

Biden seeks \$715B for DOD in budget

BY SARAH CAMMARATA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden on Friday proposed \$715 billion for the Pentagon in its 2022 baseline budget, which is a slight increase from this year's spending plan.

However, Biden's proposal is a decrease from what former President Donald Trump's administration had expected to request for the Pentagon in 2022.

Lawmakers allocated \$704 billion for fiscal year 2021, and Biden's request Friday would be a 1.5% increase in defense spending.

Yet, the budget boost is less than the Trump administration projected for the fiscal year 2022 budget. That budget would have requested the Pentagon get \$722 billion for the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1.

The overall defense budget top-line, which includes money for the Department of Energy and its nuclear weapons program, is \$753 billion. The budget does not detail where the money that is not earmarked for the Pentagon is going, but it is typically spent on the National Nuclear Security Administration that oversees the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

The proposal rolled out Friday also includes a significant reform and ends the use of an overseas contingency operations, or OCO, account.

For the first time in two decades, the budget does not include a separate fund to fi-

nance overseas military operations. Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have slammed the OCO account as a "slush fund" that should be spent as part of the baseline Pentagon budget.

Pentagon spokesman Christopher Sherwood said the Defense Department budget proposal will likely be released in late May, but he added the White House's Office of Management and Budget has not set a date yet.

The budget could spark criticism from top Republicans, including Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., who in recent weeks have called for a hike in defense spending to confront China. At the same time, some Democrats have called for significant cuts to defense spending to pay for other priorities such as diplomacy, humanitarian aid and public health.

The Trump administration had increased defense spending to help the Pentagon challenge rival world powers China and Russia. Trump's military budget for fiscal year 2021, which ends Sept. 30, was \$740.5 billion.

Democrats in Congress have repeatedly called for spending on the military to shift to other issues such as health care, education and jobs, with the Congressional Progressive Caucus pushing last year for a 10% reduction in defense spending.

In light of the coronavirus pandemic, "spending \$740 billion a year on this one

piece of the federal budget is unconscionable," Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., said during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing in February.

In March, a group of 50 House Democrats, led by former progressive caucus chairpersons Reps. Barbara Lee of California and Mark Pocan of Wisconsin, urged Biden to make a "significantly reduced Pentagon topline," without naming a specific number.

"While we are heartened that your administration is not contemplating expanding the Pentagon's already inflated budget, our new Democratic majorities in Congress along with your administration should go further," the lawmakers wrote in the letter to Biden. "Rather than requesting a flat Pentagon budget, we urge you to seek a significantly reduced Pentagon topline."

The lawmakers called for a reevaluation in priorities that had been set under the Trump administration. They said investments in diplomacy and global public health, among other things, would have a greater return on investment than hundreds of billions of dollars directed to the military.

The letter came after top Republicans on the House Armed Services Committee in early March argued in a letter to Biden that the budget should increase by 3-5% to modernize the force and fill ongoing readiness gaps to keep pace with China's rising military investments.

DOD staff and family eligible for virus vaccines soon

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — All service members and Defense Department beneficiaries will be eligible for a vaccine appointment by April 19, despite the lag in vaccines for people serving overseas, defense officials said Thursday.

The Defense Department's decision follows President Joe Biden's announcement Tuesday that all American adults will be eligible for a vaccine on that date, Army Lt. Gen. Ronald Place, the director of the Defense Health Agency, said during a briefing at the Pentagon.

About 40% of military vaccination sites have already opened appointments to people in the last tier or "phase 2," which includes a younger, healthier population, he said. Even with eligibility for vaccination opened to all, the tier system will not be going away.

"If individuals in our initial tiers now want an immunization, they still get to the front of the schedule," Place said.

He also said the military is seeing more people who "were taking a wait-and-see approach" come forward to receive their vaccine.

Place acknowledged the lag in vaccina-

tion rates at overseas locations due to the limited options of receiving a shot. Thus the Defense Department had decided to send double the amount of vaccines to overseas locations compared to the size of the eligible population, according to Place.

Many personnel and family members in Europe with high-risk medical conditions are still waiting to get their first shots, Stars and Stripes reported Wednesday. About 25% of the adult Army community in Europe has received at least one dose, and 11% of beneficiaries have been fully vaccinated, Gino Mattorano, a spokesman for Regional Health Command Europe, said Tuesday.

Fort Hood-based leader fired for bullying

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTT GART, Germany — A Fort Hood-based brigade commander was relieved of duty Thursday for bullying subordinate officers, resulting in “a loss of trust and confidence” in his ability to lead, the 1st Cavalry Division said in a statement.

Col. Michael Schoenfeldt, who commanded the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, has been reassigned and is now performing administrative duties, the division said.

“The troopers of the ... brigade deserve the best leadership the

Army can provide. ... The relief was based on poor judgment demonstrated by Col. Schoenfeldt while in command,” the 1st Cavalry Division said.

Schoenfeldt was leading his brigade on a nine-month rotation in Europe before he departed the Continent in February for unspecified health reasons. The investigation into his leadership style resulted in “several adverse findings” related to bullying of his staff, the division said.

“This behavior was directed at subordinate commanders and staff officers. These behaviors were recurrent, and even if they

did not have a deleterious impact on 1ABCT’s performance, they did have a deleterious impact on the welfare of subordinates,” the division said.

Schoenfeldt also faced allegations that he used racially insensitive nicknames for some soldiers. However, allegations of “racism and maltreatment were unfounded,” the division said.

Schoenfeldt’s firing is the latest in a string of problems connected to units based out of Fort Hood, Texas, where the killing of Spc. Vanessa Guillen last year sparked an independent investigation that found a pervasive cli-

mate of abuse and sexual harassment. More than a dozen Army senior leaders have been fired since then.

Soldiers in the 1st Armored Brigade, which began arriving in Germany in November, told Stars and Stripes earlier this month that a toxic climate in the unit persisted well after the Fort Hood report findings.

“This is the worst I’ve been treated. That’s the bottom line,” one brigade officer said under the condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation. “I’ve dealt with some hard leaders before, but this was toxic through and through.”

Intel sees many in post-virus world wary of government

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — U.S. intelligence officials have little comfort to offer a pandemic-weary planet about where the world is heading in the next 20 years. Short answer: It looks pretty bleak.

On Thursday, the National Intelligence Council, a center in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence that creates strategic forecasts and estimates, often based on material gathered by U.S. spy agencies, released its quadrennial “Global Trends” report.

Looking over the time horizon, it finds a world unsettled by the coronavirus pandemic, the ravages of climate change — which will propel mass migration — and a widening gap between what people demand from their leaders and what they can actually deliver.

The intelligence community has long warned policymakers and the public that the coronavirus could profoundly reshape global politics and U.S. national security. The authors of the report, which does not represent official U.S. policy, describe the pandemic as a preview of crises to come. It has been a globally desta-

bilizing event — the council called it “the most significant, singular global disruption since World War II — that “has reminded the world of its fragility” and “shaken long-held assumptions” about how well governments and institutions could respond to a catastrophe.

At the same time, the pandemic accelerated and exacerbated social and economic fissures that had already emerged. And it underscored the risks from “more and cascading global challenges, ranging from disease to climate change to the disruptions from new technologies and financial crises,” the authors write.

In language that will resonate with just about anyone who has tread water in the past year, the authors write of a “looming disequilibrium between existing and future challenges and the ability of institutions and systems to respond.”

Within societies, fragmentation is increasing — political, cultural, economic — and “large segments of the global population are becoming wary of institutions and governments that they see as unwilling or unable to address their needs,” the report says.

The effects of the pandemic will

linger, and could shape future generations’ expectations of their governments, particularly as a warming world leads to new human conflicts, including, in the most dire scenario, global food shortages that spawn mass violence.

Global power was contested long before the pandemic, and those trends haven’t abated.

The report sees the international stage as largely being shaped by a rivalry between China and the United States, along with its allies. No single state is poised to become the dominant global force, the authors write. And competing powers will jockey for position, leading to “a more conflict-prone and volatile geopolitical environment.”

Technology, with all its potential to boost economies and enhance communication, also may aggravate political tension — as it already has.

People “are likely to gravitate to information silos of people who share similar views, reinforcing beliefs and understanding of the truth,” the report concludes.

Prediction is an inherently risky business, and intelligence practitioners are quick to emphasize that they can’t see the future.

But the National Intelligence Council imagines five scenarios on a kind of sliding scale that may help tell us where the world is turning as we approach 2040.

On the rosier end, a “Renaissance of democracies” ushers in a new era of U.S. global leadership, in which economic growth and technological achievements offer solutions to the world’s biggest problems and Russia and China are largely left in the dust, authoritarian vestiges whose brightest scientists and entrepreneurs have fled to the United States and Europe.

At the dark end of the future is “tragedy and mobilization,” when the United States is no longer the dominant player, and a global environmental catastrophe prompts food shortages and a “bottom-up” revolution, with younger people, scarred by their leaders’ failures during the coronavirus pandemic, embracing policies to repair the climate and tackle longstanding social inequality. In this scenario, a European Union dominated by green parties works with the United Nations to expand international aid and focus on sustainability, and China joins the effort in part to quell domestic unrest in its cities affected by famine.

Biden takes first steps on gun control

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden put on a modest White House ceremony Thursday to announce a half-dozen executive actions to combat what he called an “epidemic and an international embarrassment” of gun violence in America.

But he said much more is needed. And while Biden had proposed the most ambitious gun-control agenda of any modern presidential candidate, his moves underscored his limited power to act alone on guns with difficult politics impeding legislative action on Capitol Hill.

Biden’s new steps include a move to crack down on “ghost guns,” homemade firearms that lack serial numbers used to trace them and are often purchased without a background check. He’s also moving to tighten regulations on pistol-stabilizing braces like the one used in Boulder, Colo., in a shooting last month that left 10 dead.

The president’s actions delivered on a pledge he made last month to take what he termed immediate “common-sense steps” to address gun violence, after a series of mass shootings drew renewed attention to the issue. His announcement came the day after yet another episode, this one in South Carolina, where five people were killed.

But his orders stop well short of some of his biggest campaign-trail proposals, including his promise to ban the importation of assault weapons, his embrace of a voluntary gun buyback program and a pledge to provide resources for the Justice Department and FBI to better enforce the nation’s current gun laws and track firearms.

And while gun control advocates lauded Thursday’s moves as a strong first step in combating gun violence, they, too, acknowledged that action from lawmakers on Capitol Hill is needed to make lasting change.

“Some of the other big-ticket items are leg-

islative,” said Josh Horowitz, executive director of the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence. “And that’s going to be very difficult.”

Biden mentioned a formidable list of priorities he’d like to see Congress tackle, including passing the Violence Against Women Act, eliminating lawsuit exemptions for gun manufacturers and banning assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. He also called on the Senate to take up House-passed measures to close background check loopholes.

But with an evenly-divided Senate — and any gun control legislation requiring 60 votes to pass — Democrats would have to keep every member of their narrow majority on board while somehow adding 10 Republicans.

Horowitz said “it’s hard to think” who those Republicans would be, and though that doesn’t mean it’s impossible to move on gun control “we’re going to have to change some of the people who are in the Senate.”

Policy changes boost migrant border crossings

Associated Press

BROWNSVILLE, Texas — Paying a smuggler, Edgar Mejia could afford to take only one child with him to the United States. He chose his 3-year-old “warrior” son, leaving his 7- and 12-year-olds with their mother in Honduras.

“Pitifully, I had use him like a passport to get here,” Mejia said last week after picking up milk from volunteers at a Brownsville, Texas, bus station for the last leg of their journey to join relatives in Atlanta. “I am here because of him.”

Mejia, 32, and his son, who paid a smuggler \$6,000 for a “new dream” that Honduras couldn’t provide, are among the Border Patrol’s nearly 170,000 encounters with migrants on the U.S.-Mexico border in March, a 20-year high. The total, announced Thursday, includes nearly 19,000 children traveling alone, the highest monthly number on record.

About four in 10 border encounters last month were with families and unaccompanied children — many from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador — at a time when policies in the U.S. and Mexico favor them staying in the United States while they seek asylum. It marks the third sharp jump in Central American asylum-seekers in seven years.

For decades, predominantly Mexican

men crossed the border illegally, with many returning for visits until heightened border security made going back and forth more difficult. Migration rose and fell but was fairly steady and predictable.

Over the last decade, a complex mix of factors has produced periodic, dramatic spikes, especially among families and children, who get more legal protections and require more care. The Government Accountability Office identified 10 potential causes for a spike in the number of unaccompanied children at the border in 2014, including poverty, violence and perceptions of U.S. immigration policy.

A large increase in family arrivals in 2019 followed an end to the Trump administration’s practice of generally separating parents from their children at the border. The latest jump follows ferocious storms in Central America and President Joe Biden ending his predecessor’s hardline immigration policies, though many changes attributed to Biden are rumors or have been fabricated by smugglers to generate business.

The “root causes” prompting Central Americans to leave haven’t changed, said Sister Norma Pimentel, executive director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley in Texas, whose tempora-

ry shelter has been hosting 400 to 500 people nightly, compared with a peak of about 1,000 in 2019.

“I think that it’s simply that the traffickers use whatever is happening in the United States to extort the families, to lure them, to create a narrative that says, ‘Come right now. The president is going to let you in,’” she said.

Migrants, in dozens of interviews over the last two weeks, generally said circumstances in Central America led them to the U.S. When asked about Biden, nearly all said his relatively pro-immigration positions influenced their thinking.

“(Smugglers) tell you it’s going to go well, but the reality is different,” Mejia said, turning to his 3-year-old son at the bus station in Brownsville, a border city of about 200,000 people on the Rio Grande. “I have a warrior here. We suffered greatly.”

The Border Patrol had 168,195 encounters with migrants last month, the highest since March 2001. The numbers aren’t directly comparable because more than half of those stopped last month had been quickly expelled from the country under federal pandemic-related powers that deny people the right to seek asylum. Being expelled carries no legal consequences, so many people make multiple attempts.

Expert: Floyd held down in fatal manner

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — George Floyd died of a lack of oxygen from the way he was held down by police, a retired forensic pathologist testified Friday at former Officer Derek Chauvin's murder trial.

The testimony of Lindsey Thomas, who retired in 2017 from the Hennepin County Medical Examiner's office in Minneapolis, bolstered the findings of other experts on Thursday who rejected the defense theory that Floyd's drug use and underlying health problems killed him.

Thomas did not work on Floyd's case but agreed with her former colleague Hennepin County Medical Examiner Andrew Baker that Floyd died from cardiopulmonary arrest complicated by the way

law enforcement restrained him and compressed his neck.

But she went further in saying "the primary mechanism of death is asphyxia, or low oxygen."

"This is a death where both the heart and lungs stopped working. The point is, it's due to law enforcement subdual, restraint and compression," Thomas said. "The activities of the law enforcement of officers resulted in Mr. Floyd's death."

Thomas said she reached her conclusion primarily from the video, which showed Floyd "in a position where he was unable to adequately breathe."

The autopsy itself ruled out heart attack, aneurysm, COVID-19 and other factors, and Thomas said it was not a drug

overdose death, either.

"There is no evidence to suggest he would have died that night except for the interactions with law enforcement," she said.

Thomas' testimony came a day after other medical experts also said Floyd died of a lack of oxygen.

"A healthy person subjected to what Mr. Floyd was subjected to would have died," prosecution witness Dr. Martin Tobin, a lung and critical care specialist at the Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital and Loyola University's medical school in Illinois, testified Thursday.

Tobin said the lack of oxygen resulted in brain damage and caused his heart to stop.

Violence flares again in Belfast over Brexit rules

Associated Press

BELFAST — Gangs of youths threw stones and fireworks at police in Belfast who hit back with water cannons as violence flared again on the streets of Northern Ireland.

Unrest has erupted over the past week amid tensions over post-Brexit trade rules and worsening relations between the parties in the Protestant-Catholic power-sharing Belfast government.

The latest violence Thursday night came despite appeals by U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Irish Premier Micheal Martin and U.S. President Joe Biden for a calming of tensions.

Police holding riot shields were pelted with missiles before officers charged at the rioters with dogs. Police also used water cannons to disperse the crowds.

Earlier in the day, the Northern Ireland Assembly unanimously passed a motion calling for an end to the disorder, and the region's power-sharing government condemned the violence.

"While our political positions are very different on many issues, we are all united in our support for law and order and we collectively state our support for policing and for the police officers who have been putting themselves in harm's way to protect others," leaders of the five-party government said in a joint statement. "We, and our departments, will continue to work together to maximize the support we can give to communities and the (Police Service of Northern Ireland) to prevent further violence and unrest."

Northern Ireland has seen sporadic outbreaks of street violence since the 1998 Good Friday peace accord ended "the Troubles" — decades of Catholic-Protestant bloodshed over the status of the region in which more than 3,000 people died.

Britain's split from the EU has highlighted the contested status of Northern Ireland, where some people identify as British and want to stay part of the U.K. while others see themselves as Irish and seek unity with the neighboring Republic of Ireland, an EU member.

US suicides drop, defying pandemic expectations

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The number of U.S. suicides fell nearly 6% last year amid the coronavirus pandemic — the largest annual decline in at least four decades, according to preliminary government data.

Death certificates are still coming in and the count could rise. But officials expect a substantial decline will endure, despite worries that COVID-19 could lead to more suicides.

It is hard to say exactly why suicide deaths dropped so much, but one factor may be a phenomenon seen in the early stages of wars and national disasters, some experts suggested.

"There's a heroism phase in every disaster period, where we're banding together and expressing lots of messages of support that we're in this together," said Dr. Christine Moutier, chief medical officer of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. "You saw that, at least in the early months of the pandemic."

An increase in the availability of telehealth services and other efforts to turn around the na-

tion's suicide problem may have also contributed, she said.

U.S. suicides steadily rose from the early 2000s until 2018. The rate finally fell slightly in 2019.

The number fell further last year, to below 45,000, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in a recent report. It was the lowest number of U.S. suicide deaths since 2015.

Many worried that such progress might end when COVID-19 arrived.

The pandemic sparked a wave of business closures. Millions of people were forced to stay at home, many of them alone. In surveys, more Americans reported depression, anxiety and drug and alcohol use. Adding to that dangerous mix, firearm purchases rose 85% in March 2020.

But the spring of last year actually saw the year's most dramatic decline in suicide numbers, said the CDC's Farida Ahmad, the lead author of a recent report in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* that detailed the decline.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man running naked on interstate is arrested

AZ PHOENIX — A 21-year-old man has been arrested after running naked on Interstate 10 in Phoenix, according to authorities.

Arizona Department of Public Safety officials said John Kramer was booked into jail Wednesday on suspicion of multiple charges including felony endangerment and disorderly conduct.

DPS officials said Kramer had recently been released from jail and admitted to recent drug use.

They said two big rigs collided on the I-10 on Wednesday morning and a man jumped from the moving semi, ran down the shoulder while taking his clothes off and then walked out into traffic before being arrested.

Authorities said Kramer told a DPS trooper he had hitched a ride on the semi, unbeknownst to the driver.

Prosecutor: Money held as evidence now missing

NJ JERSEY CITY — The top prosecutor in a northern New Jersey county says cash being held as evidence by her office has gone missing.

Hudson County Prosecutor Esther Suarez said Tuesday night that an internal investigation has been launched, but she did not disclose how much money was missing overall or when and how the thefts were discovered.

Suarez said various denominations of cash recovered in several separate cases has gone missing. All the money was being temporarily held for safekeeping and was kept in temporary storage in locked safes at the prosecutor's office in Jersey City, with limited access by in-

vestigative staff.

Suarez said the investigation is in its very early stages, and officials haven't determined how many people may have been involved. She declined further comment, citing the ongoing investigation.

Feds charge 24 people in gun, drug bust

WA SEATTLE — Federal authorities have charged two dozen people in connection with a drug and gun bust in the Puget Sound region.

The U.S. Attorney's Office in Seattle said 21 defendants were arrested Wednesday as law enforcement teams executed about 90 search warrants from Everett to Spanaway.

As part of the investigation, agents seized 73 guns, more than \$600,000 in cash, more than 12 kilos of cocaine, fentanyl pills and a fentanyl pill manufacturing lab.

Several defendants were previously convicted of felonies and were barred from having firearms.

Saks joins growing list of retailers to go fur-free

NY NEW YORK — Saks Fifth Avenue is joining a growing list of retailers and brands including Macy's, Versace and Prada that will stop using animal fur as it reacts to a backlash from consumers.

Saks Fifth Avenue said Wednesday that it will phase out using fur by the end of fiscal 2022. That includes both brand partner and store-label merchandise sold online and in stores. As part of the decision, Saks will eliminate the sale of products made from animals that were raised for the use of their fur or those made with fur

from wild animals. Shearling, goatskin, cattle hide, down, feathers, leather and faux fur products will continue to be sold online and in stores, the New York-based retailer said.

Saks Fifth Avenue also plans to close all of its fur salons by the end of fiscal 2021.

Monkeys on the loose, last seen in cemetery

OH CINCINNATI — Police in Cincinnati are on the lookout for monkeys, some last seen swinging in trees in a cemetery.

Police say there are as many as five monkeys on the loose, suspected to be from a private owner. Officers responded Wednesday night to the Saint Joseph's Cemetery in a west-side neighborhood after residents reported monkey sightings.

WXIX-TV reported that police planned to resume searching and have reached out to the Cincinnati Zoo for help.

Anti-pot effort nets 389 stops, 1 pound seized

WY CASPER — Police in a Wyoming city made almost 400 traffic stops over 14 hours in a federally funded effort to crack down on marijuana.

The operation March 29-30 in Casper deployed 30 officers each day to the city's main roads and entry points, resulting in 389 stops for suspected traffic violations.

"Essentially any car that they saw that had a traffic infraction take place, they pulled over," Casper Police Department spokeswoman Rebekah Ladd said.

Police gave motorists 269 warnings and 115 tickets. The tickets included 80 for speeding,

26 for other driving violations and nine for seat belt or child restraint violations, the Casper Star-Tribune reported.

Officers also made 23 arrests, including 13 for drugs, according to police.

Police seized 1 pound of marijuana from one vehicle and 2.4 ounces of marijuana from other vehicles stopped.

Police also seized 2.4 ounces of methamphetamine and 1 gram of cocaine.

Man attempts to breach elephant exhibit at zoo

WI MILWAUKEE — A man accused of climbing over a fence at the Milwaukee County Zoo's elephant enclosure is facing a trespassing charge.

Sheriff's officials detained the man after zoo security called deputies Wednesday afternoon. The man was escorted from the property.

Authorities said the man wanted to impress his daughter and climbed over a locked fenced area in the outdoor elephant exhibit. He started climbing over a secondary fence, but zoo officials say he never made it into the enclosure.

The man "never shared space with two of the Zoo's African elephants who were outside at the time," zoo officials said.

The incident took place nearly three weeks after a California man was arrested and charged after he was caught inside the San Diego Zoo's elephant habitat with his 2-year-old daughter.

Witness video shows a man dropping the child as they flee the enclosure as an elephant charged at them. The man picked up the toddler and was able to get her out safely.

— From wire reports

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Stanford wrestlers grappling with future

Associated Press

The Stanford logo was missing on Shane Griffith's all-black wrestling singlet when he won an NCAA national title last month.

By design. To draw attention.

He also celebrated his victory at 165 pounds by donning a black sweatshirt which read: "Keep Stanford Wrestling."

Griffith's way — his team's way — of making a statement after the school announced in July that wrestling, which has been at Stanford since 1916, and 10 other sports would be dropped to save money. The Cardinal wrestling community organized fundraising efforts and has raised about \$12.5 million so far.

The program may not be pinned to the mat just yet — or so they're optimistically hoping.

"We're still in confusion and kind of in denial of what happened," said Griffith, who competed on March 20 in what — for now — could be the last match in program history. "Because we don't have a feasible answer from them to move on with our lives."

Stanford wrestling is one of at least 85 Division I sports programs to be shuttered since the coronavirus pandemic started a year ago because of financial strains. Olympic and college-sports leaders fear it will only continue as changes in the college system take hold. Congress and the NCAA are con-

sidering allowing athletes to benefit from their name, image and likeness (NIL). There are also proposals in Congress that would allow schools to pay players beyond the scholarship and stipends they already receive.

On the line is an Olympic feeder system that buoys Team USA. Nearly 80% of U.S. athletes at the 2016 Rio Games came from an American college program.

Along with wrestling, Stanford announced it would discontinue at the conclusion of the academic year men's and women's fencing, field hockey, lightweight rowing, men's rowing, co-ed and women's sailing, squash, synchronized swimming and men's volleyball.

In an open letter sent to the school community, Stanford leaders announced, "We now face the reality that significant change is needed to create fiscal stability for Stanford Athletics."

Many in the community questioned the legitimacy of the administration's arguments.

That includes those involved with the "Keep Stanford Wrestling" efforts.

"There's no way this is a financial decision. It can't be," said Robert Hatta, a former Stanford wrestler who's co-chair of KSW. "We offered a financial solution that they refused to consider and when we

peeled back the numbers we found the savings were minimal and the actual underlining financial issue deficits of the department not only continue but grow after these cuts."

In a statement to The Associated Press, Stanford disagreed with that assessment: "Discontinuing sports was an extremely painful decision, and it was driven by the financial challenges of supporting twice as many varsity teams as the Division I average at the level we believe is essential for our student-athletes to excel. The fundraising numbers cited by groups that have organized to reinstate individual sports have significantly underestimated the total amount of funding required to support the program they wish to reinstate, and do not account for the need to adhere to Title IX gender equity requirements."

Here's a sign of potential progress, though: An invitation to be among those who speak next week with Stanford's board of trustees. Hatta said the meeting was at the behest of school president Marc Tessier-Lavigne.

"We're hopeful they're ready to talk and not hear us out and say, 'What's done is done and we're sorry' versus actually consider the solutions we've recommended," Hatta said. "We're ever optimistic. We're never going to quit."

Adams, NFL vet who killed 5, known as quiet, troubled

Associated Press

Phillip Adams was a journeyman NFL player whose career was cut short by injuries, a disappointment that apparently stuck with him during his post-football life.

The 32-year-old Adams fatally shot five people — including a doctor, his wife and their two grandchildren — before later killing himself, authorities in Rock Hill, S.C., said Thursday.

"He had an injury his rookie year," Adams' agent, Scott Casterline, told The Associated Press. "Some teams wrote him off and he had that stigma of a guy who was hurt. His ability was better than a guy who bounced around a lot. All that weighed on him heavily. He had (six) years, a great career, but he felt he had more. It was hard for him to walk

away from the game, especially a guy as dedicated as he was.

"We encouraged him to explore all of his disability options and he wouldn't do it. He would isolate, but that's who he was, so it wasn't a big concern. I knew he was hurting and missing football, but he wouldn't take health tips offered to him. He said he would but he wouldn't. I felt he was lost without football, somewhat depressed, but he was really hard to follow because he would isolate."

Adams played in 78 NFL games over six seasons for six teams. He joined the 49ers in 2010 as a seventh-round draft pick out of South Carolina State, and though he rarely started, he went on to play for New England, Seattle, Oakland and the New York Jets before finishing his career with the Atlanta Falcons in

2015.

As a rookie late in the 2010 season, Adams suffered a severe left ankle injury that required surgery that included several screws being inserted into his leg. He never played for the 49ers again, getting released just before the 2011 season began. Later, with the Raiders, he had two concussions over three games in 2012.

Former Cowboys cornerback Kevin Smith trained with Adams leading up to the 2010 draft and after he entered the league. Both Smith and Casterline said Adams opened a smoothie and juice store before the coronavirus pandemic hit. Both emphasized how much Adams trained, even overworked. They said he didn't drink or do drugs. Smith mentioned he liked fast cars and

drove too fast.

"I used to have to tell him you don't have to do so much," Smith said. "I would tell him it's about preserving your body because he'd want to work out three times a day."

Earlier this month, Adams was convicted on traffic charges, including driving under a suspended license and failure to maintain proof of insurance.

Adams was on a state championship high school football team in Rock Hill, then headed to South Carolina State, an FCS program in the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference.

"I can say he's a good kid — he was a good kid, and I think the football messed him up," his father, Alonzo Adams, told WCNC-TV. "He didn't talk much and he didn't bother nobody."

Mets win on disputed hit by pitch in 9th

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Jeff McNeil launched a tying homer in the bottom of the ninth inning on his 29th birthday and the New York Mets were handed the winning run on a disputed hit by pitch for a bizarre 3-2 victory over the Miami Marlins in their home opener Thursday.

With the bases loaded and one out, a scuffling Michael Conforto appeared to stick out his right elbow just enough to get it grazed by a 1-2 breaking ball from closer Anthony Bass that looked to be in the strike zone.

Plate umpire and crew chief Ron Kulpa at first signaled strike, then quickly ruled Conforto was hit by the pitch. Conforto headed toward first base as Luis Guillorme scored and the Mets celebrated a comeback win in front of the first crowd at Citi Field in 557 days.

Marlins players and manager Don Mattingly argued with Kulpa before a replay review was initiated. The review lasted 58 seconds, and the call was upheld.

According to baseball rules, if a batter is hit by a pitch in the strike zone, the pitch should be called a strike. According to replay rules, however, whether the pitch was in the strike zone or the batter made any attempt to get out of the way is not subject to video review. Those are umpire judgment calls. Only whether the ball touched the batter is reviewable.

The official explanation from the replay supervisor in Manhattan was this: "After viewing all relevant angles, the Replay Official definitively determined that the ball struck the batter. The call is confirmed, it is a hit by pitch."

Edwin Diaz (1-0) worked a hitless inning in his first outing of the season.

Angels 7, Blue Jays (11): At Denedin, Fla., David Fletcher had a two-run single in the 11th inning and Los Angeles won the first regular-season game played at Toronto's spring training ballpark.

Los Angeles star Mike Trout went 3-for-5 and had the first reg-

ular-season hit at the ballpark, a first-inning double, and also homered.

Vladimir Guerrero Jr. and Cavan Biggio homered for the Blue Jays.

Astros 6, Athletics 2: Carlos Correa, Yordan Alvarez and Jose Altuve homered and Houston kept up its hot start by treating the home crowd to a win over Oakland in the first game with fans at Minute Maid Park since 2019.

Houston is 6-1 this season, tied for the best seven-game start in franchise history.

Cubs 4, Pirates 2: Jayy Baez hit a go-ahead two-run home run in the sixth inning in visiting Chicago's victory over Pittsburgh.

Kris Bryant and Anthony Rizzo also homered as the Cubs pounded out a season-high 11 hits against Tyler Anderson (0-2) and four relievers. Baez, Rizzo, Bryant and Jake Marisnick had two hits each to help Chicago raise its major league-worst batting average from .143 to .157.

White Sox 6, Royals 0: Lance

Lynn pitched a five-hitter for the first complete game and shutout in the major leagues this season, and host Chicago beat Kansas City.

Rockies 7, Diamondbacks 3: Jon Gray took a no-hit bid into the seventh inning and got his first win of the season, pitching host Colorado past Arizona.

Red Sox 7, Orioles 4: Eduardo Rodríguez won in his return from heart inflammation that caused him to miss the 2020 season, allowing three runs over five innings to help Boston spoil Baltimore's home opener.

Cardinals 3, Brewers 1: Nolan Arenado hit a tiebreaking, two-run homer in the eighth inning of his home debut, lifting St. Louis over Milwaukee as fans returned to Busch Stadium for the first time since 2019.

Twins 10, Mariners 2: Mitch Garver, Byron Buxton and Luis Arraez hit home runs to back another strong start by José Berrios, providing the Minnesota fans plenty to cheer for in their return to Target Field.

Jazz back on track with victory over Trail Blazers

Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Donovan Mitchell scored 37 points and Utah beat Portland 122-103 for its 23rd straight home victory.

Rudy Gobert had 18 points and 21 rebounds, Joe Ingles added 13 points and six assists and Utah dominated the glass by outrebounding Portland 58-41. The NBA-leading Jazz snapped a two-game skid, rebounding from an overtime loss in Phoenix a night earlier.

Damian Lillard scored 23 points for Portland.

Clippers 113, Suns 103: When Paul George and Kawhi Leonard are both healthy, they are one of the most difficult duos to stop in the NBA. The Los Angeles Clippers superstars showed that again Thursday night.

George scored 33 points and Leonard added 27 in the Clippers' victory over the Phoenix Suns in a physical matchup between two of the top teams in the Western Conference.

Heat 110, Lakers 104: Jimmy Butler

scored 28 points to lead host Miami past depleted Los Angeles.

Victor Oladipo had 18 points, and Tyler Herro finished with 15 points for the Heat. They bounced back from a 12-point home loss to Memphis on Tuesday night.

Recently acquired Andre Drummond returned from a four-game absence and had 15 points and 12 rebounds for the Lakers. Drummond hurt his right big toe in his Los Angeles debut March 31.

Mavericks 116, Bucks 101: Luka Doncic scored 27 points, Kristaps Porzingis had 26 points and 17 rebounds playing on consecutive days for the first time in two months in Dallas' victory over visiting Milwaukee.

Donte DiVincenzo scored 22 points and Bobby Portis had 20 points and a season-high 14 rebounds for the Bucks. They dropped to 1-2 without reigning two-time MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo, out with left knee soreness.

Bulls 122, Raptors 113: At Tampa, Fla., Nikola Vucevic and Zach Levine each

scored 22 points and Chicago beat Toronto for its third straight victory.

LaVine also had 15 assists, and Lauri Markkanen came off the bench to score 18 points on 8-for-10 shooting.

Cavaliers 129, Thunder 102: Collin Sexton scored 27 points and Cleveland ended a five-game series losing streak to host Oklahoma City.

Taurean Prince scored 22 points, Darius Garland added 21 and Kevin Love had 18 points and 11 rebounds for Cleveland. The Cavaliers broke open a tight game with an 11-0 run to begin the second half.

Pistons 113, Kings 101: Cory Joseph had a season-high 24 points and seven assists in his first game against his former team, and Jhalil Okafor returned after missing nearly two months following knee surgery in visiting Detroit's victory over Sacramento.

Isaiah Stewart added 16 points and 13 rebounds in place of injured Mason Plumlee for the Pistons.

Swayman helps Bruins down Capitals

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Brad Marchand scored a short-handed goal, Jeremy Swayman made 31 saves to win his second NHL start and the Boston Bruins beat the Washington Capitals 4-2 on Thursday night.

Jeremy Lauzon, Anton Blidh and Craig Smith also scored for Boston, which won back-to-back starts by its rookie fourth-string goaltender fresh out of college in his first professional season. Swayman allowed two power-play goals in under 20 seconds to Alex Ovechkin and T.J. Oshie, but kept the Bruins ahead when the Capitals tilted the ice toward him in the second period.

Despite Ovechkin's 5-on-3 power-play goal that gave him 20 this season and 726 for his career and Oshie's team-leading eighth on the power play, the Capitals couldn't tie it and Smith scored on the power play with 3:05 left in the game.

Washington has lost two in a row and four of its past six.

Islanders 3, Flyers 2 (SO): Brock Nelson scored in regulation and had the only goal in a five-round shootout to lift host New York past Philadelphia.

Penguins 5, Rangers 2: Kris Letang and Evan Rodrigues scored in the second period and visiting Pittsburgh beat New York.

Jets 4, Canadiens 2: Connor Hellebuyck made 36 saves and visiting Winnipeg beat Montreal to open a five-game trip.

Lightning 6, Blue Jackets 4: Tampa Bay scored three times in the first six minutes of the game, Andrei Vasilevskiy made 32 saves and visiting Tampa Bay beat Columbus.

Oilers 3, Senators 1: Devin Shore broke a tie with 7:02 left, Mike Smith made 39 saves and visiting Edmonton beat Ottawa to sweep the nine-game season series.

Hurricanes 3, Panthers 0: Alex Nedeljkovic made 24 saves for his third career shut-out, all in his last 12 games, and Vincent Trocheck scored an-

other goal against his former team to help host Carolina beat Florida.

Devils 6, Sabres 3: Jesper Boqvist scored the go-ahead goal with 11:15 remaining and visiting New Jersey overcame the disappointment of having veteran forwards Kyle Palmieri and Travis Zajac traded to beat Buffalo.

Stars 5, Blackhawks 1: Blake Comeau scored twice, Roope Hintz had a goal and three assists and visiting Dallas beat Chicago to end a two-game slide.

Predators 7, Red Wings 1: Viktor Arvidsson scored three times to lead surging Nashville past host Detroit.

NHL grapples with vaccine inequity between US, Canada

Associated Press

His smile covered by a light blue surgical mask, Jacob Trouba's eyes shined as the needle went into his left arm.

The New York Rangers gave players, coaches and staff a day off this week so they could get vaccinated against COVID-19.

"We're very fortunate to be able to get that vaccine," Trouba said.

As vaccinations ramp up past a pace of 3 million a day in the U.S., the NHL is in a tougher spot than the other three major North American professional sports leagues because seven of its 31 teams are based in Canada. While the NFL, NBA and Major League Baseball are relaxing virus protocols when a certain percentage of each team is fully vaccinated, the top hockey league in the world is facing a severe outbreak with the Vancouver Canucks and grappling with vaccine inequity on opposite sides of the border.

"It all comes down to the government guidelines, and it's out of our control," U.S.-born Winnipeg Jets goaltender Connor Hellebuyck said. "You definitely see

the States getting out the vaccinations well and it's very good, very nice, and it'd be nice to see that in Canada, but I don't know the logistics of it all."

Canada has lagged in vaccinations because, like many other countries, it lacks the ability to manufacture vaccines and has had to rely on the global supply chain. While hope is on the way with 45 million doses expected to be available by July for the nation of 38 million people, cases in Canada are surging, and the NHL is not immune.

The Canucks reported 21 players and four staff members tested positive for the virus and another is considered a close contact. Team physician Jim Bovard called the outbreak "a stark reminder of how quickly the virus can spread and its serious impact, even among healthy, young athletes."

The NHL got around the U.S.-Canada border being closed to nonessential travel by making this 56-game season divisional play only, with the seven Canadian teams only facing each other.

And because of that split, hock-

ey has mirrored the evolving virus situations in the U.S. and Canada. From Jan. 13-March 31, players on Canadian teams accounted for just 103 of the 1,361 appearances on the NHL COVID protocol list — with just one of a season-high 59 players Feb. 12.

Since April 1, players on Canadian teams have accounted for 138 of 160 instances, including 23 of 25 Thursday.

As of Thursday, over a third of the U.S. general population had received at least one dose and 19.9% was fully vaccinated, compared to 16.5% with one shot and 1.98% fully vaccinated in Canada.

"There's two different countries, different roles, different situations," Sweden-born Calgary Flames forward Mikael Backlund said. "Nothing we can do about it, really. So, we just have to wait for our turn."

The Associated Press asked all 31 NHL teams how many players, coaches and staff had been partially or fully vaccinated and if any had refused a vaccine, and none would provide specific details. Among the responses, the Tampa Bay Lightning said some

players and staff had been vaccinated, the Rangers said many were getting a shot, the Detroit Red Wings said a majority and the Columbus Blue Jackets a vast majority of players and coaches had received at least one dose.

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said the league is "monitoring, but (the) vaccination process is very much team by team and market by market." Along with the league, the Players' Association sent a memo to members and is working to educate them and answer questions about vaccination, which is being handled by individual teams.

With U.S. President Joe Biden setting an April 19 deadline for all 50 states and the District of Columbia to open up vaccine eligibility to everyone age 16 and up, the NFL, NBA and MLB — with all teams currently playing in the U.S. — instituted incentives that relax masking and other protocols based on a certain level of personnel being fully vaccinated. Memos were sent to players and teams last week reminding them to adhere to protocols — even if fully vaccinated.