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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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DOD defers ruling on Navy captain's future

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon has deferred a decision about the future of an aircraft carrier captain who was relieved of command after he raised concerns about the Navy's handling of a sprawling coronavirus outbreak on his ship, defense officials said Friday.

The delay comes after the Pentagon's chief spokesman, Jonathan Rath Hoffman, told reporters earlier in the day that senior Navy officials would brief Defense Secretary Mark Esper about an inquiry into what happened with the USS Theodore Roosevelt and its former commander, Navy Capt. Brett Crozier.

Several other defense officials said they expected a conclusion to be announced afterward. But as the afternoon wound down, the Navy acknowledged that no decision was forthcoming. Two people

familiar with the issue, including one senior defense official, said administration officials wanted more time to review their options.

Hoffman said in a statement that Esper had received a "verbal update" from senior Navy officials about the inquiry into the Theodore Roosevelt outbreak.

"After the Secretary receives a written copy of the completed inquiry, he intends to thoroughly review the report and will meet again with Navy leadership to discuss next steps," Hoffman said. "He remains focused on and committed to restoring the full health of the crew and getting the ship at sea again soon."

The delay comes after days of speculation that the Navy could reinstate Crozier, who was removed from his job after sending a memo to senior Navy officials that raised alarm about how quickly the service was moving to test and quaran-

tine sailors aboard his ship.

Adm. Michael Gilday, the chief of naval operations, has said he was open to Crozier's reinstatement and recommended that on Friday, a person familiar with the discussions said Friday. The New York Times first reported the recommendation.

The Navy said in a statement that no final decisions have been made.

"Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday has presented recommendations to the Acting Secretary of the Navy James McPherson. Secretary McPherson is continuing discussions with Secretary of Defense Mark Esper," it said.

Another senior defense official, also speaking on the condition of anonymity, said that Esper's briefing with Navy officials on Friday took about an hour. The inquiry is "in fact about far more than one person," so Esper wants to ensure the report is thorough and can

"stand up under the rightful scrutiny of Congress, the media, the families and crew of the Theodore Roosevelt, and the American people," the official said.

President Donald Trump expressed an interest this month in reviewing Crozier's case, after videos of sailors chanting their captain's name as he left the ship went viral.

Though Trump initially lambasted Crozier for writing the memo, he later softened his tone, saying that he was impressed with the officer's overall record and didn't "want to destroy" Crozier over "a bad day."

The Navy said Friday that it had just completed testing the crew for the coronavirus. The service reported 856 positive cases among 4,954 tests, about 17%. One Theodore Roosevelt sailor, Chief Petty Officer Charles Robert Thacker Jr., 41, died April 13 after testing positive on March 30.

Navy expands sailors' sea-duty incentive eligibility

BY WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

The Navy has added nearly two dozen job categories for which sailors are eligible for sea-duty bonus pay, an expansion done to ensure operations will continue during the coronavirus epidemic, the Navy said.

Twenty-three new ratings and pay grades were added to an existing list of those eligible to receive sea-duty incentive pay for extending current tours at sea or returning to sea early, the Navy said in a news release Wednesday.

The additions bring the total number of ratings eligible for the bonus to just under 120.

"The move was done to ensure the Navy continues to fill operational requirements for sea-going commands, particularly in this challenging time brought on by the

[coronavirus] pandemic," the news release said.

With 1,445 confirmed cases of coronavirus as of Friday morning, the Navy is the hardest hit of America's military services.

Sailors assigned to the carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt account for 840 of those cases. The ship has been sidelined in Guam since late March as it deals with the contagion.

Sailors testing positive for the virus have been found in another 26 Navy ships now in port, a Navy official speaking on the condition of anonymity told Stars and Stripes on Wednesday.

Among the newly added rates qualifying for incentive pay are: aviation ordnanceman, culinary specialist, cryptologic technician, engineman, gunner's mate, machinery repairman and steelworker.

Depending on the rating, pay grade and Navy enlisted classification code, qualifying second class petty officers and below who qualify could receive up to \$750 for each additional month spent at sea. First class petty officers and above could receive \$1,000 per month, the news release said.

Sailors who wish to extend sea duty can either choose a billet at their current command, or choose one at a new command, according to the Navy. In doing so, sailors must commit to serve one to four years in that billet.

Requests for extension should be made more than 14 months prior to a sailor's projected rotation date.

The Navy established the sea-duty incentive pay in 2007 and has since made numerous additions and deletions of eligible billets.

Poll: Most think jobs will return after crisis

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — One out of every four American adults say someone in their household has lost a job to the coronavirus pandemic, but the vast majority expect those former jobs will return once the crisis passes, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

The economic devastation writ by COVID-19 is clear: 26.4 million people have lost their job in the past five weeks, millions of homeowners are delaying mortgage payments and food banks are seeing lines of cars that stretch for miles. Forty-six percent of all Americans say their household has experienced some form of income loss from layoffs, reduced hours, unpaid leave or salary reductions.

And yet, the survey finds a majority of Americans still feel positive about their personal finances. One possible reason: Among those whose households have experienced a layoff, 78% believe those former jobs will definitely or probably return. Another positive sign: The percentage of workers who say their household has lost a source of income is not significantly different from a few weeks ago.

Seventy-one percent of Americans now describe the national economy as poor, up from 60% three weeks ago and 33% in

January. At the same time, 64% call their personal financial situation good — a number that remains largely unchanged since before the virus outbreak began.

Some of the resiliency can likely be traced to the nearly \$2 trillion rescue package enacted by Congress that expanded jobless benefits, extended forgivable loans to small businesses and provided a government check to most Americans — money that has helped stabilize some families' finances.

Skylar Banks, 24, used her 2019 tax refund and a separate government check for \$3,000 to prepay six months of rent on her house. Her plan: to ensure her family's housing is secure in case coronavirus infections spike in a second wave later this year and the nation's economy gets worse.

"We're not sure how many people actually have COVID-19," said Banks, who lives in Dyersville, Tennessee, and works at Walmart. "If they open everything back up, we have no clue what is going to happen."

Indeed, the country is split on whether the economy will rebound over the next year. Forty-five percent expect it will improve, while 37% say it will worsen. Just 17% expect it to stay the same.

The survey found Americans overwhelmingly support stay-at-home orders and other efforts to slow the spread of the

coronavirus — 61% described efforts in their area as about right, while 26% said they didn't go far enough — even as those actions have forced an untold number of businesses to close.

Lower-income households and those with less education appear especially hard hit by job losses — 29% of those whose families earn less than \$50,000 a year said their household experienced a job loss, compared with 22% of those who make more. Similarly, 28% of those without a college degree experienced a household layoff, while just 19% with a degree said the same.

As the crisis drags on, 22% of Americans have started to miss payments on housing or debts, the survey found. That includes 11% of Americans who have unpaid rent or mortgage bills, 11% who have missed a credit card payment and 19% who were unable to pay another type of bill. Some were unable to pay more than one kind of bill.

More than half of Americans, 58%, think the government has not done enough to help small businesses, while 53% say the same of aid to individuals.

Meanwhile, about 4 in 10 think too much assistance has been offered to larger corporations. The poll was conducted before Congress passed a new bill worth nearly \$500 billion aimed at helping small businesses and hospitals.

Virus relief pushing US deficits to staggering heights

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Spend what it takes, Washington said as it confronted the coronavirus. Well over \$2 trillion later, it's unclear where that spending will end.

One of the lasting legacies of the coronavirus pandemic will be staggering debts and deficits on the U.S. balance sheet, with shortfalls hitting levels that would have been unthinkable just a few decades ago.

It's a fiscal stranglehold that is likely to persist for a generation, with debt levels having passed the point of easy return in a capital where lawmakers are increasingly incapable, or unwilling, to constrain them.

The latest, and dire, projection from the Congressional

Budget Office, released Friday, states the U.S. deficits will mushroom to \$3.7 trillion in 2020, fueled by the four coronavirus relief bills signed into law by President Donald Trump. A fifth bill is already in the works and will be "expensive," according to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif.

The deficit for 2021 is estimated to tally \$2.1 trillion, double previous CBO estimates.

The report predicts a devastating hit to the economy this quarter at an annualized rate of decline of 40% — probably the sharpest economic shock ever — accompanied by a 15% unemployment rate this spring and summer. For the entire year, the economy is predicted to shrink by 5.6%.

CBO Director Phillip Swa-

gel cautioned that there is "enormous uncertainty" to the projections, given the unprecedented nature of the crisis, but it's plain the economic shock is unlike anything seen since the Great Depression.

"Challenges in the economy and the labor market are expected to persist for some time," Swagel wrote in a blog post. He said the economy is likely to begin rebounding in the third quarter, but the jobless rate will remain about 10% by the end of 2021.

On the government front, coronavirus-related figures point to red ink unparalleled since World War II. Economists generally say the most significant measure of debt and deficits is to compare it against the size of the economy, and by

that measure, the debt is soon to rival the record. CBO says publicly held debt will reach 101% of gross domestic product by the end of this year, just below the post-war high.

The deficit was entrenched long before the virus, with federal revenues shrinking to well below historic averages and the spending side of the ledger rising thanks to record Pentagon expenditures and the addition of baby boomers to Medicare and Social Security.

Even Washington's few remaining spending hawks say red ink should not be a focus for now as the government faces unemployment levels not seen since the Great Depression and shutdown orders lasting well into next month or beyond.

India joins others in easing lockdown

Associated Press

NEW DELHI — A tentative easing around the world of coronavirus lockdowns gathered pace Saturday with the reopening in India of neighborhood stores that many of the country's 1.3 billion people rely on for everything from cold drinks to mobile phone data cards.

The U.S. states of Georgia, Oklahoma and Alaska also began loosening lockdown orders on their pandemic-wounded businesses, even as the confirmed U.S. death toll from the coronavirus soared past 50,000 and despite warnings from health experts that such steps may be coming too early.

The relaxation of the super-strict Indian lockdown came with major caveats. It did not apply to hundreds of quarantined towns and other hot spots that have been hit hardest by the outbreak that has killed at least 775 people in the country and terrified its multitudes of poor who live hand-to-mouth in slum conditions too crowded for social distancing.

Shopping malls also remained closed nationwide.

Still, for families that run small stores, being able to earn again brought relief.

Last week, India also allowed manufacturing and farming to resume in rural areas to ease the economic plight of millions of daily wage-earners left jobless by the lockdown imposed March 24. India's stay-home restrictions have allowed people out of their homes only to buy food, medicine or other essentials.

In Sri Lanka, however, the lockdown was tightened, not eased, confirming a pattern of one-step-forward, one-step-back also seen elsewhere in the pandemic, trying to juggle public health against the health of shut-down economies.

Sri Lanka had partially lifted a monthlong curfew during daytime hours in more than two-thirds of the country. But it reimposed a 24-hour lockdown countrywide after a surge Friday of 46 new infections, the highest increase in a day on the Indian Ocean island. The new curfew remains in effect until Monday.

The global death toll climbed Saturday toward 200,000, according to a tally compiled by

John Hopkins University from government figures. The actual death toll is believed to be far higher.

In Europe, Belgium sketched out plans for a progressive lockdown relaxation starting May 4 with the resumption of nonessential treatment in hospitals and the reopening of textile and sewing shops so people can make face masks. Bars and restaurants would be allowed to start reopening June 8, although Belgian Prime Minister Sophie Wilmes also cautioned that a surge in infections could alter the timeline and that "nothing is set in stone."

Kids in Spain will get their first fresh air in weeks on Sunday when a total ban on letting them outside is relaxed. After 44 days indoors, they'll be allowed to take one toy or scooter with them but not play together for the adult-supervised one-hour excursions no further than 0.6 miles from home.

Italy announced that free protective masks will be distributed to nursing homes, police, public officials and transport workers, preparing for millions of Italians returning to work when lockdown restrictions are

eased May 4.

In France, the government is preparing to gingerly ease one of Europe's strictest lockdowns from May 11. The health minister detailed plans Saturday to scale up testing to help contain any new flare-ups.

Testing shortages are a critical problem elsewhere, too, including in Brazil, Latin America's largest nation, which is veering closer to becoming a pandemic hot spot.

Medical officials in Rio de Janeiro and four other major cities warned that their hospital systems are on the verge of collapse or already overwhelmed. In Manaus, the biggest city in the Amazon, officials said a cemetery has been forced to dig mass graves because there have been so many deaths.

In the U.S., Republican governors in Georgia and Oklahoma allowed salons, spas and barbershops to reopen, while Alaska opened the way for restaurants to resume dine-in service and retail shops and other businesses to open their doors, all with limitations. Some Alaska municipalities chose to maintain stricter rules.

Many states lack efficient system to track exposure

Associated Press

ATLANTA — As more states push to reopen their economies, many are falling short on one of the federal government's essential criteria for doing so — having an efficient system to track people who have been physically near a person infected with the coronavirus.

An Associated Press review found a patchwork of systems around the country for so-called contact tracing, with many states unable to keep up with caseloads and scrambling to hire and train enough people to handle the task for the months ahead. The effort is far less than what public health experts say is needed to guard against a resurgence of the

virus.

The result is a wide array of strategies and little national coordination. With few exceptions, most states reviewed by AP are going it alone. Many other countries dealing with the pandemic are taking a national approach to testing.

As late as Friday, the website for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said detailed guidance on contact tracing for states was "forthcoming."

"We'll not ever control the whole country unless we have the same strategy," said Dr. Cyrus Shahpar, a former CDC official. "Right now, that's not what we're doing."

Contact tracing is a pillar of

infection control and typically requires in-depth interviews with those who may have been exposed. The number of public health employees needed for the work throughout the U.S. remains up for debate, but some estimates are as high as 300,000 people.

Louisiana, which has been hit hard by the virus, had only about 70 people working on tracing contacts this week. By comparison, North Dakota, with less than a fifth of Louisiana's population and no serious outbreaks, has 250 case investigators and will soon bring on an additional 172 staffers.

Pennsylvania is still working to determine how many people it will need in the field. In

Texas, coordination will be left to individual counties.

Health experts worry that a scattershot approach will only prolong the crisis, and they urge a more coordinated strategy. In South Korea, for example, the national health agency oversees the effort, gathering and sharing data on the movement of confirmed cases with local health departments. The country has seen its case count plummet and remain low.

There is little consensus in the states on basic questions such as how extensive the tracing should be and whether cellular data should be used to assist in identifying people who may have been exposed at a public location.

La. sees death rates greater than other states

Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. — Even amid positive trends in Louisiana's coronavirus outbreak, officials are grappling with a state death rate from the virus that appears higher than other states' rates while outpacing Louisiana's own modeling.

The Louisiana Department of Health offered reporters a first detailed look Friday at the state's modeling of deaths from the COVID-19 disease caused by the coronavirus. And while Louisiana's falling hospitalization rate is tracking the projected results for Gov. John Bel Edwards' statewide stay-at-home order, the death rate is higher than expected.

More than 1,600 Louisiana residents have died from COVID-19, about 6% of all positive tests for the coronavirus announced so far in the state. But that testing data doesn't reflect those who never develop symptoms and never get tested for the virus.

The health department estimates that 2% of Louisianans who contract COVID-19 are dying from it, based on modeling of the number of residents presumed to have been infected, said Jeanie Donovan, policy director for the agency.

The department is trying to determine why the death rate is double what was expected and varies considerably among regions of the state, she said.

Among the theories: Louisiana's higher-than-average percentage of residents who have high blood pressure, obesity, chronic kidney disease and other health conditions may be a factor.

Alabama

MONTGOMERY — Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey will work with the state health officer "to firm up a timetable to reopen" state businesses, her office said Friday, as the state's current stay-home order for the coronavirus outbreak sets to expire April 30.

Facing political pressure to follow the aggressive plans of other Southern states — in-

cluding Georgia, which began reopening businesses Friday — Ivey has stated that the decision to reopen will be driven by data. Ivey spokeswoman Gina Maiola said, "we will probably hear an announcement from them early next week as to how Alabama will gradually phase in business." The governor's office said previously that an announcement is expected around Tuesday.

California

SACRAMENTO — California restaurants will get taxpayer money to feed millions of seniors during the coronavirus pandemic, but only if they can offer meals with fresh fruit, vegetables and no sugary drinks.

Gov. Gavin Newsom said Friday the requirements reflect California's values, though lawmakers have repeatedly failed to impose special taxes and require warning labels for sugary drinks in the past.

Restaurants have been one of the hardest-hit industries in the state, with more than 1 million workers either laid off or furloughed, according to a survey by the National Restaurant Association.

Local governments will choose which restaurants will make the food and get the money. But restaurants have to meet nutrition guidelines.

Massachusetts

BOSTON — Gov. Charlie Baker said Friday that while the state continues to battle the coronavirus, it still hasn't reached the other side of the surge.

That means steps taken to slow the spread of COVID-19 — from shuttering nonessential businesses to social distancing — will remain in place.

"Until we start to see some of that kind of information about the peaking of the surge and the move in the other direction for some sustained period of time, we're not going to be interested in reopening anything," Baker said.

Baker said there has been

some discussion about how the state might safely reopen the economy, but again emphasized the state is not at that point.

Health officials are keeping an eye on the number of people tested and what percentage have tested positive. The percentage of positive tests compared to all tests has fluctuated in the 20s, Baker said.

Michigan

LANSING — Gov. Gretchen Whitmer on Friday lengthened her stay-at-home order through May 15, while lifting restrictions so some businesses can reopen and the public can participate in outdoor activities like golf and motorized boating during the coronavirus pandemic.

The measure immediately replaces one that was scheduled to expire next week. Michigan has nearly 3,100 deaths related to COVID-19 after 108 more were reported, behind only New York and New Jersey among U.S. states.

People are now required, rather than encouraged, to wear face coverings in enclosed public spaces such as grocery stores if they can medically tolerate it. Employers must provide non-medical grade masks to their in-person employees.

North Carolina

RALEIGH — North Carolina's public school buildings, already shuttered for the past month due to COVID-19, won't reopen this school year, Gov. Roy Cooper announced Friday.

The decision was largely expected. Cooper originally closed all K-12 public schools in mid-March for two weeks, then extended his executive order through May 15.

Cooper on Thursday extended a statewide stay-at-home order for another two weeks, saying case and hospitalization trends did not support loosening restrictions. And his plan by which businesses could reopen and mass gathering limits eased if epidemiological and supply goals are met likely could not be fully achieved until mid-June at the earliest.

Nebraska

LINCOLN — Life in the Omaha area and other parts of Nebraska will start inching back toward normal May 4, Gov. Pete Ricketts announced Friday as he unveiled plans to loosen the state's coronavirus restrictions.

Ricketts said he will relax restrictions in 59 counties, including Douglas, Sarpy and Cass in the Omaha area, but not Lancaster, which includes Lincoln.

The new orders, which will be in effect until May 31, will allow restaurants in chosen counties to reopen their dining rooms but require them to keep crowds at or below half of their rated occupancy. Dining parties would be limited to six people, and buffets would remain closed. Bars would have to keep their dining areas closed.

Oregon

ALBANY — The National Frozen Foods plant in Albany, Oregon, has shut down production because of an outbreak of COVID-19 that has sickened 10 people, Linn County Public Health announced Friday.

Of the illnesses linked to the plant, eight are workers and two are associated with those employees, The Albany Democrat-Herald reported.

The county worked with the plant to temporarily close the facility, said Linn County Sheriff's Capt. Michelle Duncan, the county's coronavirus pandemic spokeswoman.

Steve Schossberger, general counsel and vice president of National Frozen Foods, said the shutdown started Friday and will continue at least through the weekend. A deep cleaning of the Albany plant will be done with the oversight of Linn County Public Health, he added.

"We'll look at opening back up on Monday, but only on automated lines. ... That's still yet to be determined," Schossberger said.

Judge OKs Baltimore's test of aerial surveillance

Associated Press

A federal judge on Friday cleared a planned pilot program by the Baltimore Police Department to consistently surveil the city for six months using cameras attached to airplanes.

U.S. District Judge Richard Bennett in Baltimore ruled against a grassroots think tank and area activists who asked him to keep the program from taking off, arguing that it violates their First and Fourth Amendment rights. The department now expects the first flight to take place next week.

"The United States Supreme Court and the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit have long upheld the use of far more intrusive warrantless surveillance techniques than the (Aerial Investigation Research) program," Bennett wrote in a 34-page opinion denying the plaintiffs' motion for a preliminary injunction.

Under the six-month pilot program, up to three planes equipped with cameras will gather images of the city at a rate of one per second to help police investigate murders, nonfatal shootings, armed robberies and carjackings. Weather permitting, the aircraft will fly at least 40 hours a week and cover about 90% of the city.

The police department has defended the plan as an opportunity to test a crime-fighting tactic as violent crime has continued in Maryland's largest city, even in the midst of a global pandemic. Philanthropic funds will cover the cost of the program.

The technology was secretly tested in Baltimore in 2016. Residents and top city officials were unaware of the police-approved test until the media revealed it.

Trump: Postal Service must raise Amazon rate or no loan

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Friday that he won't approve a \$10 billion loan for the U.S. Postal Service unless the agency raises charges for Amazon and other big shippers to four to five times current rates.

"The Postal Service is a joke because they're handing out packages for Amazon and other internet companies, and every time they bring a package, they lose money on it," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office.

The president was responding to a question about reports his administration plans to force major changes in postal operations as the price for approving a \$10 billion loan that was included in the government's \$2 trillion economic rescue package.

Under the rescue package legislation, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin must approve the loan before the Postal Service can receive the money. Officials at the Postal Service had no immediate reaction to Trump's comments.

Trump said the changes the administration will insist on will make it a "whole new ballgame" at the Postal Service. He said the Postal Service did not want to make the changes because they did not want to offend Amazon and other companies.

Looking at Mnuchin, who was with him in the Oval Office, the president said, "If they don't raise the price of the service they give ... I'm not signing anything and I'm not authorizing you to

do anything."

Mnuchin told reporters that he had Treasury officials working with the Postal Service on the terms of the loan if postal officials decide they need more money.

"We are going to post certain criteria for (a) postal reform program as part of the loan," Mnuchin said. He said the Postal Service board is already conducting a search for a new postmaster general to run the agency and undertaking reforms of operations.

The Washington Post, which first reported the administration's push for changes at the Postal Service, quoted unnamed officials as saying that senior Postal Service officials have been told the administration wants to use the \$10 billion loan as leverage to influence how much the agency charges for delivering packages and how it manages its finances.

Trump has complained for years that the Postal Service was being exploited by Amazon and other shippers and that was the reason the agency was losing so much money. But analysts have said that efforts to sharply boost charges on big shippers like Amazon could backfire by raising prices above those being charged by competitors such as UPS and FedEx.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, asked about the administration's efforts Friday, said the Postal Service enjoyed wide support with the American people and that the administration is threatening to harm a critical part of the economy.

Biden's Obama link may hinder Latino voters

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Joe Biden's tenure as Barack Obama's vice president is complicating his efforts to deepen ties with Latinos who could be critical to winning the White House.

For many Latinos, Biden's embrace of the Obama years is a frightening reminder of when the former president ejected about 3 million people living in the U.S. illegally, earning him the moniker of "deporter in chief."

That's one reason Latinos overwhelmingly backed Bernie Sanders during the Democratic primary. But with the Vermont senator out of the race and Biden left as the presump-

tive Democratic nominee, Latinos face an agonizing choice. They could look past Biden's resume and vote for him or sit out the election and risk another four years of President Donald Trump, who escalated his hard-line stance this week with an executive order freezing some immigration into the U.S. during the coronavirus pandemic.

"The 'Let's go back to how things were' for people who feel like they have a boot on their neck, it's not always that compelling," said Marisa Franco, director and co-founder of the Latino activist group Mijente, which made its first-ever endorsement when it backed Sanders for president.

Biden long defended the administration's immigration policy, even telling one activist in South Carolina who decried deportations, "You should vote for Trump." But just before losing the caucuses in heavily Hispanic Nevada in February, Biden conceded, "We took far too long to get it right."

"I think it was a big mistake," Biden said.

Domingo Garcia, president of the League of United Latin American Citizens, said some "in the more liberal side of the Latino community" view the issue as a "litmus test that's something they've not forgotten." But he said many activists see it as palling in comparison to Trump's race-baiting.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman sentenced for posing as FBI agent

NC CHARLOTTE — A North Carolina woman was sentenced to three years in prison for impersonating an FBI agent on an online dating site, and on a date.

Riane Brownlee, who identified herself as Agent Alexandria Mancini, posed in a dating profile with a fake FBI badge and a stolen gun, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of North Carolina said in a news release.

Brownlee had prior convictions on various charges, including identity theft. The day she was arrested, she told a date she was working as an undercover agent in a drug case without the awareness of law enforcement.

3 men arrested for possessing stolen guns

SD RAPID CITY — Rapid City police arrested three men they said were in possession of firearms stolen from a local pawn shop.

Ten AR-15-style rifles and one shotgun were stolen from Pawn With Us, according to authorities.

Investigators said they received a tip that some of the weapons were at a Rapid City home.

Officers saw three men leaving the property in a vehicle, pulled it over, found two of the guns in the vehicle and arrested the three.

Police said two additional guns and methamphetamine were found in the residence.

Dog found 4 months after being stolen

CA SAN FRANCISCO — Four months after a distraught San Francisco

woman hired a plane to fly a search banner for her stolen dog, the blue-eyed mini Australian shepherd was found and the two were reunited.

Emilie Talermo, 31, said she received a call from an animal shelter in Palmdale, which is about 370 miles away in Southern California, telling her someone had just dropped off a dog with a microchip connected to her phone number.

Teen in recovery after fall near waterfall

ME WEST FORKS — A Maine teenager rescued after slipping and falling 30 feet down an embankment near the state's tallest waterfall is recovering.

Maine officials and volunteers were able to place Antonio Jacobs, 18, of China into a rescue jacket after he slipped and fell into a gorge at the base of Moxie Falls.

The teen was hiking with three friends when he fell down the embankment, according to a news release from the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife.

DNA used to ID victims after cases went cold

FL DAYTONA BEACH — Two victims of separate violent crimes were identified through DNA decades after their cases went cold.

The Volusia County Sheriff's Office said in a Facebook post that DNA was used to identify the remains of Howard "Kip" Evans, whose body was found in 1986, and Doris Regina Chavers, whose body was found in 1991.

Evans was 29 when he disappeared and his remains were found in January 1986, officials said. His body had been there for an undetermined amount of time.

In 2019, information about Evans was received from posts in a missing persons group, sheriff's officials said. Detectives obtained a DNA sample from his mother in South Carolina.

Chavers was last seen Aug. 1, 1989, and reported missing the following year, the post said. Two fishermen found her body on Aug. 19, 1991.

In 2018, Seminole County Sheriff's officials tracked down Chavers' biological daughter. Detectives received confirmation that the daughter's DNA sample matched the remains found in Volusia County in 1991.

Man angry about aid check set shed on fire

LA MARKSVILLE — Fire Marshals in Louisiana said a man set his mothers shed on fire out of anger for not receiving a federal stimulus check amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Marvin Smith Jr., 51, got into a dispute with his mother over the federal payout before the arson happened, the Louisiana Office of State Fire Marshal said in a news release.

Investigators were able to determine the fire was intentionally set inside the Hamburg shed. They arrested Smith after witnesses told them they saw him in the shed moments before the fire started.

Man killed by shot fired from nearby apartment

KY FRANKFORT — A Kentucky man was fatally shot when a gun went off in a neighboring apartment unit, piercing through walls, a couch and the man's back, authorities said.

Samuel Sexton, 20, was in a friend's Frankfort apartment when he was fatally struck, Capt. Dustin Bowman told

news outlets.

Frankfort police said the shot came from an apartment across the hall. Police accused Trevor Fridenmaker, 20, of handling the gun that went off. Police said Fridenmaker tried to hide the gun but it was found along with an additional gun and marijuana.

He was charged with manslaughter, evidence tampering, possession of marijuana and drug paraphernalia.

Officer charged for nude photos of minors

GA VALDOSTA — A Georgia police officer was arrested for possessing nude photos of underage people, authorities said.

Valdosta Police Lt. Jeremyah "J.B." Jones was charged with one count of child exploitation and was later fired from the department, police Chief Leslie Manahan told news outlets.

Lowndes County Sheriff Ashley Paulk said a social media account was brought to their attention by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, which prompted an investigation into Jones.

Man shoots at FBI field office; no injuries

AZ PHOENIX — The FBI said no one was injured and a suspect is in custody after he allegedly fired at the bureau's Phoenix field office.

FBI spokeswoman Jill McCabe said a man approached the bureau's North Phoenix offices and fired at the building and at an employee who was exiting. The shooter did not access the FBI's building or grounds, she said.

Phoenix police officers and FBI agents took the man into custody without incident.

From wire reports

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NFL Draft all about wide receivers

Associated Press

Pitch and catch.

While only one quarterback, Oklahoma's Jalen Hurts, was taken in the second round of the NFL Draft on Friday, the guys who haul in passes were everywhere.

Starting with the top two selections on Day 2 — Clemson's Tee Higgins to Cincinnati and Southern California's Michael Pittman to Indianapolis — seven wideouts were drafted. Add that to the six who went in the opening session, and it set an NFL record through two rounds.

The NFL these days is built on passing offenses. This draft is loaded with outstanding pass catchers. Many teams had both Higgins and Pittman rated as top-32 talent.

So the Cincinnati Bengals held firm atop the second round by grabbing Higgins to catch Joe Burrow's passes. The pair worked out together heading toward the draft.

And Higgins idolizes Bengals star receiver A.J. Green.

"I actually model my game after him," Higgins said. "Man,

it's crazy. I was just talking about this to my good friend — I could end up with the Bengals and be his teammate one day. Now that this moment is here, it's surreal."

In addition to finding what they hope will be their franchise quarterback in LSU's Burrow with the first overall pick, the Bengals (2-14 last season) added a threat who can make the spectacular reception.

Pittman takes his 6-foot-4, 224-pound frame to Indianapolis. The Colts had no first-rounder, and they quickly gave new quarterback Philip Rivers a target in Pittman, whose father also played in the NFL.

"I think they brought me in to make an impact right now and they have Philip Rivers, who I think is a Hall of Famer," Pittman said. "I'm happy I get to start with, like, a Hall of Fame quarterback."

Hurts wound up in Philadelphia, which has an established QB in Carson Wentz. But the Eagles envision using Hurts, who was at Alabama before being beaten out as starter by Tua Tagovailoa.

"We're always going to be

about the QB position," Eagles draft boss Howie Roseman said. "It's the most important position in sports. ... We think Jalen is an incredible teammate."

"We believe Carson will lead us to our next championship. ... We are quarterback developers."

Two positions barely or not addressed at all in the first round got some attention directly after Higgins and Pittman were selected. Georgia's D'Andre Swift became the second running back chosen, by Detroit. LSU's Clyde Edwards-Helaire was the only RB who went in the opening round, last to Super Bowl champion Kansas City.

Swift is a dynamic playmaker unlike anyone the Lions have had in the backfield in years — maybe since Hall of Famer Barry Sanders, who retired in 1998.

Four more running backs went in the round.

Safety was ignored on Thursday, but immediately was addressed by the Giants in Round 2 with Alabama's Xavier McKinney. New York's secondary has been a sieve.

"He also has that ability to be a quarterback on the back end, a signal caller for the defense," coach Joe Judge said. "He fits the mold of a smart, tough, fundamentally sound guy we are looking to build with."

New England finally surfaced with the 37th overall spot after trading out of the first round. Coach Bill Belichick was nowhere in sight — his dog appeared to be manning his laptop — as the Patriots chose Kyle Dugger, a safety from Division II Lenoir-Rhyne.

Other teams making their initial selections Friday saw:

■ TCU defensive tackle Ross Blacklock going to Houston;

■ Chicago adding a 10th tight end to its roster in Cole Kmet of Notre Dame;

■ Another Irish player, wideout Chase Claypool, a Canadian, to Pittsburgh;

■ Florida State's Cam Akers to the Rams, who had released their standout running back, Todd Gurley last month, with Gurley surfacing in Atlanta;

■ Buffalo adding to an already solid defense with Iowa end A.J. Epenesa, one of the Big Ten's outstanding defenders.

Still no players drafted from 2 former powerhouses

Associated Press

Miami and Nebraska dominated college football from the 1980s through the early 2000s.

Since the Hurricanes and Cornhuskers played for the 2001 national championship they have been trending in the wrong direction, and both are coming off losing seasons in 2019.

So maybe it should be no surprise that neither the Hurricanes nor Cornhuskers had a player taken in the NFL Draft's first three rounds. Heading into Saturday's final four rounds, Miami is still trying to extend a streak of having at least one player drafted that started in 1976. Nebraska will try to avoid a second straight season of no drafted players after having

its 56-year streak snapped last year.

Other prominent college programs without a selection after Friday's second and third rounds were Washington, Michigan State, Oklahoma State and Stanford.

Through three rounds, none of the power five schools in North Carolina had a player drafted. The first North Carolina college player drafted was safety Kyle Dugger from Division II Lenoir-Rhyne, taken in the second round by New England. In the third round, running back Darrynton Evans from Appalachian State was selected by Tennessee and Alex Highsmith from Charlotte was picked by Pittsburgh.

Meanwhile, national champion LSU tied a record with 10

players taken in the first three rounds and the Southeastern Conference had a record 40 players drafted overall.

Miami was the No. 1 producer of NFL players for years in the 1980s and '90s while winning four national titles. "The U" surged again in the early 2000s, winning another national title and playing for another. Miami had a string of 14 straight seasons with at least one player being selected in the first round that ended in 2009.

This is now the third straight season the Hurricanes have gone without a first-round selection. Miami, coming off a 6-7 season that ended with three straight losses, is likely to avoid the embarrassment of no draft picks. Saturday may have been a good day for several

Miami players with receivers Jeff Thomas and K.J. Osborn, linebacker Shaq Quarterman and defensive end Jonathan Garvin were all candidates to be picked.

Nebraska won three national titles in the 1990s, but has not even reached a bowl game the last two seasons under coach Scott Frost, a former Huskers quarterback.

This is the fourth straight season Nebraska has not had a player drafted during the first three rounds. Defensive tackle Khalil Davis and cornerback Lamar Jackson were probably good enough to keep the streak of no drafted players from reaching two in a row on Saturday.

US boxers stay committed to Olympics

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES—Keyshawn Davis took several weeks to choose his path to boxing stardom after the Tokyo Olympics were postponed.

Thanks to the coronavirus pandemic, the top professional prospect on the U.S. Olympic qualification team was suddenly facing nearly a year without an amateur fight that mattered.

He could wait for 16 months to get his shot at gold in Tokyo, or he could accept one of several lucrative offers to begin his professional career immediately.

When Davis began his delib-

eration, the 21-year-old lightweight was leaning toward turning pro. After speaking to family, coaches and his fellow fighters, he decided to keep his Olympic flame burning.

“It’s just hard to say no to the Olympics,” Davis said from his home in Virginia. “That’s like passing up a deal right in front of your face that makes a lot of sense.”

Every member of the U.S. team agrees so far. Even with an extra year to wait, Davis and his 12 teammates are all still focused on Tokyo and the rewards of the Olympic experience.

The Olympic postponement

could have caused upheaval for many Western nations’ teams in an amateur sport that frequently loses its brightest talents to the pros, even in normal Olympic cycles. But U.S. head coach Billy Walsh has managed to keep his whole team together for 2021 by selling his boxers on the promise of brighter pro futures if they show a little patience.

“We’ve always had that challenge,” said Walsh, the Irish coach who has restored the fractious U.S. program to respectability in his five years in charge. “Since I came here, we’ve turned that around a piece. We’ve given the guys

the vision of first becoming an Olympic champion, as all the greats did back in the day, and using that for a platform to launch your professional career.”

After decades of the pro game’s predation and innumerable scandals, amateur boxing is no longer the marquee Olympic event that catapulted Muhammad Ali (then known as Cassius Clay), Sugar Ray Leonard and Oscar De La Hoya to athletic superstardom.

Yet Olympic experience still turns heads within the sport — and it remains an enormously valuable commodity to boxing promoters.

Sports briefs

49ers acquire Pro Bowl LT Williams from Redskins

Associated Press

The San Francisco 49ers acquired seven-time Pro Bowl left tackle Trent Williams from the Washington Redskins on Saturday.

Williams’ agent, Vincent Taylor, said in a statement that it was time for Williams to leave Washington after he sat out all last season in a dispute with management.

“Trent Williams is ready to get back to competing in the NFL and is glad to be part of a great organization like the San Francisco 49ers,” Taylor said.

Two people familiar with the deal say the Niners will send a fifth-round pick in this year’s draft and a 2021 third-rounder to acquire Williams. The people spoke on condition of anonymity because the compensation hasn’t been announced.

Williams sat out the entire 2019 season because of a dispute with Washington’s front office.

The deal reunites him with 49ers coach Kyle Shanahan, who was the offensive coordinator in Washington when Williams was drafted fourth overall in 2010.

Memorial Day race in N.C. possible

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The governor of North Carolina said Thursday that NASCAR teams can work in their race shops if they maintain social distancing guidelines, clearing a potential hurdle to resuming the season in coming weeks.

Gov. Roy Cooper extended the state’s stay-at-home order through May 8 on Thursday and said he would gradually open the state in three phases. He said he is still considering NASCAR’s request to run the Coca-Cola 600 as scheduled on May 24 without spectators.

The governors of both Florida and Texas have already said NASCAR is welcome to race in their states without fans, and South Carolina and Georgia are gradually easing restrictions. For any racing to be done, the North Carolina-based teams need access to their shops to prep the cars.

“From the information that I have now, already under our state executive order, they can begin working in their garages as an essential business, as defined under our executive

order,” Cooper said. “(Teams) are still in contact with local health departments. Local governments may have some different health restrictions.”

As for Charlotte hosting the 600 on Memorial Day weekend for the 60th consecutive year, Cooper said he would have a decision soon.

Ex-Padre, officer Walters dies

SAN DIEGO — Dan Walters, who played for the San Diego Padres for parts of two seasons, has died from complications of injuries he suffered as a police officer in 2003. He was 53.

Walters’ death is considered a line-of-duty fatality.

“Dan grew up locally, played professional baseball here in San Diego and proudly served his city as a police officer,” the San Diego Police Department said in a statement. “He will forever be remembered by the members of this Department.”

Walters attended suburban Santana High and played with the Padres in 1992 and 1993. He later played in the Colorado and Oakland organizations but never returned to the majors.

His playing career ended when he suffered a severe spine injury while diving for a ball during a spring training drill.

He joined the police department in 1998.

Walters was paralyzed on Nov. 12, 2003, when he was shot in the neck during a struggle with a domestic violence suspect and struck by a passing car, crushing two cervical vertebrae. The suspect was killed by officers. Walters used a wheelchair until his death Thursday.

NCAA men’s hoops get scheduling options

INDIANAPOLIS — The NCAA is giving teams new scheduling options for the 2020-21 season.

The NCAA’s Division I Council approved a proposal Friday to give men’s basketball programs choices with 28- and 29-game schedules.

The council vote still must be reviewed by the NCAA Board of Directors and won’t be considered final until the conclusion of its board meeting on Wednesday.