

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Navy ordered to destroy Iranian gunboats

Associated Press

President Donald Trump said Wednesday that he has ordered the Navy to “shoot down and destroy” any Iranian gunboats that harass U.S. ships, a directive that comes a week after the Navy reported that a group of Iranian boats made “dangerous and harassing approaches” to American vessels in the Persian Gulf.

Trump did not cite a specific Iranian provocation in his tweet or provide details. Senior Pentagon officials gave no indication that Trump had directed a fundamental change in military policy on Iran.

“The president issued an important warning to the Iranians,” David Norquist, the deputy secretary of defense, said at a Pentagon news conference when he was asked about Trump’s tweet. “What he was emphasizing is, all of our ships retain the right of self-defense.” He called the tweet “a very useful thing.”

Air Force Gen. John Hyten, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that he thinks the Iranians under-

stand what Trump meant. He said the Navy also understands that if an Iranian on a gunboat “has a gun and you point it at me,” that can be interpreted as an expression of hostile intent that may be answered with U.S. force.

In the tweet, Trump said, “I have instructed the United States Navy to shoot down and destroy any and all Iranian gunboats if they harass our ships at sea.”

Asked whether the tweet means that a repeat of last week’s incident in the Gulf would require a lethal U.S. response, Hyten said, “I would have to be the captain of the ship in order to make that determination.” Hyten said that the nature of the response “depends on the situation and what the captain sees.”

Last Wednesday, the U.S. Navy said that Revolutionary Guard vessels repeatedly crossed the bows and sterns of several American ships at close range and high speed in the northern Gulf. The American vessels included the USS Paul Hamilton, a Navy destroyer and the USS Lewis B. Puller, a ship

that serves as an afloat landing base. The ships were operating with U.S. Army Apache attack helicopters in international waters, the statement said.

Gen. Abolfazl Shekarchi, a spokesman for Iran’s armed forces, accused Trump of “bullying” and said that the American president should focus on taking care of U.S. service members infected with the coronavirus. The U.S. military had more than 2,600 confirmed cases of coronavirus as of last week, and at least two service members have succumbed to COVID-19, the disease the virus causes.

“Today, Americans must do their best to save those troops who are infected with coronavirus instead of bullying others,” Shekarchi said, according to Iran’s semi-official news agency ISNA.

Shortly before Trump’s tweet, Iran’s Revolutionary Guard said that it had put the Islamic Republic’s first military satellite into orbit, dramatically unveiling what experts described as a secret space program. That launch raised concerns among experts about

whether the technology could be used to help Iran develop intercontinental ballistic missiles. It currently has short- and intermediate-range missiles.

Hyten told reporters that the Iranian payload “went a very long way.” He said that it was still too early to tell whether the launch had successfully placed a satellite into orbit.

“This is just another example of Iranian malign behavior,” Hyten said.

U.S. Navy ships and Iranian Guard naval vessels occasionally have encounters in the Gulf that the U.S. calls unprofessional, but they rarely escalate or include an exchange of gunfire. Tehran views the heavy presence of American forces there as a security threat.

During last Wednesday’s incident in the Gulf, the U.S. Navy said that the 11 Iranian gunboats’ “dangerous and provocative actions increased the risk of miscalculation and collision ... and were not in accordance with the obligation under international law to act with due regard for the safety of other vessels in the area.”

## Marines cancel fitness test requirements

BY JAMES BOLINGER

Stars and Stripes

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan — The Marine Corps is nixing physical fitness test requirements for the first half of this year due to coronavirus prevention guidelines.

Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger announced the change in a tweet Tuesday afternoon. The service’s physical fitness testing season runs

through June 30, after which a six-month period for the combat fitness test begins.

“Our fitness to fight remains a priority, and I expect each of us to continue to maintain our fighting condition,” he wrote in the tweet.

The service has directed Marines to practice social distancing, that is, maintain a minimum 6 feet between individuals to the maximum extent possible to prevent the virus’ spread.

The events include a 3-mile run, pushups or pullups and crunches or a plank pose. If a Marine chooses to perform crunches, a fellow Marine is needed to hold his or her feet during the exercise.

Berger’s tweet said that more information regarding the cancellation would be released service-wide as a Marine administrative message.

The Combat Fitness Test gauges a Marine’s physical

ability to perform a broad spectrum of combat-related tasks, including a lifting a 30-pound ammo can above one’s head a minimum of 67 times in two minutes, a fireman’s carry and a buddy drag.

The Marine Corps has not released any information about postponing or canceling the Combat Fitness Test.

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# Navy ships sail near South China Sea hotspot

BY WYATT OLSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

A U.S. Navy amphibious assault ship and guided-missile cruiser sailed through the contested South China Sea on Tuesday, continuing the U.S. pushback on China's broad claims of sovereignty over those waters.

Satellite images provided by the European Union through the EO Browser service indicated that the amphibious USS America was within 60 nautical miles of the West Capella, a vessel exploring for underwater oil reserves for Malaysia, Radio Free Asia reported Tuesday.

Chinese ships are also surveying near and within Malaysia's exclusive economic zone, according to recent media reports.

A U.S. Indo-Pacific Command spokeswoman confirmed

that the America and cruiser USS Bunker Hill were in the sea on Tuesday.

"Through our continued operational presence in the South China Sea, we are working with our allies and partners to promote freedom of navigation and overflight, and the international principles that underpin security and prosperity for the Indo-Pacific," Lt. Cmdr. Nicole Schwegman said in a statement.

China claims sovereignty over much of the South China Sea, an assertion disputed by other Southeast Asian nations, such as Vietnam, Philippines, Brunei and Malaysia.

China has sought to bolster its claim by building up and militarizing tiny land features and by blanketing the sea with military, militia and commercial vessels.

Earlier this month, Beijing

named two new administrative districts encompassing the disputed Spratly and Pratacel islands, issuing a map that christened all islands and reefs within the districts with Chinese names. Vietnam, which has ongoing claims in the Paracels, responded with a stern rebuke.

The Navy's freedom-of-navigation operations have been the Defense Department's primary means of countering China's claims of exclusive right of access to disputed archipelagos.

Compared to other claimant nations, China carries out by far the most surveys throughout the South China Sea, including forays into the exclusive economic zones of other countries, according to the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, maintained by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a District of Columbia think

tank.

Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, nations are required to seek permission to conduct marine scientific search within another nation's exclusive economic zone, which extends roughly 200 nautical miles from its coast.

In many cases, however, China has not requested such permission.

"The most likely explanation is that the surveys were military in nature and therefore not governed by [the convention]," the initiative said in an online post Thursday. "If so, this suggests a double standard in which Beijing demands that other states seek permission for military surveys in its [exclusive economic zone] while not requiring its vessels to do the same abroad."

# Airmen recount tough calls on Iranian missile strike

BY CHAD GARLAND  
*Stars and Stripes*

With little advanced warning of an Iranian ballistic missile attack in early January, commanders at al Asad Air Base in Iraq had to decide who would stay — possibly to die — and who would be evacuated to carry on operations, a new Air Force report shows.

"I watched as commanders made life or death decisions based on little information and a whole lot of gut," said Capt. Adella Ramos, a flight commander and one of dozens of airmen whose firsthand accounts of the night of Jan. 7 into Jan. 8 were included in the 36-page report released Tuesday by U.S. Air Forces Central Command.

No Americans died in the strikes, which hit al Asad and an air base in Irbil, the capital of northern Iraq's Kurdish region, but more than 100 suffered brain injuries.

U.S. officials have said that they believed the attacks were intended to cause maximum casualties and damage, and the military has since deployed Patriot missile batteries to both locations to shoot down incoming missiles.

Warnings that the retaliatory strike was imminent came four days after a U.S. drone strike killed Iran's Qassem Soleimani, an influential general, along with

the head of an Iran-backed Iraqi militia outside Baghdad's international airport on Jan. 3. The intelligence, which came at about 8 p.m., said an "attack window" was expected from 11 p.m. to 1:30 a.m., some airmen recalled.

The 160-member 443rd Air Expeditionary Squadron at al Asad was split in half, with 80 sent to safety, recounted squadron commander Lt. Col. Staci Coleman.

"I was being forced to gamble with my members' lives by something I couldn't control," Coleman said. "I honestly thought anyone remaining behind would perish ... and it made me feel sick and helpless."

The accounts detail the tough decisions leaders had to make in the hours before the first volley struck, and how they endured the fear and uncertainty as they hunkered down in bunkers or looked around the base for casualties and damage.

Several turned to their religious faith, thought of family and sought comfort from their friends in what they feared were their last moments.

At bases elsewhere, some airmen scrambled to evacuate personnel minutes before the alert announced "incoming," while others maneuvered some 20 helicopters onto a landing zone "like jigsaw pieces" as the aircraft ferried evacuees to safety.

Coleman was settled into a bunker at al

Asad when the first of several volleys hit.

"The ground shook with a force impossible to put into words," she recalled. "The blast waves could be felt throughout the entire body."

After the third wave, she was sure they'd live, if the bunker didn't take a direct hit, but she remained concerned about airmen outside the bunker and an airfield operations team in a separate bunker.

The first missile struck about 100 meters from a team of security forces airmen, one account said. More "lit up the night sky with every impact." At one point, the team helped a group of soldiers escape from a damaged guard tower where flames were blocking the entrance.

The squadron's director of operations, Maj. Johnathan Jordan, tried to reassure the airmen with him who had been evacuated from the base. He cracked jokes and talked though their "anger of not being with those we left behind," while he internally wrestled with the possibility of having to identify the bodies of friends and lay them to rest.

Eventually, back at al Asad, a knock came at the door of Coleman's bunker and security forces airmen reported no casualties — "a miracle," she said.



# First US service member to get virus tells of his, family's ordeal

BY KIM GAMEL  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP CARROLL, South Korea — Army Spc. Deontae Chappel, the first U.S. service member to test positive for the coronavirus, was “shocked” but not overly worried when he found out he had the respiratory disease in late February.

But then the 23-year-old network systems clerk learned his wife and toddler also had been infected and would be joining him in a hospital isolation unit on Camp Humphreys, the main U.S. military base in South Korea.

“The saddest thing throughout the entire process was knowing that my wife and daughter caught it. If it was just me, I would say, ‘OK I’m going to prevail,’” Chappel said Tuesday in his first interview since being discharged from medical care.

“But hearing my wife and daughter have it, that’s when it got surreal for me and a little scary,” he told *Stars and Stripes*.

Chappel, who is assigned to Materiel Support Command – Korea under the 19th Expeditionary Sustainment Command, and his family were cleared of the virus on April 15, ending a nearly two-month ordeal.

During the interview, he confirmed for the first time that his 1½-year-old daughter Alaina also tested positive.

He said she never exhibited any symptoms and “was just as happy and playful as usual throughout the whole situation.”

Chappel said his wife and daughter had been cleared of the virus earlier, but they all had to

remain in home quarantine until he could meet the USFK requirement of two consecutive negative tests separated by 24 hours.

He said his symptoms disappeared after the first week in the hospital, but he continued to test positive with daily swabs — an unpleasant experience that he said felt like it was piercing his brain.

“The tests were fluctuating between positive and negative the entire time,” he said.

“Luckily my daughter and my wife, they received both their double negatives even before we left Camp Humphreys, so that was a blessing to not have to worry about them,” he added.

USFK command surgeon Dr. Clint Murray, an Army colonel and infectious diseases specialist, said Chappel remained in isolation 49 days because his tests kept coming back negative or inconclusive.

“He is a unique case that we are continuing to research and analyze as he could provide some valuable data to similar patients who’ve spent more time than others in isolation,” Murray said Wednesday in an email.

Much remains unknown about the highly contagious virus, which has infected more than 2.5 million people and killed more than 177,000 globally since it first appeared in China late last year, according to Johns Hopkins University.

Chappel still doesn’t know how he contracted the coronavirus, although he is stationed at Camp Carroll and lives in an apartment building outside the base in the southeastern city of Waegwan, near the epicenter of the pandemic in South Korea.

## 3 soldiers punished for sneaking off base

BY KIM GAMEL  
*Stars and Stripes*

SEOUL, South Korea — Three U.S. soldiers with a military police battalion were punished for sneaking off base and returning through a hole in the fence in violation of restrictions aimed at preventing the spread of the coronavirus, the military said Wednesday.

The soldiers were all assigned to the 94th Military Police Battalion, 19th Expeditionary Sustainment Command, at Camp Walker in the southeastern city of Daegu, according to the Eighth Army.

Two privates, caught visiting an off-post bar, were reduced in rank and must forfeit \$866 in pay for two months, said command notices posted on social media. They also received 45 days restriction and extra duty.

They also were accused of “entering post through a hole in the installation’s fence,” violating a ban on nonessential travel, making false official statements and dereliction of duty for not reporting the hole.

A private first class received the same punishments, but the military said only that he exited Camp Walker for an unauthorized purpose, without specifying what that was.

The soldier also was accused of returning to post through the hole and “soliciting others to disobey orders,” it added.

The military has published the punishments as a warning to others not to violate restrictions on off-base travel and social activities in a bid to keep the virus outside the gates.

An American contractor based on Camp Humphreys and another civilian working for U.S. Forces Korea at Camp Casey also have been slapped with a two-year ban from bases in South Korea after they went to neighborhood bars in separate incidents.

## 9 from the Roosevelt in hospital with virus

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The USS Theodore Roosevelt has nine sailors now hospitalized with coronavirus symptoms, the Navy announced Tuesday, as positive cases of the illness increased to more than 700 among the crew.

However, none of the sailors being treated at the U.S. Naval Hospital Guam are in the intensive care unit.

As of Tuesday, 94% of the Roosevelt’s crew has been tested for the coronavirus as the ship nears a month since it docked in Guam due to the out-

break aboard the ship. About 710 sailors have tested positive, with 42 sailors now recovered from the virus, according to the Navy. About 3,872 crewmembers have received a negative test result.

Most of the aircraft carrier’s crew — 4,158 sailors of about 4,800 — has been transferred from the ship to Guam.

Overall, the Navy said there are 999 current cases of the virus within its military personnel as of Tuesday. The service has had a total of 1,252 coronavirus cases among its sailors, including Roosevelt crewmember Chief Petty Officer Charles Robert Thacker Jr.,

41, who died April 13.

The Roosevelt has been in port in Guam since March 27 after the outbreak aboard the nuclear-powered carrier forced the ship to divert from its scheduled deployment to the island.

The Roosevelt’s former commander, Capt. Brett Crozier, raised alarms about the outbreak with an emailed letter to other Navy officers requesting assistance for his crew as they battled the virus. Crozier, who also contracted the virus, was fired April 2 by then acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly two days after the letter was leaked to the media.

# Trump order to bar new green cards, not temporary visas

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump announced what he described as a “temporary suspension of immigration into the United States.” But an executive order he was expected to sign Wednesday to implement the change would bar only those seeking permanent residency, not temporary workers.

“I will be signing my Executive Order prohibiting immigration into our Country today,” Trump tweeted Wednesday.

The president said Tuesday he would put a 60-day pause on the issuance of green cards in an effort to limit competition for jobs in a U.S. economy wrecked by the coronavirus. The order would include “certain exemptions,” but he declined to outline them, noting that the order was still being crafted.

“By pausing immigration, we’ll help put unemployed Americans first in line for jobs as America reopens, so important,” Trump said at the White House. “It would be wrong and unjust for Americans laid off by the virus to be replaced with new immigrant labor flown in from abroad.”

An administration official familiar with the plans, however,

said that the order will apply to foreigners seeking employment-based green cards and relatives of green card holders who are not citizens. Americans wishing to bring immediate family will still be able to do so, according to the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity before the plan was announced.

By limiting his immigration measure to green cards, Trump was leaving hundreds of thousands of foreign workers granted non-immigrant visas each year untouched, including farm workers, health care workers and software programmers. The Migration Policy Institute, a nonpartisan think tank, estimated that some 110,000 green cards could be delayed during a two-month pause. Trump said that he would consider extending the restrictions, depending on economic conditions at the time.

Trump has long advocated restrictions on both legal and illegal immigration and has raised concerns for years about foreigners competing with American citizens for jobs. But he denied that he was using the virus to make good on a long-standing campaign promise as he seeks reelection.

# Congress set to pass \$483B aid package

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Congress is sprinting to approve the next coronavirus aid package, a \$483 billion deal backed by the White House to replenish a small business payroll fund and pump more money into hospitals and testing programs.

President Donald Trump is urging swift passage this week. The Senate approved the bill Tuesday and the House planned a vote for Thursday.

The bipartisan bill, Washington’s fourth in response to the crisis, is not expected to be the last as lawmakers take unprecedented steps to confront the virus and prop up communities nationwide amid the health crisis.

Most of the funding, \$331 billion, would go to boost a small-business payroll loan program that ran out of money last week. There would be \$100 billion for health care, with \$75 billion to hospitals and \$25 billion to boost testing for the virus, a key step in building the confidence required to reopen state economies. There is \$60 billion for small business loans and grants.

What started as a Trump administration effort with Republicans to bolster the government’s small business Paycheck Protection Program quickly doubled in size, second only to the nearly \$2 trillion coronavirus rescue package that became law last month.

As negotiations dragged on,

Democratic demands for additional funds for hospitals and virus testing in the states became more pressing, and eventually gained support from Republicans.

Of the \$25 billion for increased testing efforts, at least \$11 billion goes to state and tribal governments to detect and track new infections. The rest will help fund federal research into new coronavirus testing options.

As announced Tuesday, the centerpiece of the deal remains the small business payroll program. It provides forgivable loans so that shops can continue paying workers while businesses remain closed for social distancing and stay-at-home orders.

Launched just weeks ago, the paycheck program quickly reached its lending limit after approving nearly 1.7 million loans. That left thousands of small businesses in limbo as they sought help.

Missing from the package, however, was extra funding for state and local governments staring down budget holes and desperate to avert furloughs and layoffs of workers needed to keep communities running.

Trump said that he was open to including fiscal relief for state and local government — Democrats had wanted such funding for the current bill — in a subsequent virus aid package, along with infrastructure projects

# NY governor: Hospital ship no longer needed

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A Navy hospital ship deployed to New York City to help fight the coronavirus outbreak is no longer needed, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said Tuesday, expressing confidence that stresses on the hospital system are easing.

Cuomo said after meeting with President Donald Trump that the USNS Comfort was helpful, but could now be sent elsewhere after being docked for weeks off

of Manhattan.

At an evening press conference, Cuomo said that having the ship had been worthwhile, even as the need for it didn’t reach the levels that had been projected.

“I believe Comfort not only brought comfort, but also saved lives,” Cuomo said.

Trump said at his Tuesday briefing that he asked Cuomo if “we could bring the Comfort back to its base in Virginia so that we could have it in other locations.” Trump

said that they would bring the ship back soon.

The Navy ship arrived March 30 as state and city officials scrambled to add hospital beds to prepare for a potentially catastrophic surge in COVID-19 cases.

But hospitalization levels appeared to have peaked recently amid strict stay-at-home restrictions.

The Comfort has treated 179 patients, with 56 on board Tuesday.



# Southern states largely go alone on reopening

Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. — Governors in 17 states have committed to regional coordination to reopen their economies during the coronavirus outbreak — but none are in the South, where leaders are going it alone, just as they did in imposing restrictions.

As questions about when and how to ease virus control measures becomes increasingly politically charged, governors in the Deep South have resisted any appearance of synchronization, instead driving home their message that each state must make its own decision.

Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp plans to have many of his state's businesses up and running again as soon as Friday. Fellow Republican Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee announced that most businesses will begin resuming operations as soon as next week.

Some other Republican leaders were taking smaller steps, like reopening their beaches. In the virus hot spot of Louisiana, Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards was also taking a more cautious approach, announcing that he'll first allow some non-emergency medical procedures to resume next week.

## Alabama

MONTGOMERY — A group of protesters gathered outside the Alabama Capitol on Tuesday as Gov. Kay Ivey said that she intends to keep a stay-at-home order in place through April, striking a measured approach as some Southern states have pushed to quickly reopen.

Ivey intends to keep a stay-at-home order active through April 30 and will decide next week on what can reopen, saying that the decisions will be driven by data amid public safety concerns as the global pandemic continues.

State Health Officer Scott Harris said that the state hasn't quite met a White House recommendation of 14 days of declining cases before proceeding to an additional phase of reopening as the global pan-

demic continues.

About 100 protesters gathered outside the Capitol on Tuesday for what was supposed to be a "driving protest" around the complex to urge a reopening of the state. Drivers, carrying American flags and signs, circled the complex. Some demonstrators got out of their cars as Montgomery police ticketed drivers for honking and closed the street in front of the Capitol.

## Alaska

JUNEAU — Gov. Mike Dunleavy's administration announced plans to begin allowing the limited reopening of restaurants, retail stores and other businesses this week that were shut down amid coronavirus concerns.

Starting Friday, hair and nail salons, restaurants, retail outlets and some other businesses that fell under the category of nonessential will be allowed to reopen, with limited services. Bars, theaters, bowling alleys and bingo halls will not be allowed to reopen yet, the state's health commissioner, Adam Crum, said Tuesday.

Under the plan, restaurants, which have been allowed to do takeout and deliveries, will be able to resume dine-in service. But restaurants will be limited to 25% capacity inside, with 10 feet between tables and only household members allowed at a table, Crum said. Limits will also be placed on outdoor seating. Crum said that the state will continue to encourage takeout options.

## Washington, D.C.

Cybercriminals are taking advantage of the pandemic, including hackers who target hospitals and medical research institutions that are studying the coronavirus, the head of the FBI's cyber division said Tuesday.

The FBI has received thousands of complaints regarding scams and frauds related to the virus, FBI Assistant Director Matt Gorham said in a statement responding to queries

from The Associated Press.

The FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center has received more than 3,600 complaints regarding coronavirus scams, he said.

This uptick gives the FBI an additional set of investigations to tackle at a time when its agents are already busy trying to combat economic espionage and ward off election interference.

The Justice Department has made it a priority to go after a broad variety of crimes related to the coronavirus outbreak, including cyber crimes.

## Florida

GAINESVILLE — A county clerk's office in north Florida is giving a second chance to couples whose wedding plans were canceled or postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Alachua County Clerk of Court office will host drive-thru wedding ceremonies outside the courthouse on the evening of April 30.

The ceremonies are set to begin at 5 p.m., and anyone interested in participating is being asked to call for an appointment, the Gainesville Sun reported. The couples should arrive at the location about 15 minutes before their scheduled ceremony. The ceremony costs \$30 and is payable by cash or credit card.

## Hawaii

HILO — Daily arrests on Hawaii's Big Island have plunged 33% since the governor issued a stay-at-home order because of the coronavirus pandemic, the Hawaii County Police Department said.

Hawaii Police Chief Paul Ferreira confirmed the decrease in arrests during the period after Democratic Gov. David Ige's emergency proclamation took effect March 25, The Hawaii Tribune-Herald reported Monday. The decrease has various explanations, including an expanded use of citations by officers to deal with some crimes, Ferreira said.

Arrests for bench warrants

would likely result in release and court dates later in the year, Ferreira said.

## Idaho

BOISE — The Idaho Endowment Fund that distributes money to public schools and other entities lost \$255 million and dropped nearly 11% in value in March due to the economic problems caused by the coronavirus, officials said Tuesday.

Investments Manager Chris Anton told Republican Gov. Brad Little and other members of the Idaho Land Board that the fund is now worth about \$2.1 billion, down over 15% since Jan. 1.

Despite the drop in value, Anton said that the fund is in good shape and has enough reserves to make distributions to schools and other beneficiaries for at least five years.

## Nevada

CARSON CITY — Nevada Gov. Steve Sisolak announced Tuesday that he's extending the closure of schools until the end of the school year and is not close to relaxing restrictions aimed to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

The Democratic governor and state experts said Tuesday that Nevada would take a gradual approach to easing business closures and stay-at-home rules, without giving any expected date for how soon that might occur. Sisolak also said it was too soon to say whether schools would remain closed for the start of the new school year in the fall.

Nevada has had fewer cases and deaths than statistical models had predicted, and it appears to be reaching a plateau. The number of people hospitalized with the disease has started to fall, Sisolak and officials said at a news conference in Carson City. But the state still needs to see at least a two-week trend of drops in the number of hospitalizations and people testing positive for the disease before the state could start to inch open some restrictions.



# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## New owner to reopen Fat Boy restaurant

**ME** BRUNSWICK — A landmark fast-food drive-in restaurant in Maine that was on the market for nearly a year and a half was sold.

Longtime owners Jeanne and Ken Burton have been running the Fat Boy in Brunswick since the 1980s, taking over for Ken's father. The business was sold to local restaurateur Mike Jerome, the Times Record reported.

Jerome plans to open the restaurant with a limited menu. Fat Boy is in a unique position to reopen during the COVID-19 pandemic, he said, because a drive-in diner follows social distancing practices by design.

Fat Boy grilled up its first burger in 1955, across the road from the former Brunswick Naval Air Station.

## Gym owner will fight charge for staying open

**VA** ROANOKE — The owner of a fitness center in Virginia said he will fight a misdemeanor charge that's been filed against him for defying the state's order for nonessential businesses to close.

The Roanoke Times reported that Thomas Milton, owner of Titan Fit, was cited by Roanoke police.

Gov. Ralph Northam's order is in effect until May 8. It's designed to protect against the spread of the coronavirus.

Greg Phillips, Milton's attorney, signaled that Milton would argue the Northam exceeded his authority. He said that Titan Fit is following the same rules for social distancing and cleaning that are set by businesses that have been allowed to remain open.

## Tornado throws portable building into pickup

**FL** OCALA — A tornado touched down in north Florida on Monday, tossing a portable building being hauled by a semitrailer into a nearby pickup truck, authorities said.

The semi and pickup were both traveling south on I-75 when the cyclone lifted the 36-foot structure off a trailer and sent it flying into the rear of the pickup, officials said. The small building continued over the northbound lanes and crashed into multiple pieces on a grassy shoulder.

The pickup's driver sustained minor injuries.

## Police: 4 street racers arrested in crackdown

**OR** PORTLAND — Portland police arrested four drivers as part of the latest crackdown on street racing.

Kevin Garcia, Jaren Jacobsen and Mystar Russell were arrested on suspicion of reckless driving and reckless endangering, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.

A 17-year-old boy was also arrested on suspicion of reckless driving, police said.

The arrests come as racers take advantage of reduced traffic amid the coronavirus pandemic, and warmer weather.

Police had announced plans to partner with other law enforcement agencies after weekend reports of dozens of racers blocking traffic and cars spinning circles across the Fremont Bridge.

The effort in North and Northeast Portland resulted in 12 traffic stops and two dozen as many citations — both for street racing and other illegal driving, police said.

## Police arrest driver sought in hit-and-run

**NJ** MILLVILLE — A woman who authorities said purposely struck and seriously injured another woman with a car following a dispute at a southern New Jersey apartment complex last year was captured.

Deszarrae Hannah, 29, of Millville faces numerous counts, including attempted homicide and aggravated assault, that stem from an April 23, 2019, incident at the Oakview Apartments in Millville. Authorities said she fought with a woman there that night and struck her over the head with a bottle, then later encountered the woman's 24-year-old cousin in the complex's parking lot.

Hannah struck the cousin with a car, pinning her between two vehicles, authorities said. The cousin suffered a crushed pelvis and had to have a portion of her left leg amputated.

Hannah drove off and later abandoned the car, removing the license plate and front bumper, authorities have said.

## Suspect arrested for explosive under vehicle

**WA** SEATTLE — One person was arrested in Washington state for attempting to explode a device under a police vehicle.

There were no injuries after a suspicious device was found underneath a Lynnwood Police Department pickup in the department's parking lot, KOMO-TV reported.

The person suspected of leaving the device tried to drive away from the scene, police said.

A police sergeant chased the suspect, who was then taken into custody, authorities said.

Bomb squad technicians told

Lynnwood police it appeared the person attempted to detonate the device, authorities said.

## Steeple catches fire after lightning strike

**SC** CHARLESTON — A Charleston church was largely undamaged after an apparent lightning strike caused a fire in its steeple.

WCIV-TV reported firefighters responded to smoke seen coming from the 100-foot steeple of Second Presbyterian Church.

Witnesses in the area saw lightning strike near the building about 20 minutes prior to the fire, officials said. After assessing the damage, investigators said it was consistent with a lightning strike.

Senior Pastor Rev. Cress Darwin said the church interior is undamaged.

## 2 charged in connection with ATM fraud scheme

**RI** PROVIDENCE — Two men were charged with defrauding banks in Rhode Island and Massachusetts out of \$150,000 through ATM skimming schemes, federal prosecutors in Rhode Island said.

Rafael Pedro Dutra DaSilva, 29, of Miami, and Guilherme Mendes Altafin, 28, of Sao Paulo, Brazil, allegedly accessed accounts at nearly a dozen bank branches with the use of gift and credit cards activated with stolen personal identifying information, prosecutors said in a release.

Altafin was ordered detained last week by U.S. District Court Magistrate Judge Lincoln Almond on bank fraud and access device fraud charges.

DaSilva remains in custody in Massachusetts.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

# Hybrid players highly valued in NFL Draft

Associated Press

The NFL is embracing dexterity for the first time since the 1960s, when expanded rosters and the age of specialization ushered out the last of the great two-way players such as Chuck Bednarik and Les Richter.

For much of the last half-century, players who didn't fit the mold were essentially taunted as "tweeners." Now, they're hailed as hybrids.

Panthers star running back Christian McCaffrey is handsomely compensated for his versatility, and Clemson star safety Isaiah Simmons is highly coveted for his all-purpose potential.

"Everybody's looking for people who can play multiple positions or do multiple things," said long-time talent evaluation expert Gil Brandt, a Pro Foot-

ball Hall of Famer.

Versatility has become its own specialty.

"It's never been more important," NFL Draft analyst Daniel Jeremiah said.

Jeremiah sees the NFL following the same path the NBA took over the last decade or so as athleticism and rule changes revolutionized play. That blurred traditional positions and produced a more exciting style of play in which today's centers are yesterday's forwards, if not sharp-shooting 7-footers running the floor.

"We use the phrase in scouting, we talk about 'positionless' players, and that's where it's headed, where you're not going to be labeling these guys anymore as a receiver or running back. No, they're offensive weapons," Jeremiah said.

He pointed to the likes of Austin Ekeler and McCaffrey, running backs whose hands are as fabulous as their feet, and to 49ers wideout Deebo Samuel, who averaged a jaw-dropping 17 yards per carry in the playoffs, including three runs for 53 yards in the Super Bowl.

"We saw a skill in Deebo, not only in being a traditional receiver but also just a guy who you want the ball in his hands," 49ers GM John Lynch said. "I think perhaps part of the trickle up that has come from the colleges and such has opened a lot of people's minds up to being creative."

Added Jeremiah: "That's where the value is. And then defensively, you've got to find a way to match up with those."

Enter the likes of Chargers safety Derwin James and

Clemson's Simmons, players whose versatility, Jeremiah said, "allows you to keep your guys on the field and not get manipulated where they can sub, get you in a look, crank the tempo, isolate the guy that's out of position and go at him."

Defenders such as Simmons, LSU's Patrick Queen, Wisconsin's Zack Baun and Oklahoma's Kenneth Murray won't be labeled as linebackers anymore but as hybrids for their ability to rush the passer, cover the deep ball and mirror tight ends and running backs.

"It allows you to disguise your looks defensively, allows you to confuse quarterbacks and allows you to match up with the athletes you're going to see," Jeremiah said. "So those guys have never been more valuable."

# Gronkowski comes out of retirement, joins Brady

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Four-time All Pro tight end Rob Gronkowski is back in the NFL, reunited with quarterback Tom Brady.

Brady's new team, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, completed a trade for the retired New England star, sending a fourth-round pick in this week's draft — No. 139 overall — to the Patriots for Gronkowski and a seventh-round selection (No. 241).

"Rob Gronkowski is one of the best tight ends in NFL history and he plays the game with the type of passion and desire that sets him apart," Bucs general manager Jason Licht said.

"Rob has played his entire career alongside Tom Brady, and their accomplishments speak for themselves. Together they have developed the type of chemistry on and off the field that is crucial to success," Licht added. "Rob combines elite-level skills as both a receiver and blocker, but what really makes him special is the fact that he's a proven winner

who brings that championship mindset and work ethic."

Brady, a six-time Super Bowl champion with the Patriots, signed a two-year, \$50 million contract with the Bucs in free agency last month.

Gronkowski was one of the league's most dominant tight ends when he walked away from the game in March 2019. He was part of teams that won nine division titles, appeared in eight AFC championship games and won three NFL titles in nine seasons.

Gronkowski, who turns 31 on May 14, has one year left on his contract at \$10 million.

"He will honor his current contract at this time," agent Drew Rosenhaus said.

In addition to 521 receptions for 7,861 yards and 79 touchdowns in 115 regular-season games, the five-time Pro Bowl selection has 81 catches for 1,163 yards and 12 TDs in 16 playoff games.

Even before adding Gronkowski, the tight end position was considered one of Tampa Bay's biggest strengths, with O.J. Howard and Cameron

Brate teaming with Pro Bowl receivers Mike Evans and Chris Godwin to form the best collection of targets Brady has had to work with in more than a decade.

The Bucs are coming off a 7-9 finish and missed the playoffs for the 12th consecutive season. They haven't won a postseason game since the franchise's only Super Bowl championship run 18 years ago.

Brady played in nine Super Bowls in 20 seasons with the Patriots, who appeared in 13 AFC championship games and won 17 division titles while the three-time league MVP was their primary starting quarterback.

A few days after signing with the Bucs in free agency, Brady said not only was he impressed with a talented young roster Tampa Bay has assembled in recent years but what he sensed is a commitment to do whatever necessary to be successful.

"I don't want to get into every process to the decision I was making at the time, but there were a lot of things that really were intriguing to me about

the organization — the players, and the coaches and the willingness of everyone to try to accomplish what the goal of playing football is, which is to win," the four-time Super Bowl MVP said.

"I'm going to try to do everything I can in my position, and in what I am responsible for to make it happen," Brady added. "I've got to trust that everyone else is doing the exact same thing. That part is no different from what I've experienced in 20 years of my own role."

Gronkowski was an All-Pro in 2011, 2014, 2015 and 2017. He had 43 receptions for 682 yards and three TDs in 2018, his final season with the Patriots.

Without his favorite target, Brady had one of his worst non-injury seasons last year, throwing for 4,057 yards with 24 TDs vs. eight interceptions.

The Patriots, nevertheless, won 12 games and extended their string of consecutive playoff appearances to 11 before a sputtering offense contributed to a first-round loss to the Tennessee Titans.



# USOPC braces for cuts of up to 20%

Associated Press

DENVER — The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee is bracing for cuts of up to 20% because of the coronavirus pandemic and warning that a cancellation of the Tokyo Games would be “devastating” to athletes and the organization.

The Associated Press received a copy of a letter CEO Sarah Hirshland sent to leaders across the U.S. Olympic world Tuesday, in which she said cuts of 10 to 20% are “necessary to balance both the current delay in revenue and anticipated decline” that’s expected over the coming years.

The letter was accompanied by a Q&A that dealt with the possibility that the Olympics, now scheduled to start a year late, in July 2021, could be canceled altogether if the coronavirus isn’t curtailed by then.

“We have to fully understand what that possibility would mean for our organization, so we certainly have considered it and evaluated it,” the note

said. “The impact of cancellation would be devastating to our athletes, first and foremost, but also to our financial health and stability. We would survive such a scenario, but the impact would be severe.”

Though job cuts or pay reductions appear likely among the 500-person staff, many based at the headquarters in Colorado Springs, the Q&A said “we will look at broader program, services and personnel-related costs before we consider cuts or furloughs.”

Hirshland said decisions will be made by the end of May.

Most of the 50 USOPC-affiliated sports organizations were already hurting, and can also expect to see shortfalls in the amounts they receive from the federation in the form of grants and other funds that support athletes.

“Rather than attempting a simple across-the-board reduction, we will make strategic decisions based on the resources needed to continue mission-critical programs, services and

functions,” Hirshland wrote, while also telling staff that she has taken a 20% pay cut and the rest of the executive team has taken 10% pay cuts through at least the end of the year.

The USOPC’s budget runs on four-year cycles, and the biggest splash of money comes in during the year of a Summer Olympics, when TV payouts across the Olympic world are at their peak. The federation, for instance, brought in \$195 million more in 2016 than in 2015 for total revenue of \$336 million.

Should the Olympics go on as now planned, in 2021, the TV money will still arrive, but a year late. But the delay could have a negative impact on a marketing agreement the USOPC cut with organizers of the LA 2028 Olympics, which was supposed to start next year. Virtually all Olympic-style marketing deals set for 2021 will need to be altered while many that were set to expire in 2020 could be extended.

Meanwhile, a full cancella-

tion of the games would throw the USOPC into uncharted territory. It could include having to tap into the \$200 million U.S. Olympic Endowment, a fund borne out of the surplus from the 1984 Games in Los Angeles.

“We need to retain the ability to deal with things getting significantly more difficult, for example if there were a cancellation of the Tokyo Games,” the Q&A said in response to a question about why the USOPC isn’t using the endowment money now.

National governing bodies already have taken a big hit, with USA Cycling and USA Track and Field among those making staffing cuts, and USA Rugby filing for bankruptcy. A survey of the NGBs estimated they would endure \$121 million in lost revenue between February and June — the result of canceled events, declining membership and reductions in other revenue-generating operations.

## Source: Minor leagues prepared to cut to 120 affiliates

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The minor leagues are prepared to agree to Major League Baseball’s proposal to cut guaranteed affiliations from 160 to 120 next year, a person familiar with the negotiations told The Associated Press, a plan that would impact hundreds of prospects and cut player development expenses.

The person spoke Tuesday on condition of anonymity because no announcements were authorized. The development was first reported by Baseball America.

An electronic negotiating session is scheduled for Wednesday.

In informal talks, parties have discussed the possibility of a radical overhaul in which MLB would take over many of the duties of the National Asso-

ciation of Professional Baseball Leagues, the minor league governing body, another person familiar with the negotiations said.

Instead of franchise affiliations, there would be licensing agreements similar to those of hotel chains, that person said. MLB would then sell sponsorship, licensing and media rights, a switch that may lead to decreased overhead and increased revenue.

“There have been no agreements on contraction or any other issues,” the National Association said in a statement Tuesday, adding it “looks forward to continuing the good-faith negotiations with MLB tomorrow.”

In talks to replace the Professional Baseball Agreement that expires after the 2020 season, MLB last year proposed

cutting 42 affiliates, including Double-A teams in Binghamton, N.Y., and Erie, Pa., along with Chattanooga and Jackson, Tenn. The plan would eliminate affiliations for the 28 teams from four Class A Short Season and Rookie Advanced leagues that do not play at spring training complexes.

MLB said in a statement it looks forward to “continuing our discussion about how we can jointly modernize player development and continue to have baseball in every community where it is currently being played.”

Under MLB’s proposal, each franchise would have four full-season farm teams, a rookie level club at its minor league complex and prospects in the Dominican Summer League. Some franchises would be cutting their U.S.-based affili-

ates from seven to five. Which teams would lose affiliations is subject to negotiation.

The National Association lobbied Congress as it fought MLB’s plan. But the COVID-19 pandemic changed the dynamic and sapped minor league teams of revenue and willingness to fight. Some teams have trimmed expenses with layoffs and furloughs.

Opening day in the majors, slated for March 26, has been pushed back indefinitely; the commissioner’s office and players’ association have discussed the possibility of playing in empty ballparks.

Without big broadcast contracts, the minors don’t appear to have that type of option and are less likely to play this year. MLB refused the minors’ request to extend the PBA for a year, both people said.