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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Russian fighter buzzes past US craft again

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

STUTT GART, Germany — A Russian fighter plane on Sunday cut within 25 feet of a U.S. military aircraft, marking the second time in less than a week that unsafe maneuvers by Russian pilots put Navy pilots at risk, the military said.

The incident over the eastern Mediterranean Sea involved a Russian SU-35 fighter jet conducting two high-speed intercepts of a U.S. P-8A submarine reconnaissance plane, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa said late Sunday, without specifying the location.

While the first intercept was judged safe, the second was deemed “unsafe and unprofessional due to the SU-35

conducting a high-speed, high-powered maneuver that decreased aircraft separation to within 25 feet,” NAVEUR said in a statement.

The encounter exposed the U.S. aircraft to wake turbulence and jet exhaust, forcing the P-8A to “descend to create separation and ensure safety of both aircraft,” the Navy said.

Russia’s defense ministry said in a statement Monday that it scrambled a fighter from Hmeymim air base in Syria to shadow the U.S. aircraft, which it said was flying toward Russian military facilities. The defense ministry did not address the Navy’s complaint that the Russian fighter performed unsafe maneuvers.

On Wednesday, an SU-35 risked a midair collision over

the Mediterranean when it performed an inverted high-speed maneuver 25 feet in front of a Navy P-8A.

The incidents are part of a recent string of close military encounters with adversaries. Earlier this month, U.S. Air Force F-22 fighter jets intercepted a pair of Russian maritime patrol planes 50 miles off the western coast of the Aleutian Islands in what military officials said at the time was a test of U.S. capabilities amid the coronavirus pandemic.

And last week, 11 Iranian military vessels moved dangerously close to several American ships conducting operations in the northern Persian Gulf, the Navy said.

On Thursday, U.S. European Command’s Gen. Tod Wolters told reporters that last week’s

encounter with the Russians over the Mediterranean appeared to be more about the actions of one air crew rather than a strategy aimed at testing American combat capabilities.

“I’ve studied the intent, and my conclusion at this point is that it was probably something that was more along the lines of unprofessional as opposed to deliberate,” Wolters said.

Sunday’s incident occurred in international airspace where the P-8A was operating within international law and did nothing to provoke the Russian response, the Navy said.

“The unnecessary actions of the Russian SU-35 pilot were inconsistent with good airmanship and international flight rules, seriously jeopardizing the safety of flight of both aircraft,” NAVEUR said.

Reports: Many have had COVID-19 with no symptoms

Associated Press

A flood of new research suggests that far more people have had the coronavirus without any symptoms, fueling hope that it will turn out to be much less lethal than originally feared.

While that’s clearly good news, it also means that it’s impossible to know who around you may be contagious. That complicates decisions about returning to work, school and normal life.

In the last week, reports of silent infections have come from a homeless shelter in Boston, a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier, pregnant women at a New York hospital, several European countries and California.

The head of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said that 25% of

infected people might not have symptoms. The vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. John Hyten, thinks that it may be as high as 60% to 70% among military personnel.

None of these numbers can be fully trusted because they’re based on flawed and inadequate testing, said Dr. Michael Mina of Harvard’s School of Public Health.

Collectively, though, they suggested that “we have just been off the mark by huge, huge numbers” for estimating total infections, he said.

Scientists in Iceland screened 6% of its population to see how many had previously undetected infections and found that about 0.7% tested positive. So did 13% of a group at higher risk because of recent travel or exposure to someone sick.

Aboard the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt, where one crew member died from the virus, “the rough numbers are that 40% are symptomatic,” said Vice Adm. Phillip Sawyer, deputy commander of naval operations. The ratio may change if more develop symptoms later, he warned.

In New York, a hospital tested all pregnant women coming in to deliver over a two-week period. Nearly 14% of those who arrived with no symptoms of the coronavirus turned out to have it. Of the 33 positive cases, 29 had no symptoms when tested, although some developed them later.

Previously, tests on passengers and crew from the Diamond Princess cruise ship found that nearly half who tested positive had no symptoms at

the time. Researchers estimated that 18% of infected people never developed any.

These studies used tests that look for bits of the virus from throat and nose swabs, which can miss cases. Someone can test negative one day if there’s not much virus to detect and then positive the next.

Symptoms may also not appear when someone is tested but turn up later. One Japanese study found that more than half of those who had no symptoms when they tested positive later felt sick.

Better answers may come from newer tests that check blood for antibodies, substances the immune system makes to fight the virus. But the accuracy of these, too, is still to be determined.

Some US manufacturers reopen amid political heat

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Boeing and a small number of other manufacturers around the U.S. geared up Monday to resume production this week amid pressure from President Donald Trump to reopen the economy and resistance from governors who warn there is not enough testing yet to keep the coronavirus in check.

Boeing, one of the Pacific Northwest's biggest employers, said it will put about 27,000 people back to work building passenger jets at its Seattle-area plants, with virus-slowng precautions in place, including face masks and staggered shift times. Bobcat, a farm equipment manufacturer, announced it will resume production with about 600 employees in Bismarck, N.D.

Elsewhere around the world, step-by-step reopenings were underway in Europe, where the crisis has begun to ebb in places like Italy, Spain and Germany. Parts of the continent are perhaps weeks ahead of the U.S. in the trajectory of the disease, which has killed over 160,000 people worldwide.

The reopenings of certain industries in the U.S. are meager compared with the more than 22 million American thrown out of work by the crisis.

Businesses that start operating again are likely to engender good will with the Trump administration at a time when it is doling out billions to companies for economic relief. The president has been agitating to restart the economy, egging on protesters against Democratic governors.

But reopening carries major risks, especially

since people can spread the virus without even knowing they are infected. Many governors say they lack the testing supplies they need and warn that if they reopen their economies too soon, they could get hit by a second wave of infections.

The death toll in the U.S., the worst-hit country by far, was more than 40,000 with over 750,000 confirmed infections, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University of government reports. The true figures are believed to be much higher, in part because of limited testing and difficulties in counting the dead.

On Monday, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious-disease expert, warned: "Unless we get the virus under control, the real recovery economically is not going to happen."

"If you jump the gun and go into a situation where you have a big spike, you're going to set yourself back. So, as painful as it is to go by the careful guidelines of gradually phasing into a reopening, it's going to backfire," he said on ABC's "Good Morning America."

In the past few days, Florida gave the OK for beaches to reopen, and Texas on Monday began a week of slow reopenings, starting off with state parks. Later, stores will be allowed to offer curbside service.

Washington state was the first in the nation to see a spike in cases and enacted strict shutdown orders that helped control the virus. Europe was likewise ahead of the U.S. on the curve.

The global game plan is to open up but maintain enough social distancing to prevent new flurries of the virus.

Pentagon orders masks for DOD personnel

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON— The Pentagon has ordered thousands of face coverings for Defense Department personnel to help stop the spread of the coronavirus, a top Pentagon official announced Monday.

The face coverings, made of cloth, will be provided to the entire Defense Department workforce of about 3 million people, Ellen Lord, the undersecretary of defense for acquisition and sustainment, said during a news conference at the Pentagon.

The order follows a Defense Department directive April 6 for personnel to use cloth face coverings to prevent the spread of the coronavirus if they cannot maintain six feet of social distance in public areas or in their places of work.

The deliveries for the face coverings will start this week, with 135,000 face coverings expected to be delivered by the end of the month, and another 580,000 by the end of May, Lord said.

Barbers, gyms reopen on Camp Humphreys

BY MATTHEW KEELER
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — After nearly three weeks without a regular trim or daily workout, Camp Humphreys soldiers lined up outside base barbershops and with their families hit the gyms that reopened over the weekend.

Most installation services that involve close contact with other personnel were closed in March after Eighth Army reported a case of corona-

virus that originated at its headquarters.

At least eight base barbershops and three fitness centers reopened Saturday after U.S. Forces Korea commander Gen. Robert Abrams allowed Camp Humphreys to revert to Health Protection Condition C from C+ on Friday.

Maj. Bernard Bunal, the Korean Service Corps Battalion executive officer, and hundreds more waited in a queue, each member spaced six feet apart, for more than two hours Satur-

day at barber shops in efforts to meet the military grooming standards.

Off-base barbershops remain off-limits to USFK personnel, but to satisfy the demand all base hair salons and barbershops operated on extended hours over the weekend.

Garrison commander Col. Michael Tremblay said last week that service members would have at least a week before they faced any type of haircut inspection.

The fitness centers reopened

Saturday to a clientele that made do with alternatives for three weeks. Doors opened for service members and their dependents only to accommodate the distancing requirements.

Additional services are becoming available as the command monitors the declining number of reported cases throughout the peninsula.

"We're opening it up a little bit by a little bit," Tremblay said Thursday, "but we're being vigilant."

Contractors asked to stay on base in Djibouti

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

Military officials have flown out scores of personnel from Djibouti's Camp Lemonnier as a precaution and are urging contractors to immediately move into temporary berthing on base, due to mounting numbers of coronavirus cases in the country.

Home to some 5,500 U.S. military and other personnel, the base began barring hundreds of local workers late last month and evacuated service members and others most vulnerable to the virus.

In Djibouti, 846 people have tested positive and two have

died, World Health Organization data showed Monday — an increase of more than 300 positive cases over the weekend.

As new infections increased to an average of 60 a day, military leaders in Africa called on contractors to leave their off-base homes for now.

"To ensure continuation of the mission and access to emergent health care, if necessary, it is imperative that contractor employees take advantage of this opportunity immediately, before further base access restrictions are in place," said a memo signed by Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa commander Maj. Gen.

Michael D. Turello and base commander Navy Capt. Kenneth Crowe on Friday.

But many of the roughly 180 contractors don't want to move, partly because they'd be forced to live in closer quarters than in their housing about four miles from the facility, a contractor with knowledge of the matter said last week.

Contractors also were afraid that moving would leave many of their residences vulnerable to burglary while separating a few others from their local families.

Defense officials became concerned coronavirus had spread from China to Africa

in January, after reports of a possible outbreak in Djibouti, where Beijing is heavily involved in infrastructure work and opened its first naval base outside the Pacific in 2017.

But the first confirmed case came last month via Europe when a Spanish special operations soldier showing symptoms arrived in Djibouti, the country's health department said.

There are currently no cases at Lemonnier, the memo stated. But Crowe said in a video last month that a contractor who had been evacuated to Germany with symptoms of the disease later tested positive.

Marines on Okinawa to prep for sheltering order

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The III Marine Expeditionary Force in Okinawa instructed its Marines to prepare to shelter in place with up to 72 hours of food, water and other necessities on hand to contain the spread of the coronavirus and to facilitate contact tracing and cleaning teams.

III MEF posted the instructions Monday on its Facebook pages. If imposed, the order requires Marines to make their way home immediately via the quickest route possible, limit interactions with other people and seek further instruction from their chains of command in regard to essential service requirements.

The order is a proactive, precautionary measure and not based on a specific threat, III MEF spokesman 1st Lt. Ryan

Bruce wrote Monday in an email to Stars and Stripes. Marine officials likened it to preparations for a typhoon, an annual occurrence on the island.

There are currently no confirmed cases of the coronavirus among Marines in Japan, Bruce said.

"We need our personnel to be prepared for a multitude of situations, which include a potential shelter-in-place order," he wrote. "An order to shelter in place may be issued in any situation requiring personnel to stop movement, limiting the potential spread of the disease, enabling more effective contact tracing and facilitating cleaning team activities."

Essential items include food, water, medications, infant formula, diapers, personal hygiene items, pet supplies and means of entertainment, III MEF said on Facebook.

Marines would be informed of the order

by their unit leaders or through the AtHoc interactive warning system. The system notifies users via phone call, text message or email.

Bruce said that sheltering in place would reduce the number of potential contacts and contaminated locations.

On Friday, Marine Forces Japan imposed more stringent off-base liberty restrictions that included barring Marines from using nonmilitary public and mass transportation, and going off-base for anything except essential services. This included visiting other people's off-base homes and getting food through a drive-thru or even delivery.

It also barred Marines, dependents, Defense Department civilian employees and contractors from off-base schools and child care facilities.

The restrictions are among the strictest on Okinawa.

Pot holiday fizzles as industry braces for economic woes

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The unofficial holiday celebrating all things cannabis arrived Monday as the nation's emerging legal marijuana market braces for an economic blow from the coronavirus crisis, with many consumers reducing spending or going underground for deals.

It was supposed to be a long weekend of festivals and music culminating April 20, or 4/20, the code for marijuana's high holiday. Instead, it was reduced to an online replica because of stay-at-home orders to curb the pandemic.

Virtual parties and video chats replaced vast outdoor smoking sessions to mark the rise of legalization and cel-

brate cannabis culture. The origins of the annual celebration are believed tied to a group of Northern California high school friends, who used the code as slang for smoking pot in the early 1970s.

For businesses, 4/20 is usually their once-a-year Black Friday, when sales soar. Instead, they reported up-and-down buying and pondered an uncer-

tain future.

As for the holiday, "there's a somber feeling to this one," said Jordan Lams, CEO of Pure CA, which specializes in marijuana extracts and does business as Moxie brand products. Before the outbreak, "it was going to be the biggest 4/20 in history," Lams said.

Army pledges on-post day care changes

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Army is building a 10-year plan to improve its on-post day care services, which top service leaders told lawmakers would include major investments during the next five years.

The service plans to brief lawmakers on its strategy to “fix all of our [child development center] challenges” in the coming months, Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy and Gen. James McConville, the Army chief of staff, wrote last week in response to written questions from the Senate Armed Services Committee. The service runs 184 of the Defense Department’s more than 800 on-post day cares at its installations throughout the world.

“We are now prioritiz-

ing these [child development centers] for renovation and increased maintenance (if needed),” they wrote. “We’ve also identified those locations that need new [day care] facilities due to deterioration or increased soldier and family demand.”

The Army’s testimony submission comes as about 70% of its day cares have been forced to temporarily close by the coronavirus pandemic. The 30% of facilities now open are restricted to use only by essential staff who cannot work from home, Lt. Gen. Douglas Gabram, the service’s installations chief, said last week.

It was not immediately clear Monday how much money the Army intends to pour into the child care facilities and initiatives during the next five years. Congress authorized the ser-

vice to spend about \$50 million on child and youth services this year, but it is unclear what impact the pandemic will have on that spending.

The military services, including the Army, have faced criticism from lawmakers who have voiced concerns about long waiting lists for service members to enroll their children in day care services on bases and a lengthy process to hire civilians to work in those centers.

Sens. Mazie Hirono, D-Hawaii, and Doug Jones, D-Ala., were among the lawmakers to express concerns with the Army’s handling of its day care issues in their written questions.

Hirono questioned the decision by Army leaders to include a request for \$65 million for new child care facilities and playgrounds at Schofield Bar-

racks and Fort Shafter in her home state in the service’s unfunded priorities list instead of its annual budget submission.

“Access to safe, affordable child care is an important quality of life issue for families,” Hirono wrote.

In his questions, Jones challenged the Army’s decision to cut funding to its child and youth services programs in its 2021 budget request, despite an assessment that the service would need more child care spaces next year.

McCarthy and McConville responded that they were not able to adjust their funding request in time to update their budget submission after officials determined the service would likely see an increase in need for child services in 2021. But they promised improvements, nonetheless.

Certain crimes spiking in major cities across the US

Bloomberg

Amid empty streets and shuttered shops, crime rates in some of the biggest U.S. cities have dropped — with a few exceptions.

Car thefts and store robberies are spiking in some municipalities even as crime overall — especially violent offenses — dropped in 10 of the 20 most populated cities, more than halving in San Francisco alone, according to a Bloomberg News analysis of data from 10 major cities.

“It’s just a reflection of reduced opportunities for these kind of events,” said Daniel Nagin, a criminologist and professor of public policy at the H.J. Heinz School of Public Policy and Management at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. “In the case of murders, these often occur in public places in bars and things like that. With those kinds of activities shut down there’s less social interaction.”

Car theft is one exception, at least in some places. In New York it’s surging, up 49% for the week ended April 12 as compared to the same period a year earlier. Car theft was the only major crime to show an increase in Los Angeles, rising 11.3% for the 28 days ending April 11 from the previous period.

Burglaries are also on the rise in New York, up 26% year-to-date as compared to the same period in 2019. In Philadelphia, burglaries were down 6.7%, with residential break-ins falling 25% as more people stay home, but unoccupied businesses were hit hard, with commercial burglary rising 71%.

Robberies and burglaries dropped more dramatically in Los Angeles, perhaps because it closed non-essential businesses and told people to stay at home earlier than other cities, said Charis Kubrin, a professor of criminology at the University of California, Irvine.

Tornadoes leave at least 2 dead in the Deep South

Associated Press

HEADLAND, Ala. — Suspected tornadoes killed at least two people as severe weather blasted a wide area across the Deep South, officials said.

Jerry Oliver Williams, 61, of Henry County died when the storm struck a rural area about 11:30 p.m. Sunday, Coroner Derek Wright said Monday.

The area was under a tornado warning when winds flipped the home Williams shared with his wife and child, Wright said.

“He was in a mobile home, and the mobile home was destroyed by a tornado. He was in the wreckage of the mobile home. His wife and child were with him, and they were OK,” said Wright.

A suspected twister also resulted in one death in Marion County, Miss., officials there said. No details were immediately available, but the National Weather Service said it had received reports of large hail,

broken power poles and other damage in the area.

The deaths came as firefighters worked through storms to contain a blaze at the main music building at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. Authorities haven’t determined the cause of the fire, but it happened while strong storms with lightning were in the area.

Firefighters saved most of the instruments and uniforms belonging to Alabama’s “Million Dollar Band,” Mayor Walt Maddox said in a tweet.

The Storm Prediction Center received more than 250 reports of possible tornadoes, high winds, hail and storm damage from east Texas to south Georgia on Sunday. Teams from the National Weather Service will assess tracks to determine where tornadoes struck.

The storms hit a week after a two-day outbreak of more than 100 tornadoes that began Easter Sunday killed at least 36 people across the region.

Poland hosts scaled down service for 1943 uprising

Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland — Sirens wailed through the city and Jewish prayers were said for the heroes of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto uprising, but the annual memorial observances were mostly scaled down Sunday and moved to the internet because of the coronavirus pandemic and the need for social distancing.

Poland's chief rabbi, Michael Schudrich, said prayers at the monument dedicated to the ghetto fighters in downtown Warsaw.

Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and representatives of Jewish and Polish organizations laid wreaths on the monument. They were all wearing face masks and kept themselves at a distance from each other. President Andrzej Duda and Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski also sent wreaths for occasion.

History lectures and virtual visits to ghetto sites were offered on the internet, mainly by the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, which faces the monument to the ghetto heroes. Commemorative concerts were to be broadcast on Radio POLIN and on Poland's state radio.

Museum director Zygmunt Stepinski said that the ongoing coronavirus pandemic ultimately "has forced us to change the formula" of the annual commemorations on this 77th anniversary.

On April 19, 1943, a few hundred poorly armed Jewish fighters put up a resistance to the Nazi German army that started to "liquidate" the ghetto, sending the remaining inhabitants to the Treblinka death camp and razing their houses to the ground. The fighters held out for almost a month in what was the first city revolt of World War II. They almost all died and the Germans destroyed the ghetto.

Gunman dressed as officer goes on rampage in Canada

Associated Press

TORONTO — A gunman disguised as a police officer went on a 12-hour rampage in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia, shooting people in their homes, setting fires and killing at least 16 people, including a policewoman, in the deadliest mass shooting in the country's history.

Officials said the suspect, identified as Gabriel Wortman, 51, was among the dead in the weekend attack. Police did not provide a motive for the killings.

"Today is a devastating day for Nova Scotia and will remain etched in the minds of many for years to come," a visibly shaken Lee Bergerman, an assistant commissioner for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, told a news conference Sunday.

Police began advising resi-

dents overnight Saturday in the rural town of Portapique, about 60 miles north of Halifax, to lock their doors and stay in their basements.

Several bodies were found inside and outside one home on Portapique Beach Road, the street where the suspect lived, authorities said.

Bodies were also found at several other locations within a 30-mile area from the neighborhood where the shootings began late Saturday, and authorities believe the shooter may have targeted his first victims but then began attacking randomly. Several homes were set on fire.

Authorities said the suspected gunman wore a police uniform at one point and made his car look like a Royal Canadian Mounted Police cruiser.

"That fact that this individual had a uniform and a police car

at his disposal certainly speaks to it not being a random act," Mounted Police Chief Superintendent Chris Leather said. He said many of the victims did not know the shooter and authorities believe he acted alone.

Wortman, who owned a denture practice in the Dartmouth, near Halifax, lived part time in Portapique, according to residents.

Canada overhauled its gun-control laws after gunman Marc Lepine killed 14 women and himself at Montreal's Ecole Polytechnique college in 1989.

It is illegal to possess an unregistered handgun or any kind of rapid-fire weapon in Canada. The country also requires training, a personal risk assessment, two references, spousal notification and criminal record checks to purchase a weapon.

Israelis oppose 'emergency' government

Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — More than 2,000 Israelis took to the streets of Tel Aviv on Sunday, demonstrating against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's attempts to form an "emergency" government with his chief rival and accusing him of using the coronavirus crisis to escape prosecution on corruption charges.

Demonstrators wore face masks and largely practiced social distancing rules, as speakers criticized Netanyahu's possible partnership with rival Benny Gantz. Some held black flags, which have become the symbol of their campaign.

Gantz, who during three bitter election campaigns vowed never to sit in a government with Netanyahu due to his legal problems, announced last month he had accepted Netanyahu's suggestion to form an "emergency" government to deal with the virus crisis.

Israelis rally against Netanyahu's calls for 'emergency' government. The announcement infuriated many of Gantz's supporters and caused his Blue and White party to fracture.

"You don't fight corruption from within. If you're inside, you're part of it," said Yair Lapid, Gantz's former political partner, who withdrew

from the Blue and White alliance last month.

Netanyahu has been charged with fraud, breach of justice and accepting bribes. He has denied the charges and said that he is the victim of a hostile media and aggressive police and prosecutors.

Protesters on Sunday accused Netanyahu of exploiting the crisis to evade his looming trial and cement his lengthy rule. Citing the pandemic, Netanyahu's hand-picked justice minister delayed the prime minister's trial just two days before it was to begin until late May.

Since then, Netanyahu's coalition talks with Gantz have reportedly stalled due to demands by the prime minister to gain more control over judicial appointments and assurances that he can remain in office even if he gives up the prime minister's job in a proposed power-sharing arrangement with Gantz. Under Israeli law, public officials, with the exception of the prime minister, must resign if charged with a crime.

Demonstrators repeatedly chanted "democracy" and accused the prime minister of endangering the country's democratic institutions. "Corona equals virus in the service of a dictator," said one sign.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man's wedding ring found years later

FL FORT LAUDERDALE — Three years ago, a New York couple was enjoying a meal by the water at a South Florida restaurant when the man's wedding ring slipped off his finger, through the wooden floorboards.

Recently, Coconuts restaurant manager Ryan Krivoy decided to replace the wooden patio deck.

He found a gold coin, \$100 bills, piles of mud and a silver wedding ring with the inscription, "Mike & Lisa 08-21-15."

The restaurant's marketing manager Sasha Formica decided to post a picture of the ring on Facebook. The post was shared about 5,000 times, making its way to Mike and Lisa.

State has 5 potential disasters in a week

ME PORTLAND — A third of the state lost power because of a freak snowstorm and a powerful windstorm as residents were locked down because of the pandemic. Rivers swelled because of heavy rain.

Then an explosion ripped through a paper mill.

It all added up to an unforgettable week at the Maine Emergency Management Agency's 24-hour operations center.

"There were so many things coming our way. We were waiting for the locusts, and the tornadoes. I don't think anything could shock us at this point," said spokeswoman Susan Faloon.

Brewery brews hand sanitizer for police

GA ALBANY — A brewery in one of Georgia's communities most affected by the coronavirus is thanking

police with donations of home-brewed hand sanitizer.

The Pretoria Fields Collective donated 200 bottles of the alcohol-based sanitizer to the Albany Police Department, the Dougherty County Police Department and the Dougherty County Sheriff's Office, WALB-TV reported.

Pretoria Fields typically brews craft beer, but pivoted to producing hand sanitizer to help offset shortages during the pandemic.

Memorial to WWI vet may soon be moved

MA WORCESTER — A memorial to a Worcester teenager killed in action during World War I may soon be moved to another site in the city because it has become a hangout spot for panhandlers.

The City Council Veterans' Memorials, Parks and Recreation Committee voted to have the city relocate the Sullivan Memorial to a yet-to-be determined location, The Telegram & Gazette reported.

Pvt. Charles J. Sullivan, who was born in Worcester in 1901, enlisted in the Army in 1917 and was killed in action in France, on July 21, 1918, at age 17. He is buried in an American cemetery there.

Homeless woman arrested in truck theft

WA BELLINGHAM — A homeless woman reportedly broke into Bellingham International Airport in Washington state and stole a Horizon Airlines truck before driving off airport property in the vehicle, deputies said.

Whatcom County deputies located the 32-year-old woman with the truck before she was arrested on multiple charges including burglary, theft of a

motor vehicle and possession of a stolen vehicle, The Bellingham Herald reported.

Deputies were called to the airport after security personnel noticed an unauthorized vehicle driving on airport property, Sheriff Chief Deputy Kevin Hester said.

FBI seeks owner of ring that might offer clue

MS JACKSON — Federal law enforcement agents are seeking the original owner or purchaser of a Mississippi class ring that might hold a clue to four unsolved murders in Indiana.

The ring was recovered as part of an investigation into four unsolved murders committed in Gary, Ind., in February of 2002. Investigators do not believe the owner or purchaser of the ring is a suspect in the murders but want to speak to them.

Sgt. Nicholas Waldrip of the Indiana FBI task force investigating the unsolved murders told the Clarion Ledger that the ring was found at the scene of a 2002 murder.

Zoom virtual meeting interrupted with porn

IN INDIANAPOLIS — A virtual meeting of the Indiana Election Commission on an online video platform was disrupted with pornographic imagery.

Commission chairman Paul Okeson said the meeting was open to anyone to join. By law, meetings of government agencies must be accessible to the public. Okeson said the interruption on the Zoom video conferencing site was swiftly taken care of.

An unidentified participant took over a single screen shared among commission members, state and county election of-

ficials and used it to display a video of a man performing a solitary sexual act. The video ran for about one minute before the manager of the commission's online services removed it.

Controlled burn morphs into out of control fire

AL MOBILE — Crews worked to put out a wildfire in Alabama that started as a controlled burn.

The Alabama Forestry Commission said the fire began on 250 acres of Alabama Power property in south Mobile County as part of the company's plan to manage vegetation, WKRG-TV reported. The burn whipped out of control, however, and spread to an additional 180 acres, authorities said.

Firefighters said current conditions — especially the winds — make burning anything dangerous.

Thousands of traffic warrants suspended

NV LAS VEGAS — A court in Nevada's largest city has decided to suspend enforcement of more than a quarter of a million traffic cases until 60 days after the governor's stay-at-home directive is lifted.

The Las Vegas Justice Court made the announcement, saying the decision will affect about 270,000 cases that involve traffic infractions. Officials cited the need to curb the spread of COVID-19.

That means anyone who has a traffic warrant from the court isn't at risk of being arrested for the time being. However, once the suspension period is over, officials said those with outstanding traffic warrants will again be held accountable.

From wire reports

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Sports' plans for potential return

Most leagues gave aggressive and optimistic plans to start play within weeks, while fall sports said they plan to start on schedule. Key stakeholders confirmed, however, that they have less optimistic backup plans.

Bull Riding: Professional Bull Riders returning to action next weekend with a "closed, made-for-TV event" in Oklahoma.

College Football: Oklahoma athletic director Joe Castiglione says policymakers are looking at several models that include shortening the season or moving part or all of it to the spring.

Horse Racing: Kentucky Derby has been rescheduled to Sept. 5.

MLB: Plans include bringing all 30 teams to Arizona and playing through December, scheduling doubleheaders with seven-inning games and home run contests to settle games in extra innings.

NASCAR: A tentative schedule given to teams shows the season resuming May 24 at the Coca-Cola 600, with midweek races and doubleheaders crammed in from June to August to complete the postponed events.

NBA: Medical experts have said there almost certainly won't be any basketball until at least June. The league is reportedly considering a number of scenarios, including shortening playoff series and playing them in arenas with no fans.

NFL: Contingency plans reportedly include playing a shortened season, or playing in empty or half-full stadiums.

NHL: Plans include going directly to playoffs when play resumes, and possibly playing at neutral sites. Teams have asked about arena availability through August.

Olympics: Tokyo Games rescheduled to start July 23, 2021, though some organizers now saying there's no guarantee COVID-19 will be controlled enough to hold the massive international event.

PGA Tour: Plans on returning week of June 11 in Fort Worth, Texas, with tournament for no fans. Three of four majors have been rescheduled, starting with PGA in August.

Soccer: English Premier League has optimistic plan in place to restart June 8. German Bundesliga plans to resume in May have been threatened by government ban on public gatherings through August.

Tennis: Wimbledon has been canceled and French Open has been moved to Sept. 20.

— Associated Press

No guarantee of normalcy as leagues seek return to play

Associated Press

With no games being played, recent sports headlines have centered around hopes and dreams — namely, the uncharted path leagues and teams must navigate to return to competition in the wake of the pandemic.

Virtually all leagues talk publicly about their desire to return before summer. But behind closed doors, they are hatching different potential plans: all 30 baseball teams playing in Arizona; home run contests to decide tie games; the Stanley Cup being hoisted in an empty arena that neither team calls home; end-of-season soccer standings decided by vote; college football games in spring.

Over the past week, The Associated Press spoke to more than two dozen policymakers, coaches and players across the globe to get their assessments of plans to return from the stoppages. The conclusion: While it's critical to put optimistic restart scenarios in place, there is no certainty any of these plans will work without buy-in from politicians and an OK from players and medical experts. Underpinning it all would have to be a drastic ramp-up in testing, a vaccine or treatment breakthrough, or some other solution.

In short, the return of any sports, no matter how innovative the plan, will be risky and uncertain for the rest of this year and into 2021.

"It's not about 22 players walking onto a pitch and throwing a ball out," said FIFA Vice President Victor Montagliani.

The organizers of the Olympics were among the last to postpone their event, then among the first to set a new date — exactly 52 weeks after the original July 24 cauldron lighting had been scheduled. The decision to reschedule for a date 15 months down the

road came just before an unexpected spike in virus cases hit Japan. The worry that followed underscored the many open questions about the arc of the outbreak.

"I think everyone's probably working on multiple options. It's 'If this, then what?'" said Tim Hinchey, the CEO of USA Swimming, the sport's governing body in the United States.

Virtually all the big-time team sports are coming up with scenarios to play games with no fans in the stands.

The Washington Post reported that while the NFL is publicly committed to its usual kickoff date in September, it is looking into contingencies that include shortening the season or playing in half-full or empty stadiums.

College athletic directors have come up with a half-dozen or more scenarios for football season, including, according to Oklahoma's Joe Castiglione, a scenario in which part of the season would be played in spring. One theme gaining wide acceptance: If it's not safe enough for students to return to school or attend games, then athletes shouldn't be asked to return either. Without the millions of dollars from football, all college sports are in peril.

NASCAR, which has been holding virtual races, has given teams a tentative schedule under which the season would resume May 24 without fans.

The NHL has drawn up plans that include resuming the season this summer, going directly to the playoffs and/or playing games in empty arenas in neutral-site cities.

The PGA Tour announced a mid-June restart and meshed its schedule with the already reworked majors calendar. In a nod to the precariousness of it all, Andy Pazder, the tour's chief officer of tournaments and competition, said if events cannot be held in compliance with health regulations, then

"we will not do anything."

That's also where the NBA appears to be for now. The league that got in front of the coronavirus pandemic first, calling off games on March 11, is in a holding pattern. Most of the league's conversations center on how to resume the season, not whether to cancel it.

Major League Baseball is talking about bringing all 30 teams to Maricopa County, Ariz., for a regular season at spring training sites.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the infectious disease expert who has been calling for restraint in resuming any normal activities, offered a glimmer of hope when he suggested sports could conceivably return. He suggested no fans in arenas and constant testing for the players.

"I'm going to go four or five months without seeing my kid when it's born? I can tell you right now that's not going to happen," Ryan Zimmerman of the Nationals wrote. Zimmerman's third child is due in June.

Baseball could be a vastly different game if it returns in 2020. Some other ideas floated include wrapping up the season in December, scheduling a multitude of doubleheaders with seven-inning games and quickly deciding ties with home run derbies.

Nobody's quite sure what will happen if, despite all the precautions, an outbreak hits a team. Could one positive test eviscerate an entire season?

Right now, Montagliani said, "the paramount skillset required from us is risk management and nothing else."

Reporting by AP Sports Writers Doug Ferguson, Jenna Fryer, Rob Harris, Stephen Wade, Ronald Blum, Steve Douglas, Ben Walker, Dennis Passa, Stephen Whyno, Tim Reynolds, Brian Mahoney, Howard Fendrich, Rob Maaddi, Ralph D. Russo and Larry Lage.

Japan scientist pessimistic Olympics will occur in 2021

Associated Press

TOKYO — A Japanese professor of infectious disease says he is “very pessimistic” the postponed Tokyo Olympics can open in 15 months.

“To be honest with you, I don’t think the Olympics is likely to be held next year,” Kentaro Iwata, a professor of infectious disease at Kobe University, said Monday speaking in English on a teleconference. “Holding the Olympics needs two conditions; one, controlling COVID-19 in Japan, and controlling COVID-19 everywhere.”

Toshiro Muto, the CEO of the Tokyo organizing committee, expressed his own reservations 10 days ago. Since then, the organizing committee and the International Olympic Committee have said there is no “Plan B” other than working for the Olympics to open on July 23, 2021.

“I am very pessimistic about holding the Olympic Games next summer unless you hold

the Olympic Games in a totally different structure such as no audience, or a very limited participation,” Iwata said, speaking at a forum arranged by the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan in Tokyo.

“You have to invite so many athletes from many, many places, which is not very compatible with this COVID-19 infection that is causing a pandemic. Japan might be able to control this disease by next summer. And I wish we could. But I don’t think that will happen everywhere on earth.”

Japan was spared during the initial stage of the coronavirus outbreak. But cases are now spiking, particularly in Tokyo and other large cities.

Devi Sridhar, professor of Global Health at the University of Edinburgh, told the BBC that the Olympics may hinge on finding a vaccine.

“If we do get a vaccine within the next year, then actually I think that (Olympics) is realistic,” she said.

Bryon repeats iRacing win

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Nobody did anything to get fired or lose a sponsor in this week’s edition of NASCAR virtual racing.

William Byron won his second consecutive NASCAR virtual race on Sunday by holding off Timmy Hill — the driver who moved him out of the way to win an earlier iRacing event — in a race low on dramatics.

Matt DiBenedetto was parked after twice crashing at virtual Richmond Raceway with Ryan Preece, the second incident clearly intentional. It triggered a Twitter spat between the two, with DiBenedetto demanding Preece’s address to go to his house to fight and Preece replying he’d give it to him if DiBenedetto showed up in the giraffe costume he wore while competing Sunday.

Jimmie Johnson manually disconnected his simulator

rather than wait out late-race repairs, and Kevin Harvick ate his lunch from the seat of his rig as he was in a 20-minute hold for repairs.

But that was about it in terms of controversy on a day NASCAR desperately needed a drama-free event.

Kyle Larson was fired this week for using a racial slur during a non-NASCAR sanctioned iRacing event last Sunday night, and drivers and fans are showing signs of losing some of the excitement that initially engulfed this virtual racing league.

Byron, 22 and in his third Cup season driving for Hendrick Motorsports, is an avid iRacer who learned to drive a stock car through the platform.

“I wasn’t in a racing family growing up and obviously this was my avenue to cut my teeth,” Byron said. “I’m very thankful for what it has done for me.”

College sports cuts may become catalyst for a paradigm shift

Associated Press

College sports programs are already being cut and more are likely on the chopping block.

The coronavirus pandemic has triggered fears of an economic meltdown on campuses around the country. The cancellation of the NCAA men’s basketball tournament cost schools \$375 million and more losses are expected, especially if football season is disrupted in the fall.

In tough times, athletic administrators often drop sports programs to save money. In the past few weeks, Old Dominion said it will drop wrestling and Cincinnati will no longer have men’s soccer. Warnings of tough times ahead have come from all over college athletics, even some of the wealthiest Power Five schools.

“To say it’s not going to have any economic impact — that, I would say, would be grossly naive,” said Oklahoma athletic director Joe Castiglione, who oversees a program that had \$148 million in operating revenue in 2017-18 and boasts of 20 straight years of balanced budgets.

“We’re just hoping to minimize it,” he said.

Paving the way for more cuts to come, the commissioners of five Bowl Subdivision conferences have asked the NCAA to waive over the next four years a slew of requirements for Division I membership, including the minimum number (16) of sports a school must sponsor.

Some observers see the coming crisis as a chance for schools to consider radical changes to how athletic departments are run or for new development paths to emerge for young athletes.

“Budgets reflect our values,” said Arne Duncan, a former U.S. education secretary and now co-chair of the Knight

Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics. “I think we’ll see now whether in a time of cut-backs, what gets prioritized. Is it the interest of adults and unbelievably high salaries? Or is it the interest of student-athletes and preserving their chance to compete and to put academics first?”

A.J. Maestas, founder of sports analytics consulting firm Navigate Research, said “a couple hundred” sports programs were cut during the economic downturn after the 2008 financial crisis. Most programs don’t break even and he expects more cuts this time, too.

Nancy Zimpher, former chancellor of the State University of New York and a member of the Knight Commission, said cutting sports programs is shortsighted when colleges could be facing a decrease in overall enrollment.

David Ridpath, a former NCAA compliance director and professor of sports business at Ohio University, said he fears schools will use the economic crisis as an excuse to make program cuts they had already been pondering. He also wonders if fewer opportunities for athletes in non-revenue college sports provides a catalyst to sever some of the ties between amateur athletics and higher education.

In his book, “Alternative Models of Sports Development in America,” Ridpath makes the case that the U.S. should move toward a European-style academy system. Elite young athletes develop their games and receive an education, but the two are not tethered.

“My argument has always been schools should not be a primary source of elite development,” Ridpath said. “We need to have other models for those elite athletes to be taken care of.”