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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Search continues for 7 Marines and sailor

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — An assault amphibious vehicle carrying 15 Marines and a sailor was more than a half-mile from San Clemente Island off the coast of Southern California when it began to sink during a training accident, senior Marine officials said Friday.

"Immediate response was provided by two additional [assault amphibious vehicles] that were with them... as well as the safety boat, which is always accompanying our water operations," Lt. Gen. Joseph Osterman, the commander of I Marine Expeditionary Force, said during a news briefing at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Yet, one Marine was killed and two were injured in the accident. Five others were rescued, and ships and helicopters continue to search for the remaining seven Marines and a sailor still missing at sea a day later, the senior Marine officials said.

The accident happened Thursday at about 5:45 p.m. local time after the Marines had just finished training on San Clemente Island and were traveling back to their ship. They were more than a half-mile from shore when they noticed the vehicle was taking on water, Osterman said.

The two injured Marines were taken to a local hospital and are in critical condition, according to the Marines. The name of the Marine who died will be withheld for 24 hours, pending notification of next of kin.

All 15 Marines aboard the vehicle were assigned to the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, I Marine Expeditionary Force. Assault amphibious vehicles, which are used for storming beaches, weigh about 26 tons and can carry up to 21 people, according to Osterman. The service members were participating in normal waterborne training with the Makin Island Amphibious Ready Group when the accident occurred. The 15th MEU is based at Camp Pendleton.

Search and rescue efforts, supported by the Navy and Coast Guard, are still underway. The assault amphibious vehicle was operating in several hundred feet of water, which is too deep for divers, Osterman said.

"Basically the adjacent assault amphibious vehicles watched it go down and, as I said, 26 tons ... the assumption is it went all the way to the bottom," he said.

The Navy and Coast Guard are providing equipment that can go down and look at the vehicle, Osterman said.

Gen. David Berger, commandant of the Marine Corps, announced during the news briefing that he had directed the immediate suspension of water operations for all assault amphibious vehicles as a precaution until they determine what caused Thursday's accident. Berger also said every assault amphibious vehicle in the fleet was going to be inspected. Osterman said the Marines have more than 800 assault amphibious vehicles.

The Marines who were aboard the ve-

hicle when it sank were wearing their normal combat gear, which includes body armor, because of the training that they were doing on the island.

They were also wearing flotation vests, according to Osterman, and some of the Marines were rescued because they were floating.

The USS San Diego and USS Somerset, amphibious transport dock ships that carry assault amphibious vehicles in the well deck, are part of the search. According to images posted online by 15th MEU, Marines from Battalion Landing Team 1/4 embarked onto the ships Saturday to conduct "training to increase Navy-Marine Corps interoperability in the eastern Pacific."

Assisting in the search for the missing are the USS John Finn, three U.S. Navy MH-60 helicopters, Coast Guard ships and helicopters, and multiple small boats from the USS Makin Island, USS Somerset and USS San Diego. The helicopters have been flying nonstop to assist with the search and rescue effort, according to Osterman.

San Clemente Island is about 70 miles west of San Diego and hosts communications equipment overseen by the Navy for managing air space, ranges and operating areas, according to the official website for Fleet Area Control and Surveillance Facility, San Diego. There are more than a dozen ranges and operational areas within a 60-mile radius of the island, according to the website.

Trump threatens to move soon on banning TikTok

Associated Press

NEW YORK — President Donald Trump said he would take action as soon as Saturday to ban TikTok, a popular Chinese-owned video app that has been a source of national security and censorship concerns.

Trump's comments came after published reports that the administration is planning to order China's ByteDance to sell TikTok. There were also reports Friday that software giant Microsoft is in talks to buy the app.

"As far as TikTok is concerned, we're

banning them from the United States," Trump told reporters Friday on Air Force One as he returned from Florida.

Trump said he could use emergency economic powers or an executive order to enforce the action, insisting, "I have that authority." He added, "It's going to be signed tomorrow."

Reports by Bloomberg News and the Wall Street Journal citing anonymous sources said the administration could soon announce a decision ordering ByteDance to divest its ownership in TikTok.

There have been reports of U.S. tech giants and financial firms being interested

in buying or investing in TikTok as the Trump administration sets its sights on the app. The New York Times and Fox Business, citing an unidentified source, reported Friday that Microsoft is in talks to buy TikTok. Microsoft declined to comment.

TikTok issued a statement Friday saying that, "While we do not comment on rumors or speculation, we are confident in the long-term success of TikTok."

TikTok's fun, goofy videos and ease of use has made it immensely popular, and U.S. tech giants like Facebook and Snapchat see it as a competitive threat.

Beard waiver granted for Muslim sailor

The Virginian-Pilot

For most of his four-year Navy career, Petty Officer 3rd Class Leo Katsareas has only been allowed to grow a quarter-inch beard.

But he believes his Islamic faith dictates he should maintain one that's fist length.

Now Katsareas, who is currently assigned to the Norfolk-based USS George Washington, can do so while still serving. He was recently granted a special grooming accommodation that allows him to grow facial hair up to 4 inches — for now.

The accommodation is subject to change if his duty station does.

"For too long, sailors like me have had to choose between serving our country and expressing our deeply held religious beliefs," Katsareas told Military.com, which first reported the waiver. "Recognizing and appreciating our nation's diversity of religious views, reflected in its sailors, will lead to a stronger and better Navy. That's a win for

everyone."

Eric Baxter, an attorney with the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty who helped Katsareas obtain the waiver on appeal, told The Virginian-Pilot it's important for the U.S. military to allow men and women in uniform the same rights as any other citizen unless it directly poses a threat.

"There's a common misconception that people who are religious are just making choices about what to do," he said. "The truth is, when someone has a religious conviction, they feel compelled to comply with religious obligations. They feel a deep injury if they are unable to do the things they believe God is calling them to do ... It feels demeaning there's not an acknowledgement of religious differences and a greater willingness to accommodate those."

Katsareas, a mass communication specialist, was unavailable for an interview this week. According to the Becket Fund's website, he is an Aus-

tralia native and converted to Islam as a teenager. He "fell in love with America's history, its principles, and particularly its commitment to freedom," the website states, and came to the United States eight years ago.

Baxter said his client has struggled to get appropriate waivers since joining the Navy in 2016, often having to start all over again when he was transferred.

His most recent special accommodation request was initially denied this spring. That's when he reached out to the Becket Fund, which has helped those in other military branches with similar requests.

In March, the Navy updated its policies to allow fleet commanders to approve most religious accommodation requests. Also, only the deputy chief of naval operations has the authority to deny such requests, "and he does so only when necessary ... to fulfill a compelling government interest," Cmdr. Dave Hecht, a spokesman for the Chief of Naval Personnel,

said in an email.

"All Sailors are welcome to request a waiver in order to observe religious practices," he wrote. "We value the diversity in our force to include our Sailors' religious preferences."

Hecht said the Navy could not discuss Katsareas' case due to privacy concerns. But under recent Department of Defense guidance, he said the service is further reviewing its standards and policies "to ensure that we promote the morale, cohesion, and readiness of the force to improve diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunity for our Service members."

Grooming standards, including facial hair policies, are part of that, he said.

The sailor has said he'd be willing to shave the hair in life-threatening circumstances, but doesn't think he should have to otherwise.

"The ongoing threat of being required to immediately shave places pressure on my religious beliefs," Katsareas told Military.com.

VMI says Confederate monuments will stay

Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Va. — The superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute said it will not take down its Confederate monuments. But the military college in Lexington said it will change some of its long-standing traditions.

The Roanoke Times reports that retired Army Gen. J.H. Binford Peay III wrote about the Confederate monument

issue in a letter to the VMI community on Wednesday.

Peay wrote that VMI's primary focus has been to celebrate the honor and integrity of those associated with the institute. He said the school's honoring of its history does not "in any way condone racism, much less slavery."

Multiple buildings are named for Confederate Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson as well as for other alumni and faculty

who fought for the Confederacy. A statue of Jackson also stands in front of the barracks.

Peay said changes will include reorienting flagpoles surrounding the Jackson statue. The school also will relocate an oath ceremony from a battlefield where 10 VMI cadets died fighting for the Confederacy to school grounds. VMI also will have classes in diversity training.

Navy shipbuilder, union to resume contract negotiations

Associated Press

BATH, Maine — Navy shipbuilder Bath Iron Works and the union representing striking workers will head back to the negotiating table for the first

time since a strike began more than a month ago, a union official said Friday.

Both parties will participate in a session on Monday with a federal mediator, Jay Wadleigh, district business represen-

tative for the Machinists union, told The Associated Press.

About 4,300 production workers represented by Machinists Local S6 went on strike June 22 after overwhelmingly rejecting the company's contract in a dis-

pute that's primarily centered on subcontractors, work rules and seniority. Wages and benefits are a secondary concern.

Wadleigh called the return to the table "a step in the right direction."

Boston Marathon bomber's death sentence overturned

Associated Press

A federal appeals court Friday threw out Dzhokhar Tsarnaev's death sentence in the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing, saying the judge who oversaw the case did not adequately screen jurors for potential biases.

A three-judge panel of the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ordered a new penalty-phase trial on whether Tsarnaev, 27, should be executed for the attack that killed three people and wounded more than 260 others.

"But make no mistake: Dzhokhar will spend his remaining days locked up in prison, with the only matter remaining being whether he will die by execution," Judge O. Rogerie Thompson wrote in the ruling, more than six months after arguments were heard in the case.

An attorney for Tsarnaev said they are grateful for the

court's "straightforward and fair decision: if the government wishes to put someone to death, it must make its case to a fairly selected jury that is provided all relevant information."

"It is now up to the government to determine whether to put the victims and Boston through a second trial, or to allow closure to this terrible tragedy by permitting a sentence of life without the possibility of release," David Patton said in an email.

A spokesperson for the U.S. Attorney's office in Boston said they were reviewing the opinion and had no immediate comment. Prosecutors could ask the full appeals court to hear the case or go straight to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The mother of Krystle Campbell, the 29-year-old killed in the attack, expressed outrage at the court's decision.

"I just don't understand it," Patricia Campbell told The

Boston Globe. "It's just terrible that he's allowed to live his life. It's unfair. He didn't wake up one morning and decide to do what he did. He planned it out. He did a vicious, ugly thing."

Tsarnaev's lawyers acknowledged at the beginning of his trial that he and his older brother, Tamerlan Tsarnaev, set off the two bombs at the marathon finish line. But they argued that Dzhokhar Tsarnaev is less culpable than his brother, who they said was the mastermind behind the attack.

Tamerlan Tsarnaev died in a gunbattle with police a few days after the April 15, 2013, bombing. Dzhokhar Tsarnaev is now behind bars at a high-security supermax prison in Florence, Colo.

Tsarnaev was convicted on 30 charges, including conspiracy and use of a weapon of mass destruction. The 1st Circuit upheld all but a few of the convictions.

Fla. battens down as hurricane approaches

Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Hurricane Isaias ripped shingles off roofs and blew over trees as it carved its way through the Bahamas early Saturday and headed toward the Florida coast, where officials in Miami said they were closing beaches, marinas and parks.

Miami Mayor Carlos Gimenez said Friday that 20 evacuation centers were on standby that could be set up with COVID-19 safety measures.

"We still don't think there is a need to open shelters for this storm, but they are ready," he said.

Authorities in North Carolina ordered the evacuation of Ocracoke Island, which was slammed by last year's Hurricane Dorian, starting Saturday evening. Meanwhile, officials in the Bahamas evacuated people on Abaco island, who have been living in temporary structures since Dorian. People living in the eastern end of Grand Bahama were also being moved.

Isaias had maximum sustained winds of 85 mph Saturday morning and some strengthening was possible later Saturday, the U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami said. The storm was centered about 80 miles south-southeast of Nassau in the Bahamas and was moving northwest at 12 mph. Forecasters said some decrease in its forward motion was expected.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said the state was "fully prepared for this and any future storm during this hurricane season," with stockpiles of personal protective equipment, generators, bottled water and meals ready to be distributed.

But he urged people to have seven days of food, water and medication on hand and said state-run coronavirus testing sites in the areas where the storm could hit would be closed.

Mexico now ranked third in virus deaths

Associated Press

PARIS — Mexico now has the third most COVID-19 deaths in the world, behind the United States and Brazil, while former success story Vietnam is struggling to control an outbreak spreading in its most famous beach resort.

Mexican health officials on Friday reported 688 new deaths, pushing the country's total to 46,688. That put Mexico just ahead of the United Kingdom, which has 46,119, according to the tally by Johns Hopkins University.

China reported a more than 50% drop in newly confirmed cases in a possible sign that its latest major outbreak in the northwestern region of Xinjiang may have run its course.

However, in Hong Kong, infections continue to surge, with more than 100 new cases reported as of Saturday among the population of 7.5 million. Officials have reimposed dining restrictions and mask requirements.

South Korean prosecutors arrested the elderly leader of a secretive religious sect linked to more than 5,200 of the country's 14,336 confirmed cases. He has denied charges of hiding members

and underreporting gatherings to avoid broader quarantines.

In Vietnam, a third person died of coronavirus complications, officials said Saturday, a day after it recorded its first death as it struggles with a renewed outbreak after 99 days with no local cases.

India recorded its steepest spike of 57,118 new cases in the past 24 hours, taking its coronavirus caseload close to 1.7 million, with July alone accounting for nearly 1.1 million infections.

The country's Civil Aviation Ministry delayed resumption of international flights by another month until Aug. 31. But it will continue to allow several international carriers from the United States, Europe and the Middle East to operate special flights to evacuate stranded nationals.

The global pandemic has impacted nearly every aspect of this year's Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, with as few as 1,000 pilgrims already residing in Saudi Arabia taking part, down from 2.5 million last year.

The Saudi Health Ministry said there have been no cases of COVID-19 among this year's pilgrims.

Airbnb shuts down party houses in NJ amid clusters

Associated Press

TRENTON, N.J. — Airbnb said Friday it's cracking down on party houses throughout New Jersey, suspending or removing altogether 35 listings, after state health officials warned house parties led to clusters of COVID-19 outbreaks.

"We ban party houses and will not tolerate irresponsible behavior on our platform," Airbnb executive Chris Lehane said in a statement. "We know that there is still more work to be done, we ask that neighbors contact us as soon as possible through our Neighborhood Support Hotline, to directly communicate any concerns."

Airbnb did not disclose the addresses of the 35 locations but indicated they're across the state, including Jersey City and Newark in the north, as well as a number of shore towns like Asbury Park, Atlantic City and Ventnor, among others.

The crackdown comes just days after Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy and Health Commissioner Judy Persichilli reported that large gatherings, particularly of younger people, across the state were leading to positive coronavirus tests.

Alabama

MONTGOMERY — A surge in coronavirus cases has overwhelmed Alabama's ability to provide test results within the expected 2- to 3-day turnaround, state health regulators said Friday.

The current turnaround time for most COVID-19 testing performed in Alabama by commercial laboratories and the state laboratory is now averaging about 7 days, the Alabama Department of Public Health said.

The department "recognizes that this is too long and asks for consumers and physicians and other providers to help in making sure that those who are most vulnerable become the focus for testing: the elderly, those in congregate living settings, healthcare personnel, those with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and those with

underlying medical conditions that place them most at risk," it said in a news release.

To help ease the turnaround time, the department said employers should not require employees to test negative for COVID-19 before returning to work.

Arizona

PHOENIX — A Phoenix-area music teacher who resigned after being told he'd have to be on campus to teach virtual classes amid the pandemic is facing a \$2,000 fine.

The Dysart Unified School District is set to charge Tavious Peterkin, a music teacher at an El Mirage school, to release him from his contract, the Arizona Republic reported.

Such a fee is common in Arizona school districts. Because the state is in a long-running teacher shortage, it's harder to find educators to fill vacant positions. Districts charge the fee to educators who suddenly quit to cover the costs of hiring someone new.

But Peterkin's case raises questions over whether fees are fair in a pandemic. Peterkin said he thought he would be excused from paying to leave because of COVID-19.

California

SACRAMENTO — California health officials reported the state's first coronavirus death of a child on Friday as the statewide tally of fatalities surpassed 9,000, saying the victim was a teenager who had other health conditions.

The teenager's death occurred in the Central Valley, but officials at the state Department of Public Health released no other details, citing privacy rules. The Central Valley is the state's major agricultural region and recently has become one of California's hot spots for the virus.

It's extremely rare for children to die of the coronavirus. As of mid-July, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said 228 children had died of the disease in the U.S., less

than 0.2% of the nation's deaths at the time.

In California, more than 9,000 people have now died from the virus, and three-quarters were 65 and older. Only about 9% of California's nearly half-million confirmed virus cases are children, and very few have suffered conditions serious enough for hospitalization, according to state data.

Illinois

SPRINGFIELD — Gov. J.B. Pritzker's administration Friday urged additional vigilance by local officials in 11 counties where there are upticks in COVID-19 cases.

The Illinois Department of Public Health reported there are 11 counties in "warning level" status because of the spread of the coronavirus, which causes the highly contagious and potentially lethal COVID-19. Online data shows there are 13.

The health department uses a variety of indicators to determine warning-level status, including increased new infections per 100,000 people, a 20% increase in deaths two weeks in a row, availability of intensive care units in hospitals, hospital admissions and more. An area hits warning level by surpassing at least two indicators.

Nevada

LAS VEGAS — Nevada officials said Friday that unemployment statewide has risen again to 24.9%, with a wave of more than 18,000 people filing initial claims for benefits last week during an ongoing economic slump following mid-March coronavirus closures.

The state Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation reported that the week ending July 25 was the fifth in a row of increases in regular initial unemployment benefit claims, up 18% from the previous week, and the second highest weekly total in state history.

The total number of filings for first-time benefits is approaching 600,000 since the business closures began.

South Dakota

SIOUX FALLS — As South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem pushes schools to reopen, a fundraising email from her campaign says she is discouraging school districts from requiring masks and telling parents they should send their children to school without masks.

The Republican governor made the argument for schools reopening, saying that research indicates the health risks are low for children. She has repeatedly cast doubt on the practicality and efficacy of wearing masks to prevent COVID-19 infections, even as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said, "There is increasing evidence that cloth face coverings help prevent people who have COVID-19 from spreading the virus to others."

The fundraising email from Noem's campaign said, "Governor Kristi Noem will not issue a state-wide mandate for distance learning, and is encouraging all families to send their children back to school — without masks."

Texas

AUSTIN — The state's top teachers group criticized state guidelines for starting the school year Friday, saying they would unfairly punish districts that choose to stick with online instruction amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The comments from the Texas State Teachers Association come after Gov. Greg Abbott, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and the state's other Republican leaders on Friday endorsed the guidelines from Attorney General Ken Paxton and the Texas Education Agency.

The Texas Education Agency guidelines limit school districts to four weeks of exclusively online instruction unless a district gets a waiver from the agency. School districts would decide when and how to start their school year, but the state would set the number of days and hours of instruction required.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

2 arrested, thousands of pot plants seized

MA BOSTON — Two people federal authorities said operated a massive illegal marijuana growing operation that was cultivating thousands of plants at multiple locations are heading to court, prosecutors said.

Weiqing Li, 41, and Li Qin Li, 49, were arrested and charged with manufacturing marijuana and possessing marijuana with intent to distribute, according to the U.S. attorney's office in Massachusetts.

Authorities executing search warrants at two homes in Palmer, two homes in Monson, and a warehouse in Monson found a total of more than 4,000 pot plants, federal authorities said.

Man charged in samurai sword killing won't talk

CT HARTFORD — A murder suspect accused of using a samurai sword to kill his roommate did not speak at a hearing and is not represented by an attorney.

At an arraignment hearing in Hartford, Jerry David Thompson, 42, refused to speak. Police said he is claiming he is a sovereign citizen, meaning he believes the government is illegitimate and its laws not binding.

Thompson is charged in the killing of Victor King, 64, who rented him a room in his home in downtown Hartford, the police said.

The two had argued about Thompson not paying rent, and Thompson threatened King with the sword, the newspaper reported.

Friends of King called the police when they could not reach him. His body was found with multiple stab wounds on the floor of the kitchen, police said.

Plane makes emergency landing on highway

CA SAN ONOFRE — The pilot of a small plane that lost engine power made a safe emergency landing on a Southern California highway, authorities said.

After rejecting the Pacific Coast Highway as a possible landing spot because it was too narrow, the pilot opted to set the Piper PA24 down on Interstate 5, the Orange County Register reported.

He timed the landing for a break in traffic near Camp Pendleton, said California Highway Patrol Officer Mark Latulippe.

"The pilot landed (the plane) on the freeway lanes without hitting any vehicles and veered to the right shoulder to remove the aircraft from the (roadway)," Latulippe said.

The 55-year-old pilot, the sole occupant of the late 1950s-model plane was en route from Orange County's John Wayne Airport to Montgomery-Gibbs Executive Airport in San Diego when the engine failed, the newspaper reported.

Chief, officer arrested for altering records

GA FAIRMOUNT — A northwest Georgia police chief and police officer have resigned after they were arrested for falsifying records.

The Georgia Bureau of Investigation said it arrested both the chief, Chandler Cagle Walter, 31, and an officer, Olan Mark Lowe, 48. Each was released on \$2,500 bail.

Fairmount Mayor Steven Brannon said both resigned later.

The men, both Calhoun residents, are charged with false official certificates and writings by officers.

In June, GBI said Gordon County District Attorney Rosemary Greene asked for an investigation into whether Walter and Lowe had falsified Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training records and improperly used state criminal databases during a test.

Cemetery to add more cameras after vandalism

AR LITTLE ROCK — An Arkansas cemetery is adding more security cameras after vandals desecrated the graves of Confederate soldiers, a cemetery employee said.

Two people were caught on camera sneaking into Oakland Cemetery Park in Little Rock on July 11 and writing "Black Lives Matter" and an obscenity related to President Donald Trump on an obelisk marking the grave sites of nearly 900 unidentified Confederate soldiers, according to Sexton John Raines, who works at the cemetery.

The Sons of Confederate Veterans, which donated the cameras to the cemetery, plans to provide additional cameras following the vandalism, Raines said.

Police investigating counterfeit cash

AZ YUMA — Police in Yuma are investigating some counterfeit money that is being passed around the city.

The fake money includes \$100 bills, according to authorities.

The cash will pass the counterfeit bill detector pen test, but police officials said the bills appear to be lighter in color and have a different feel than real paper money.

Police are asking Yuma stores and community members to check any \$100 bills

and other cash for color, feel, red and blue fibers and serial numbers as there may be duplicates.

Man accused of trying to fling feces at police

WV HUNTINGTON — A West Virginia man is accused of spitting at and trying to throw his own feces at police following a traffic stop.

A criminal complaint in Cabell County Magistrate Court said Thomas Edward Oxley Jr., 41, of Charleston was charged with possession of a controlled substance, obstructing an officer, second offense driving revoked for DUI, speeding and a firearms violation.

During processing, Oxley allegedly told an officer to remove his handcuffs so that they could fight, the complaint said.

Oxley allegedly then pulled down his pants to defecate and attempted to throw the feces at officers. Oxley also spat toward them before a mask was put on him.

Lifeguard spots 'significant size' shark

NY HEMPSTEAD — Swimming was banned at several Long Island beaches after a lifeguard reported seeing a large shark.

The "significant size" shark was spotted by a Town of Hempstead lifeguard on a surfboard, town officials said in a tweet. Swimming was suspended at several beaches along Long Island's south shore as a precaution.

Town of Hempstead bay constables were assisting with the search for the shark.

Town spokesman Michael Caputo said officials hope the beaches can reopen at some point.

From wire reports

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NFL training camp different this season

Associated Press

Don't expect any footballs — or players — on fields at NFL training camps anytime too soon.

No blocking sleds. No pass-rush drills. No whistles.

As teams adhere to the medical protocols that wisely and necessarily have been ordered by the league and the players' union, any sort of football action might be delayed until mid-August.

Hopefully, no coaches are in a rush to get the blocking and route running, the passing and rushing and kicking going in earnest even after the coronavirus pandemic shut down since March anything but remote practices and workouts.

Strange times indeed.

"These first two weeks we need to gently ramp them up and get them ready to play. Everyone is coming from different areas and with different restrictions," Chargers general manager Tom Telesco said. "We're going to have to do different things. Without preseason games or combined team practices, we will have to change up our schedule. Have to put them in more competitive situations and do the best we can."

Doing the best they can in 2020 should mean keeping everyone safe and healthy, not chasing wins. That can come later if the NFL's plan fares better than Major League Baseball's so far.

And there's no question that football organizations are paying close attention to MLB's situation.

"We understand that the virus is real," Eagles coach Doug Pederson says, "and we do everything we can in our powers to stay safe, protecting ourselves when we're in the building, protecting our players, and it's unfortunate what has happened. But we do have a lengthy set of protocols that we have to abide by, and this is our new normal right now, working in these conditions ...

"It's something that we are going to embrace. We are going to make it a positive."

How? What are the appropriate dynamics for training camp in a sport that requires frequent contact, little to no social distancing, even huddles? A sport featuring trenches, gang tackling and, at the very least, two men touching the football on every play?

Dr. Scott Braunstein, the medical director of Sollis

Health-LA and a former sideline physician for the Rams, has some suggestions.

While Braunstein finds the league's protocols reasonable and well developed, he is concerned about how the NFL is dealing with players who have had known close exposure to someone with a positive COVID-19 test or someone with symptoms suggestive of the coronavirus.

"The issue is that what will occur is, initially after exposure those nasal swabs are extremely insensitive to picking up the viral loads," Braunstein says. "The chance you will show up as a positive are small and the chances of a false negative are almost 100%. It takes seven days before those tests are truly accurate. Even on the fourth day, there's an up to 67% false negative rate.

"So you will get players back in camp who are positive and are infectious."

Braunstein is a strong proponent of point-of-care testing, something the Screen Actors Guild is using.

"These are tests that can come back within 30 minutes pretty accurately before you get on a plane or before you get on a bus," he explains. "Results are

almost lab quality, so maybe a team could then isolate players who test positive away from the rest of the team."

He also wonders about travel for teams. The NFL, like MLB, opted not to seek a bubble environment like the NHL, NBA, WNBA and MLS went for.

"Travel is definitely another issue and this is where the NBA and NHL really got it right, but it may not be feasible to do that in football," Braunstein says. "Even traveling as a team on a private jet, you are still breathing recirculated air and flying across the country."

Another logical step, Braunstein says, is facial coverings for NFL players. A face shield has been developed that players could use, but Braunstein urges more.

"If they want to provide for the greatest level of safety, masks should be used for every play," he says. "Some sort of facial material should be mandatory. ...

"I know the NFL is not ordering mandatory masks and the players and the union have given some negative feedback. I think the discomfort of wearing a mask is nothing compared to what I have seen in emergency rooms."

Ravens quarterback Jackson says he's 'got to do better'

Associated Press

Baltimore Ravens quarterback and reigning NFL MVP Lamar Jackson is eager to get started at training camp following an offseason in which he had a perilous encounter with a jet ski, tossed footballs to Antonio Brown and diligently avoided the coronavirus.

Jackson guided the Ravens to a 14-2 regular-season record in 2019, setting a league record for yards rushing by a quarterback and serving as the focal point of an attack that amassed an unprecedented 3,296 yards on the ground.

Following an unsightly playoff-opening loss to Tennessee,

the multi-faceted quarterback collected his MVP trophy and embarked on an offseason that took a sharp turn toward uncharted waters when the COVID-19 pandemic struck in March.

Speaking of water, Jackson made a splash on Twitter with a post that showed him on one of his standard impromptu runs during a pickup game on the beach. After dodging a would-be tackler, Jackson veered to his left into the path of a jet ski parked in the shallow surf.

"I did not run into a jet ski. I jumped over the jet ski and fell in the water," Jackson said with a grin during a Zoom call

Wednesday from the Ravens' training complex.

In an effort to make up for time lost due to the cancellation of minicamp, Jackson got together on a practice field in Florida with teammate Marquise Brown and the young receiver's cousin, former NFL wideout Antonio Brown.

Antonio Brown recently announced his retirement following a rocky stretch in which he was cut by New England in September and later accused of sexual assault by his former trainer. Regardless, Jackson insists the seven-time Pro Bowl star would be a good fit with the Ravens.

"It was nice throwing to Antonio Brown," Jackson said. "I was hoping we would get him. Still hoping, a little bit."

Now on the verge of starting his third NFL season, Jackson expects to ramp up his game quickly this summer after spending the past four months practicing social distancing instead of drills with the team.

"I wish I was with my guys in OTAs in April like usual, but COVID-19 had a better idea," Jackson said.

Jackson ran for 1,206 yards and threw 36 touchdown passes last year, so it would appear as if there's little room for improvement.

NBA roundup

Harden scores 49 as Rockets outlast Mavs

Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — James Harden scored 49 points and the Houston Rockets outlasted the Dallas Mavericks 153-149 in overtime Friday night in their first game in the NBA bubble.

Harden made 1 of 2 free throws before Trey Burke made a three-pointer to get the Mavericks within three with about 15 seconds left in OT. Harden made 1 of 2 free throws after that, Burke missed a three, and Harden got the rebound to secure the victory.

Russell Westbrook added 31 points for the Rockets after arriving in Florida late after testing positive for the coronavirus.

Kristaps Porzingis had 39 points and 16 rebounds for Dallas, and Luca Dončić had a triple-double with 28 points, 13 rebounds and 10 assists. Burke had 31 points, making eight of 10 three-pointers.

Bucks 119, Celtics 112: Giannis Antetokounmpo converted a tiebreaking three-point play with 1:28 left on an overturned call that kept him in the game and helped Milwaukee beat Boston.

Antetokounmpo had 36 points, 15 rebounds and seven assists in the Bucks' first game in the restart. Milwaukee improved the NBA's best record to 54-12 and moved within a victory of clinching the top seed in the Eastern Conference for the second straight year.

Trail Blazers 140, Grizzlies 135 (OT): CJ McCollum scored 33 points, teaming with Damian Lillard for 11 of their team's 16 in overtime, and Portland pulled out a desperately needed victory to resume its season by beating Memphis.

Lillard finished with 29 points and nine assists to help the Trail Blazers boost their hopes for a seventh consecutive playoff

appearance. Carmelo Anthony added 21 points as Portland moved within 2½ games of the Grizzlies for the No. 8 spot in the Western Conference.

Magic 128, Nets 118: Evan Fournier scored 24 points, Nikola Vucevic had 22 and Orlando picked up where it left off before the NBA season was suspended, beating Brooklyn.

Spurs 129, Kings 120: DeMar DeRozan scored 17 of his 27 points in the fourth quarter to help San Antonio beat Sacramento.

De'Aaron Fox scored a career-high 39 points for the Kings.

Suns 125, Wizards 112: Devin Booker scored 27 points, Deandre Ayton added 24 points and 12 rebounds and Phoenix beat Washington.

Booker made all nine of his free throws and the Suns hit 30 of 32 from the line.

Sports briefs

After two rounds, Todd leads by 2 shots

Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Brendon Todd shot a 5-under 65 Friday and grabbed a two-stroke lead through 36 holes of the FedEx St. Jude Invitational.

Todd trailed defending champion Brooks Koepka after the first round by two strokes. He quickly erased that deficit and took the lead with a bogey-free, five-birdie round for a 129 total at the World Golf Championships event at TPC Southwind.

Rickie Fowler closed with birdies on his final two holes for a 67 and 131 total just behind Todd.

Koepka had the lead to himself at 10 under before falling apart on his back nine with a double bogey and two bogeys. He finished with a 71, his first time over par at this course in seven rounds. He was four strokes back, tied with Byeong Hun An (65) and Chez Reavie (67).

Jon Rahm shot a 74 and now is 4 over in his first event as No. 1 in the world.

Brewers' Cain opts out of rest of season

Milwaukee Brewers outfielder Lorenzo Cain has decided not to play the remainder of the 2020 season.

The Brewers announced the two-time All-Star's decision Saturday hours after news broke that their scheduled home opener would be postponed for a second straight day because multiple members of the St. Louis Cardinals have tested positive for the coronavirus.

"Lorenzo Cain has informed us that he will not participate for the remainder of the 2020 season," Brewers general manager David Stearns said in a statement. "We fully support Lorenzo's decision and will miss his talents on the field and leadership in the clubhouse."

Cain's announcement comes on the same day that Miami Marlins second baseman Isan Diaz announced he was opting out. At least 21 members of the Marlins' traveling party have tested positive for COVID-19.

Brees says he'll stand for national anthem

NEW ORLEANS — Saints quarterback Drew Brees says he will continue to stand for the American flag but respects and supports any form of peaceful demonstration — including kneeling during the anthem — by those protesting social injustice and systemic racism.

"I'll always stand for the flag because of what it means to me and to honor all those who have sacrificed, who have served and died for our country, and all those who have struggled to move this country forward," Brees said Saturday.

"I acknowledge and respect anyone who chooses to kneel or any other form of peaceful protest to bring attention to social injustice and systemic racism that so many have endured and continue to endure in our country," Brees continued, adding that he "always will support and advocate for Black and brown communities in the fight for social justice."

Tennis player tests positive in Palermo

PALERMO, Sicily — A tennis player entered for the Palermo Ladies Open tested positive for the coronavirus and has withdrawn from the tournament, organizers announced Saturday.

While noting that the player is asymptomatic, the WTA Tour said in a statement that she will remain in isolation "until cleared by a physician per the established protocols."

Local organizers, who would not name the player, said she was admitted to a national health facility designated for asymptomatic patients with COVID-19.

"The efficiency of the protocols and the related tests allowed us to intercept a positive case," said Dr. Antonio Cascio, an infectious disease specialist at the University of Palermo who is the tournament's anti-virus coordinator. "The player never left her hotel room while awaiting the results of the exams."

Game postponed amid Cards positives

Associated Press

The Cardinals-Brewers game in Milwaukee on Saturday was postponed after one more player and three staff members with St. Louis tested positive for the coronavirus, according to a person familiar with the situation.

The Miami Marlins received no new positive results in their latest round of coronavirus testing, a different person familiar with that situation said, but second baseman Isan Diaz opted out of the season.

The Philadelphia Phillies, meanwhile, said they had no new positives from tests a day before. Players were permitted to access Citizens Bank Park for staggered workouts in the afternoon.

The people with knowledge of the Cardinals' and Marlins' situations spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the tests had not been released publicly.

Two Cardinals players were flagged for positive tests on Friday, forcing the series opener in Milwaukee to be called

off. The teams had hoped to resume play Saturday and make up Friday's game as part of a doubleheader Sunday.

The Cardinals learned of their first two positive tests Thursday night from samples taken Wednesday before a game in Minnesota. Players and staff were instructed to isolate in their hotel rooms, and the club said it was conducting rapid testing and contact tracing.

Saturday's game in Milwaukee is the 17th postponement caused by the coronavirus in the first 10 days of baseball's truncated 60-game season.

At least 21 members of the Marlins' traveling party have been infected by an outbreak at the start of a season-opening trip. The team hasn't played since Sunday in Philadelphia but hopes to resume games next week.

Diaz consistently tested negative while the season was on hold, but he decided to become the first Miami player to opt out. He played in two of the Marlins' three games before their season was halted.

"This has been a tough week to see so many of my teammates come down with this virus, and see how quickly it spreads," Diaz wrote on Instagram. "After much deliberation and thought, I have made the difficult choice of opting out for the remainder of the 2020 season."

Diaz batted .173 as a rookie last year, but the organization has big hopes regarding his potential.

The infected Marlins players and staff left Philadelphia in sleeper buses Friday for Miami, where they will stay together in quarantine. The rest of the team remained in isolation at a hotel in Philadelphia.

With six teams idled Friday by the pandemic, Commissioner Rob Manfred spoke to union leader Tony Clark about the importance of players following the sport's coronavirus protocols.

Manfred and Clark talked about what needs to be done to finish the season, a person familiar with the conversation said. The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity

because of the sensitivity of the situation.

The conversation between Manfred and Clark, first reported by ESPN, comes amid growing evidence that the spread of infection threatens to overtake efforts to play ball.

"Some things aren't looking too good right now, but we have to play up to that point. Players are seeing what can happen," Houston manager Dusty Baker said.

The Phillies-Blue Jays series in Philadelphia was among two weekend series called off earlier. The Marlins were hit with a virus outbreak in Philadelphia, and both Miami and the Phillies are sidelined for at least a week.

The schedules of the New York Yankees and Baltimore Orioles have also been scrambled. Cleveland players and staff talked about postponing Friday night's game at Minnesota but played on. The Cardinals had played at Target Field on Wednesday, a day before the Indians arrived.

Judge homers for 3rd straight game as Yanks rip Red Sox

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Aaron Judge homered for the third straight night, Jordan Montgomery cut up one of the league's hottest lineups in his 2020 debut and the New York Yankees beat the Boston Red Sox 5-1 on Friday night in their first home game of the coronavirus-shortened season.

Judge took aim at Yankee Stadium's short right-field porch in the third, a half-inning after starting a double play from right. Gio Urshela and Brett Gardner hit their first home runs of the season, Chad Green pitched two perfect innings in relief, and Adam Ottavino and Jonathan Holder closed up shop as New York improved to 5-1.

Michael Chavis homered for Boston and Phillips Valdez impressed over 2²/₃ scoreless

innings, but the club couldn't overcome another poor start by Ryan Weber (0-2).

Tigers 7, Reds 2: Spencer Turnbull and the Detroit bullpen combined on a three-hitter, with Austin Romine and Travis Demeritte each driving in two runs against visiting Cincinnati.

Turnbull (1-0) allowed two runs and three hits in six innings. He struck out six, walked one and didn't allow a hit until former Tigers teammate Nick Castellanos doubled leading off the fifth.

Braves 11, Mets 10: Travis d'Arnaud drove in five runs, including three with a bases-loaded double that capped a five-run eighth against his former team and host Atlanta rallied from six runs down.

D'Arnaud had three hits. The

biggest was the double off Seth Lugo (1-1) that gave Atlanta the lead.

White Sox 3, Royals 2: Adam Engel hit a three-run homer in the second inning as Chicago spoiled Kansas City's home opener.

Twins 4, Indians 1: Max Kepler hit his second leadoff home run of the season, and Alex Avila added his first homer for host Minnesota.

Orioles 6, Rays 3: Anthony Santander hit an odd home run off Blake Snell and had three RBIs to help Baltimore beat visiting Tampa Bay.

Cubs 6, Pirates 3: Yu Darvish pitched six shutout innings and Jason Heyward hit a key two-run single to lead host Chicago.

Giants 9, Rangers 2: Wilmer Flores hit a three-run homer

off Mike Minor in the fifth inning, and host San Francisco beat Texas.

Mariner 5, Athletics 3: Taijuan Walker threw one-hit ball over seven innings and Kyle Lewis had his sixth straight multi-hit game to lead host Seattle.

Diamondbacks 5, Dodgers 3: Christian Walker hit a three-run double in the eighth inning and host Arizona broke out of its offensive funk.

Padres 8, Rockies 7: Tommy Pham hit a three-run homer in the ninth after Fernando Tatis Jr. tied it with two outs, and San Diego spoiled Colorado's home opener.

Astros 9, Angels 6: Kyle Tucker had three hits and a career-high four RBIs, and Houston started a 10-game road trip with a win.