other cases, according to Department of Corrections Secretary Stephen Sinclair. Five workers at the facility also tested positive, he said.

In its order Friday, the high court justices told Inslee and Sinclair "to take all necessary steps to protect the health and safety" of inmates and to report back in detail by noon Monday.

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Man charged after wild ATV chase, crash

**WV** KINGWOOD — A West Virginia man was jailed on gun and drug charges after a wild ATV chase ended when he crashed into a creek, WBOY-TV reported.

Authorities said Billy Joe Nelder, 35, took off on his ATV as soon as Preston County sheriff's deputies pulled up behind him and zipped around corners until flipping the vehicle into a creek in Kingwood, a National Guard facility.

The deputies found three bags of methamphetamine on Nelder, as well as an illegal firearm. He also had a set of scales, multiple SIM cards, three throwing knives and a container with six bullets, according to a criminal complaint obtained by the station.

## Hoverboard suspected in fire at 2-family home

**MA** ANDOVER — Authorities are blaming a hoverboard malfunction for starting a fire that damaged a two-family home north of Boston.

Andover Fire Chief Michael Mansfield and State Fire Marshal Peter Ostroskey said investigators determined the hoverboard — which had been charging on the first floor of the home — ignited the blaze.

No injuries were reported but the building suffered an estimated \$325,000 worth of damage and five residents were displaced.

## Explosion survivor gets hero's welcome

**ME** FARMINGTON, — A maintenance worker who saved lives by evacuating a building minutes before a dead-

ly explosion returned home to a hero's welcome after more than six months of hospitalization and rehabilitation.

Larry Lord, 61, who was seriously burned, departed in an ambulance with a police escort from Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital outside Boston. Along the way, a Maine State Police honor guard and other police and fire departments joined the caravan.

Lord helped almost a dozen people get out of a building on Sept. 16, 2019, in Farmington after he smelled propane gas.

The building exploded after he returned with firefighters to investigate the source of the propane leak.

## Hunting, fishing limited to state's residents

**OR** PORTLAND — Oregon banned all non-resident hunting, fishing and shellfishing activity in an effort to stop a surge of non-resident anglers mostly from Washington.

The action follows Washington's decision to close all hunting, fishing and shellfishing until at least early May, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife cited COVID-19 concerns and said it will last until coronavirus restrictions are lifted.

## Deputies: Boy finds gun, shoots self in hand

**FL** PALM BEACH GARDENS — A Florida man was arrested after his girlfriend's 3-year-old child found a loaded gun in a nightstand drawer and shot himself in the hand, sheriff's officials said.

The mother told Palm Beach County Sheriff's detectives she heard a loud bang and found the boy in the bedroom with a

bloody hand. He was standing next to a gun, according to an arrest report.

Juan Gomes Quintero, 21, told Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office investigators he had been cleaning the .40-caliber Springfield and left it in the drawer. He was arrested on charges of culpable negligence, unsafe storage of a firearm and tampering with evidence.

## Orchestra launches site for online performances

**KY** LOUISVILLE — The Louisville Orchestra launched a new webpage where people can watch virtual performances by musicians.

The move comes after the orchestra canceled the end of its concert season due to the coronavirus pandemic. The webpage is a way for the orchestra to share music and connect with people who are confined due to social distancing requirements, the organization said in a statement.

The webpage will include videos of performances, interviews, instrument demonstrations and other content.

## Man dies after fall in Big Cottonwood Canyon

**UT** COTTONWOOD HEIGHTS — A man died after falling during a hiking and climbing excursion in Big Cottonwood Canyon in northern Utah, authorities said.

Wade Joseph Meade, 29, fell near Lake Blanche, The Desert News reports.

Meade was able to call police after falling about 50 feet, police said.

A Utah Department of Public Safety helicopter responded and lowered rescuers to Meade.

He succumbed to his injuries while being transported off the mountain, Gray said.

## Environmental officials probe fertilizer spill

**IA** MOUNT PLEASANT — Iowa environmental officials are investigating a fertilizer spill in southeastern Iowa.

The Iowa Department of Nature Resources said in a news release that the spill occurred in eastern Mount Pleasant when a fertilizer truck overturned at the interchange of U.S. Highways 34 and 218.

Investigators said the Mount Pleasant Liqui-Grow truck spilled most of its 2,400-gallon load of high nitrogen fertilizer — as well as some diesel fuel — into a roadside ditch. Liqui-Grow employees were able to recover about 400 gallons of fertilizer, but the other 2,000 gallons reached an unnamed tributary of Heather Branch Creek. Crews dammed the creek with sandbags and used pumps to try to prevent downstream contamination.

## Zoo shows off pair of clouded leopard kittens

**FL** MIAMI — Providing exactly what's needed in these trying times, Zoo Miami shared images of two clouded leopard cubs.

The male and female have been secluded in a den with their mother, Serai, since their Feb. 11 birth so that they could properly bond, according to a news release from the South Florida zoo.

Zookeepers examined the kittens to check their development and give them their initial vaccines.

"Amid all of the stressful news that we are all dealing with, I hope that this can bring a smile to some of your faces!" the zoo's communications director, Ron Magill, wrote as he shared the images.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES®

Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit [www.stripes.com](http://www.stripes.com).

Reporting  
World, National  
and Military News

# Woods waits to defend Masters title

Associated Press

Tiger Woods felt strong and fit enough to compete for another green jacket. He could sense the adrenaline starting to flow, along with a strange sensation.

He was grumpy.

Instead of flying to Augusta National for the Masters this week, he was home in Florida, where the only competition for a green jacket was a putting contest with his 11-year-old son, Charlie.

"I felt energetic, I felt really alive and wired and kind of irritable, and I didn't know what was going on," Woods said in an interview with GolfTV made available Thursday. "And I realized it was Sunday morning. ... And my body, subconsciously, I knew I was supposed to be getting ready to leave and start playing the Masters.

"My body was ready, and I didn't know why I was acting that way," he said. "It's crazy."

The interview recorded Wednesday with Henni Zuel of GolfTV — Woods has an endorsement deal with the Dis-

covery-owned channel — was his first since the final round of the Genesis Invitational in February. Woods chose not to play the next four tournaments because his back was not ready. And then golf was shut down along with other sports by the COVID-19 pandemic.

He has been at home with his two children and girlfriend, riding bikes for exercise, occasionally playing golf at The Medalist Club and having putting contests with Charlie, with the green jacket going to the winner.

That's another reminder of these times. This will be the longest a Masters champion has been able to keep golf's most famous piece of clothing at home. Woods is not required to leave it in his locker at Augusta National until he returns to defend. And that won't be until November at the earliest.

"This is not the way that I would've wanted to keep the jacket for a longer period of time," Woods said. "I wanted to get out there and compete for it and earn it again, like I did in '02. But it's not a normal

circumstance, it's not a normal world. It's a very fluid environment and it's very different for all of us. Fortunately, we potentially could have a Masters in November and play it then. I guess I'll be defending then and hopefully that all comes about."

In the meantime, he started playing for the jacket with Charlie at the start of the year, wanting to take advantage while the jacket was at home.

"I don't know if I'll be able to defend, I don't know if I'll be able to win again, but let's just take a moment to have a little fun with it," Woods said. "Occasionally, it's gone into his closet. Primarily, it's stayed in mine. But the fact he's been able to earn it off me — because there are no wins that are given in this family — it's been fun to see him tease me about beating me and being able to wear the jacket and have it in his closet where he says it belongs."

Woods would rather let 95 other players try to take it over 72 holes at Augusta National.

That will have to wait.

He still struggles to think

about what he should be doing this week: a flight to Augusta on Sunday to practice and help hand out trophies in the Drive, Chip and Putt National Finals; the noise and bustle of practice rounds on Monday and Tuesday, the Masters Club dinner on Tuesday night for only champions, the Par 3 Tournament with his kids as caddies on Wednesday, and then quiet of the eve of the Masters as he tries to build toward the final round of his favorite tournament.

He stuck to one tradition — the Champions Dinner.

Woods tweeted a photo of him having his dinner Tuesday night, wearing the green jacket, with his girlfriend and children and food that he wants on the menu — steak and chicken fajitas, sushi and sashimi, milkshakes. Also on the table were cupcakes.

Whenever he gets around to hosting the real dinner at Augusta National, it probably won't end the same way.

There was a food fight at home.

## Rivera goes to work rebuilding Redskins' culture

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Ron Rivera made plenty of mistakes as a first-time NFL head coach that he hopes not to repeat this time around.

Rivera also did enough good things early on with Carolina in 2011 that he's trying to duplicate now with Washington. The new Redskins coach took some big swings in free agency, but has so far been more focused on incremental additions and subtractions to change the culture within the organization and build for the future.

"We added pieces to the puzzle that we just felt that we needed: guys that are going to come in, guys that are hungry, they're going to compete," Rivera said. "We feel good about the young guys, and we feel good about some of the veteran

guys. We feel it's a good mix right now."

Rivera reunited with linebacker Thomas Davis to give the locker room an example of how to play and behave. He signed safety Sean Davis, cornerback Ronald Darby, running back J.D. McKissic and tight end Logan Thomas as players with something to prove.

All got one- or two-year deals.

"A lot of these guys come in and say, 'Give me an opportunity to compete, prove myself and then we'll see,' which I think is great," Rivera said. "I love the fact guys are betting on themselves and are going to come in and prove that they belong and they deserve an extensive contract. That's what we're trying to do, is (find) who fits us. And a lot of these guys were up for the challenge."

Rivera also released safety Montae Nicholson after two troubling off-field incidents the past two years. He traded disgruntled cornerback Quinton Dunbar to Seattle and could soon make a similar move with holdout left tackle Trent Williams.

The 58-year-old who guided the Panthers to the playoffs in his third season and the Super Bowl in his fifth knows Washington won't become a contender overnight. The first steps include laying a positive foundation after the Redskins' run of three consecutive losing seasons.

"What we need is, we need everybody to come in and understand what the vision is and they've got to buy into what the vision's going to be," Rivera said. "Once they've done that, it gives us an opportunity to be

successful."

Thomas Davis is on board after eight years with Rivera in Carolina. Practice habits were a point of contention among Redskins players the past few seasons, and the 37-year-old expects that to change under Rivera.

"You have to make practice harder than the game," Davis said. "That's something that we've done under Coach Rivera for a long time, and it's shown. In Carolina, we had some really good teams, in particular some really good defenses because we came together, we worked hard, we knew we had good coaches and we bought into the system."

It'll be a whole new system on defense under coordinator Jack Del Rio, and on offense with Scott Turner running the show.

# NCAA trying to plan for football season

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Spring football was shelved because of the coronavirus. There is still plenty of work going on in college football.

With the pandemic casting uncertainty on the 2020 season, programs are starting to wrestle with two weighty issues: Getting ready to play some kind of season if it is safe to do so and trying to manage what for many would be a substantial financial blow if the season is shortened or canceled.

The NCAA this week formed a working group to look at issues such as how much preseason practice and conditioning would be required once play is green-lighted again. The NCAA said “it is premature to establish a timeline for when these scenarios may be put into place.”

Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith said the discussion is just beginning on prepare-to-play issues after most programs had spring football practice shortened or wiped out and had to deal with their spring sports being called to a halt.

“Do we feel we need a longer period of time to help them physically get back into the grind?” Smith said Friday. “Maybe you need two weeks

straight without pads. I don’t know that. That’s where the collaborative of the medical people and the strength coaches and everybody across the country has to occur. A hard date will come in relation to what we figure out there, and we haven’t figured it out yet.”

Buckeyes coach Ryan Day, in an interview on ESPN, said six weeks would be a reasonable “starting point” for getting ready to play. Last week, Alabama coach Nick Saban suggested “teaching sessions on the field” over the summer to prepare for camp.

“If you look at statistics historically on concussions, injuries, the most concentrated time that you practice and not play is in fall camp,” Saban said on a conference call with reporters. “You have more practices, you have to spend more time on the field. So I don’t know that increasing that is going to be beneficial in getting people ready to play.”

On the financial side, losing football would be a devastating blow. Ohio State and other top football programs pump millions into their athletic department budgets, funding less lucrative sports. The NCAA is also slashing \$375 million that would normally be distributed to various programs from the

NCAA tournaments that were canceled.

Georgia Tech has made no cuts to staffers’ salaries, but said an early estimate of losses blamed on the pandemic will exceed \$3 million. Wisconsin deputy athletic director Chris McIntosh estimated the Badgers lost some \$4 million in revenue due to the loss of the NCAA Tournament and Big Ten Tournament.

“So far, the biggest lesson in terms of planning that we’ve experienced as it relates to COVID-19 is it’s incredibly humbling and it’s unpredictable,” McIntosh said. “We’re in the mode of preparing for anything, really, and predicting nothing.”

Louisville this week announced 10% salary cuts for coaches and athletic staff, including football and men’s basketball. At Stanford, football coach David Shaw, women’s basketball coach Tara VanDerveer and men’s basketball coach Jerod Haase all volunteered to take less pay.

Smith said Ohio State has not ruled out pay cuts or other measures.

“Our university is going through a process to evaluate whether we need to deal with personnel in that form or fashion,” he said, noting that a

hiring freeze was in place and budget cuts made before the coronavirus threat emerged.

“We did talk to some of our coaches about the blessings that they have and that we have and needed to make sure that we help as many people as we could,” he said.

Having the season possibly wiped off the calendar is something Smith said he hasn’t begun to think about yet.

“The football season is vital to the budget health of the overall department,” he said. “The bottom line is that it would have a major impact, and I haven’t yet begun to look at the cascade effects of that.”

Ohio State’s athletic department will finish with the fiscal year June 30 with about \$10.2 million in the bank and money saved on travel when spring sports were eliminated and football coaches not traveling to visit recruits, Smith said. That could get used up quickly if the seven home football games are affected.

Smith said he can’t see the players playing in Ohio Stadium in front of more than 100,000 empty seats even if it would bring in television revenue. If it’s not safe for the fans to be together, it probably wouldn’t be safe for the players, either, he said.

## Virtual auto racing popular, but challenges remain

Associated Press

The popularity of virtual motorsports racing on television has come with surprising success stories and occasional complications as race teams scramble to create value for sponsors and partners.

IndyCar drivers participating in the series’ online races represent their real sponsors and for the most part that is also true in NASCAR.

Some of the small-team drivers have seized the opportunity presented by being the only racing available. Landon Cassill, who doesn’t currently have a Cup Series ride, landed a

paying sponsor for the iRacing league and is hopeful the platform keeps him on the radar when racing resumes.

Timmy Hill, best known as the guy who found out the concession stand was out of chicken during a rain delay of the Daytona 500, has skyrocketed in popularity. Not only did he win a NASCAR race, Hill, a regular gamer considered among the best in the iRacing community, has put together a partnership with Pit Boss Grills for the virtual racing. The deal may not be for cash, but that’s not really the point.

Blue-Emu, who did have con-

tracts for real-life money with Cassill and Bubba Wallace, canceled its deal with Wallace after Wallace admittedly “rage quit” the game last week at Bristol.

The company is a partner on Wallace’s actual car with Richard Petty Motorsports and there could be fallout once the season resumes.

Some sponsors also want to see their logos on the virtual rigs and want drivers to practice hours and hours each day, giving them more exposure to fans. Hendrick Motorsports last week had Alex Bowman and Chase Elliott virtually

connect with sponsors the duo would have hosted at the actual track.

“I think the first race that was done in Atlanta was much less about the business; and then when the TV component came in, it switched to business, absolutely,” veteran NASCAR driver Jimmie Johnson said. “There’s maybe not pressure from the sponsors. But I can tell you what I feel in my own head is: How do I show value for our partners and how to show value for our team and our company and everybody involved in this tricky time?”