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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Trump: Troops in Afghanistan to be cut back

BY CHAD GARLAND

Stars and Stripes

President Donald Trump said he expects fewer than 5,000 U.S. troops to be in Afghanistan by November and called America's wars in the Middle East the "biggest mistake" in the country's history during a television interview this week.

"We're largely out of Afghanistan," Trump said in an interview with Axios aired on HBO on Monday. "It's already planned. ... We'll be down in a very short period of time to 8,000, then we're gonna be down to 4,000. We're negotiating right now, we've been there for 19 years — 19 years — we'll be getting out."

The U.S. has already withdrawn about a third of its troops, bringing the number to around 8,500, following a peace agreement signed with the Taliban in February that also calls for a full withdrawal by next summer if certain conditions are met, including the Taliban breaking ties with al-Qaida.

The current troop numbers are about what they were when Trump took office in 2017, before numbers ramped up again to about 14,000 under a strategy meant to pressure the militants into peace negotiations.

There will be "probably anywhere from 4,000 to 5,000" troops in Afghanistan by Election Day in November, Trump said in the interview, recorded last week. He said it would be 4,000 "very soon," but declined to say when.

The president also boasted that he "took out" ISIS in Iraq and Syria, killed the group's founder Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in Syria last October, and killed Iran's Maj. Gen. Qassim Soleimani in Baghdad this January.

"I've done things that no other president has done," he said. "They should have never been in the Middle East. The decision to go to the Middle East ... was the single biggest mistake made in the history of our country. That's my opinion."

With the Afghanistan War in its 19th

year, many critics believe much of the U.S. mission is no longer justified. Trump's challenger in the upcoming election, former Vice President Joe Biden, said earlier this year that the U.S. should only be there to prevent terrorist groups from threatening the U.S.

"That requires a much smaller footprint," he said on CBS's "Face the Nation," days before the U.S.-Taliban peace agreement was signed Feb. 29. That, he said, would mean "several thousand people."

Some lawmakers, however, fear a hasty troop drawdown without appropriate measures in place to ensure the Taliban live up to their promises could destabilize the country.

In a bipartisan vote last month, the House approved a measure restricting the administration from drawing down troops below 8,000 without first certifying that security and counterterrorism efforts would not be harmed. The measure must still gain Senate approval to take effect.

Some USFJ troops using dating app while quarantined

BY SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — The senior enlisted leader for U.S. Forces Japan has singled out military personnel for using dating apps and "hooking up" while under quarantine.

To prevent the coronavirus spread, U.S. service members and civilians arriving in Japan are placed in "restriction of movement," or ROM, for 14 days. People will soon have to test negative for the illness before being released, under a new policy adopted after a spate of cases were brought to Japan by personnel arriving from the United States.

However, some under quarantine aren't following the rules, USFJ Command Chief Master Sgt. Richard Winegardner Jr.

told American Forces Network during a livestreamed interview from Yokota.

"We're seeing some folks that ... are like, 'OK, I'm in here but I can just kind of sneak out.' What I would ask is if you know that somebody is doing this ... ask them to stop," he said, without elaborating on the violations or where they happened.

Some in quarantine are using dating apps such as Tinder and Bumble and "hooking up with folks," he said, without specifying whether the other parties involved were from the military community or outside the gates.

U.S. installations in Japan have differing policies about guest access, which has been limited or outright barred during the pandemic.

"They are not supposed to go out, but that doesn't mean you go

in," Winegardner said of people in quarantine.

Troops not under quarantine have also brought the coronavirus onto bases after going into unauthorized locations and establishments, he added.

"Wow, big surprise when you are bringing that stuff back," he said. "Service members are getting popped left and right for going to places that they don't belong, in areas that they don't belong ... bar districts."

Rule-breakers will face "quick and appropriate action," Col. Thomas Matelski, commander of U.S. Army Garrison Japan, said in a video message Thursday, after people from the garrison were seen partying in off-limits parts of Tokyo.

"It seems like a few members of our team are starting to lose focus," said Matelski, who over-

sees Camp Zama and Sagami General Depot in Kanagawa prefecture.

Maj. Gen. Viet X. Luong, commander of U.S. Army Japan, in his video message Thursday cited a "recent spike" in violations as a reason for increasing the health protection condition and tightening restrictions.

Tokyo recorded 390 new coronavirus cases Tuesday, down from a record-high 472 infections on Saturday. USFJ reported 127 active coronavirus cases Tuesday with most at bases on Okinawa.

The people in the military community who are testing positive are in their 20s and 30s, Winegardner said.

Rule-breakers have lost two levels of rank and received extra duties and fines, he added.

Troops face charges after fatal Iraq brawl

The Washington Post

The party was winding down around 4 a.m. when the fight erupted. The crowd at a bar in northern Iraq — including special operations Marines, defense contractors and civilians — had been drinking and dancing for hours, ringing in the new year.

A conversation between two Americans turned sour. A burly, bearded defense contractor speaking to a Navy corpsman screamed at least one profanity at him, witnesses later said. Bouncers ejected the contractor, an Army Special Forces veteran, who threatened to hurt the sailor when he got outside.

Bouncers told the sailor and two Marine friends to wait five minutes before leaving. But that did not deescalate the situation.

The three men approached the contractor and his colleagues outside, and a brawl ensued. One of the Marines punched the contractor in the side of the head, and the contractor spun around and landed on the back of his head, suffering a nine-inch skull fracture, according to previously unreported military documents and security video reviewed by *The Washington Post*. He died a few days later, on Jan. 4, 2019.

The contractor's death is at the center of military trials of the sailor and the two Marines, all members of the elite Marine Forces Special Operations Command. It is one of several recent incidents that have raised concerns about the conduct of America's elite combat forces, including an alleged sexual assault by a Navy SEAL in Iraq last summer, cocaine use and the strangulation of a Green Beret soldier in Mali in 2017.

The incidents prompted a review last year by Army Gen. Richard Clarke, chief of U.S. Special Operations Command, which found an erosion of leadership and ethics after nearly 20 years of combat. The resulting report did not cite any specific case, but said combat deployments have been "valued above

all others things," including professional development and personal maturity.

"We have often been too complacent as we build, train and certify our teams for the rigors of operating in a complex world," Clarke said. "We are renewing emphasis on proper accountability and supervision, and setting conditions for leader presence in the right places."

While military leaders have said they are pursuing a culture change, they shielded details of the MARSOC case from public view. Evidence was presented at an Article 32 hearing at Camp Lejeune, N.C., last October, but the session was not announced in advance and no media covered it.

The hearing went unannounced "in accordance with service regulations that prohibit including the name of accused in routine disseminations," said Maj. Kristin Tortorici, a Marine spokeswoman. Hearings in such high-profile cases are typically disclosed.

The lack of transparency, as well as inaccurate rumors about the case that spread in the special operations community, have stoked suspicions that the Marine Corps is hell-bent on obtaining convictions to send a message.

Ten other Marines were punished for "collateral misconduct" uncovered during the investigation, Tortorici said. She declined to describe the punishments, which have not previously been reported.

Some of the Marines punished administratively were present during the fight and have "credibility issues" after making false statements to investigators, according to a military report detailing the case, which was first reported last year by *The New York Times*.

As in several of the other recent cases, alcohol appears to have played a role, even though it is banned for deployed service members with few exceptions.

The contractor, Richard A. Rodriguez, 45, of Raeford, N.C., was a retired master sergeant

and married father with four children. He served 21 years in the Army, deploying to Afghanistan four times and earning a Bronze Star with V for valor in combat in September 2009. At the time of his death, he was working for Lockheed Martin.

Charged in his death are Navy Chief Petty Officer Eric S. Gilmet, Gunnery Sgt. Daniel A. Draher Jr. and Gunnery Sgt. Joshua S. Negron. They are accused of involuntary manslaughter, negligent homicide, obstruction of justice and drinking while deployed in violation of a general order. They each have lengthy service records in combat and are married with children.

Rodriguez's sister said their mother was devastated by his death and died a year later.

"I don't think her heart handled the sadness of losing one of her kids," Lori Rodriguez said.

The three service members declined interview requests, but their lawyers said they were acting in self-defense and helped Rodriguez after he was knocked out.

"The fact that a tragic accident happened here does not entail that a crime has been committed," said Brian Bouffard, Negron's attorney.

Details in the case are laid out in a previously unreported 21-page document, dated last November, that includes the evidence reviewed at the hearing and recommendations for senior commanders.

The Americans gathered at the T-Bar, a pub featuring cocktail waitresses, loud music and a Christmas tree. U.S. personnel were allowed to go out for dinner if they got approval and signed out, but were expected to adhere to alcohol prohibitions and meet a midnight curfew.

It isn't clear when Rodriguez and his friends arrived, but video shows that they were in the bar shortly after midnight. The Marines — known as Raiders within the special operations community — and a sailor arrived an hour or two later, and can be seen on video greeting other patrons.

Gilmet said hello to Rodriguez, who worked on the same base. Rodriguez laughed at one point during their conversation.

The bar was emptying at 4:15 a.m. when Rodriguez appeared to struggle to get Gilmet's attention and erupted at the sailor before he was thrown out.

"The evidence establishes that Mr. Rodriguez initiated the situation that eventually escalated into the incident charged," the officer in charge of the Article 32 hearing, Col. Glen Hines, wrote in the report. Hines did not respond to interview requests.

After the hearing last fall, Hines recommended that the men face charges of involuntary manslaughter, negligent homicide and violation of a general order. A conviction on the first charge carries a sentence of up to 10 years.

While Rodriguez was an instigator that night, Hines concluded, the killing was "unlawful" and a "reasonable person" should have seen that his injuries were "serious enough to warrant immediate medical treatment."

But Hines also wrote that the service members could be acquitted if a jury finds they acted in self-defense.

MARSOC announced charges last December, adding obstruction of justice, and the trials are expected to begin this fall.

In a motion, Bouffard accused MARSOC leaders of interfering in the cases, citing conversations that Negron had with other Marines. Commanders pressured "subordinates and others not to assist or testify" on behalf of the accused, and decided they were "not simply guilty, but also apparently unworthy of a fair trial," Bouffard wrote.

A hearing on those allegations was held July 13, and the case was allowed to proceed. Tortorici, the Marine spokeswoman, said MARSOC is "committed to ensuring this legal process is conducted in a fair and impartial manner."

Navy probes videos of K-9s attacking a Kaepernick fill-in

Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — The U.S. Navy is investigating an incident in which dogs attacked a “Colin Kaepernick stand-in” during a K-9 demonstration at a 2019 fundraiser at the Navy SEAL Museum in Florida.

The Navy said in a statement posted on Twitter that officials became aware of the video on Sunday.

Kaepernick is a former San Francisco 49ers quarterback who began kneeling during the playing of “The Star Spangled Banner” before games to protest social injustice and police brutality. He last played in the NFL in January 2017. He offered support to those protesting the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police officers in May, and the NFL’s commissioner has apologized for not listening earlier to players’ concerns about social injustice.

The videos show four dogs attacking a man, who is wearing a red Kaepernick football jersey over heavily padded gear as people stand nearby watching. In a second video, the man is laying on the ground when he’s approached by men wearing fatigues and holding rifles, saying, “On your belly.” The man replies, “Oh, man, I will stand,” as he rolls over, followed by laughing from the crowd.

The videos were apparently posted on Instagram last year and resurfaced over the weekend.

“The inherent message of this video is completely inconsistent with the values and ethos of Naval Special Warfare and the U.S. Navy,” the statement said.

The Navy said the “initial indications” are that no active-duty personnel or equipment were used in the demonstration at the “independent organization’s event.”

The Navy SEAL Museum is located in Fort Pierce, Fla., which is north of West Palm Beach on the state’s Atlantic Coast. According to its website, the National Navy UDT-SEAL Museum is the only museum dedicated solely to preserving the history of the U.S. Navy SEALs and their predecessors.

The museum’s stated main objective is the promotion of public education, with events for both children and adults. Children between the ages of 10 and 15 were recently given firsthand demonstrations on the care and training of working dogs as part of the museum’s “Frogman Foundry” program. The museum is not officially connected to the Navy. It was designated as a National Museum by an act of Congress and signed into law in 2008.

1 in 7 DODEA students to start school year virtually

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN

Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — Around 1 in 7 students in Defense Department schools worldwide will attend school virtually for at least the fall semester, school officials said Tuesday.

Parents of about 9,000 students selected the virtual school option by Thursday’s deadline last week, said Stephen Smith, a Department of Defense Education Activity-Europe spokesman said. That represents about 13% of the 69,000 students expected to attend DODEA schools around the world in the upcoming school year.

Breakouts of numbers by specific districts and regions were not available Tuesday evening, Smith said.

Classrooms at the Pentagon’s 160 schools will reopen this fall if local conditions allow, the Pentagon has said. DODEA schools were shuttered and classes moved online in the spring as countries around the world locked down to try to stem the spread of the coronavirus.

Students enrolled in virtual school in the

fall will be allowed to participate in extra-curricular activities at school, DODEA officials said, reversing an earlier decision.

Students have to commit to the virtual option for at least one semester, and can transition to attending classes in-person at the beginning of the second semester if local conditions allow, he said.

All students at DODEA schools on installations already in Health Protection Condition “Charlie” — indicating “sustained community transmission” of the virus — will begin the school year using remote learning with their classroom teacher, officials said. School reopenings at bases in the southeastern U.S. have been delayed this month due to the virus.

The union representing DODEA teachers has urged anyone concerned for the health and safety of students, staff and families to ask Congress to require that DODEA schools operate remotely. Federal Education Association leaders have cited concerns about the availability of personal protective equipment, the feasibility of social distancing and staffing levels.

‘SOS’ helps USAF crew find castaways

BY CHAD GARLAND

Stars and Stripes

An Air Force KC-135 Stratotanker was near the end of its pattern, looking for a missing white and blue skiff and its crew in the western Pacific, when it turned to avoid rough weather and spotted a tiny island.

“That’s when we saw ‘SOS’ and a boat right next to it on the beach,” Lt. Col. Jason Palmeira-Yen, the cargo plane’s pilot with the Hawaii Air National Guard, said in an Air Force statement.

The plane was dispatched Sunday from Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, with a crew of Hawaii and Pennsylvania Air National Guard members to search for three mariners who set out on what should have been about a 25-mile journey from one Micronesian atoll to another, but never arrived at their destination.

They apparently sailed off course and ran out of fuel — the uninhabited island where they were found is about 120 miles from their departure point — said the Australian military, which took part in the rescue along with the U.S. Coast Guard and Federated States of Micronesia.

The stranded sailors had set sail Thurs-

day, but when they failed to arrive more than a day later, a local notified Joint Rescue Sub-Center Guam that they were missing.

“This case highlights the importance of having a plan and making sure your family knows when you are expected to return,” said Capt. Christopher Chase, commander of Coast Guard Sector Guam.

Timely activation of the search and rescue system allowed for a quick response, Chase said in a Coast Guard statement. Watch personnel began coordinating with authorities throughout the region and seeking commercial vessels and others willing to help with the search.

The U.S. Air Force crew was flying at 1,500 feet when it spotted the call for help written in the sand on the tiny island of Pikelot, the Air Force said. The coral islet is about 1,800 miles east of the Philippines in the Micronesian state of Yap.

“From there we called in the Australian Navy because they had two helicopters nearby that could assist and land on the island,” said Palmeira-Yen.

Isaias makes inland march up East Coast

Associated Press

SOUTHPORT, N.C. — Tropical Storm Isaias spawned tornadoes and dumped rain along the U.S. East Coast on Tuesday after making landfall as a hurricane in North Carolina, where it smashed boats together and caused floods and fires that displaced dozens of people. At least two people were killed when one of its twisters hit a mobile home park.

Nearly 12 hours after coming ashore, Isaias was still sustaining near-hurricane strength winds of 70 mph Tuesday morning, and its forward march accelerated to 35 mph.

“Potentially life-threatening urban flooding is possible in D.C., Baltimore and elsewhere along and just west of the I-95 corridor today,” the National Hurricane Center warned.

Forecasters also issued clear warnings earlier, as Isaias approached land, urging

people to heed the danger of life-threatening storm surges along the coasts of North and South Carolina.

Nevertheless, some veterans of earlier storms were under the impression that their areas would be spared.

Royce Potter, a fifth-generation seafood purveyor and owner of Potter’s Seafood in Southport, said he rode out the storm on a boat docked near his business, which was damaged by the wind and water.

“They got this wrong,” Potter said, visibly shaken. “I’ve ridden storms out here for years.”

The storm surge and wind damage actually matched what the hurricane center predicted, leaving dozens of boats piled up against the docks and many decks facing the water smashed.

As Hurricane Isaias’ heaviest bands approached North Myrtle Beach, S.C., Monday evening, Dean Burris watched from the balcony of his family’s vacation rental.

“The water was crazy; the wind was up. The waves were coming up over the pier out there and people were walking, and we were scared for them,” he said.

Burris said a group of people were standing on Sea Cabin Pier taking photos, but took off running for land just moments before a portion collapsed from the strength of the storm.

“Next thing you know, the water kept getting higher and higher. It overtook the pier and I’m shocked it’s still standing.”

Two people were killed and at least three others were unaccounted for after a tornado destroyed several mobile homes in Windsor, N.C., said Ron Wesson, the chairman of the Bertie County Board of Commissioners. He said as many as 15 others were taken to hospitals with injuries.

The hurricane’s eye moved over land near Ocean Isle Beach, N.C., just after 11 p.m. Monday with maximum sustained winds of 85 mph.

Republicans, Democrats dig in on relief bill progress

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Negotiators on a huge coronavirus relief bill reported slight progress after talks resumed in the Capitol, with issues like food for the poor and aid to schools struggling to reopen safely assuming a higher profile in the talks.

Multiple obstacles remain, including an impasse on extending a \$600-per-week pandemic jobless benefit, funding for the U.S. Postal Service and aid to renters facing eviction. Democratic negotiators spoke of progress Monday, but Republicans remain privately pessimistic.

“We are really getting an understanding of each side’s position. And we’re making

some progress on certain issues moving closer together,” said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y.

After the meeting, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi told her Democratic colleagues on a call that she’s hopeful a deal could be reached this week but doesn’t know if it’s possible, according to a Democratic aide who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe the private discussion.

Neither side has budged from their positions, with Democrats demanding an extension of the \$600-per-week supplemental unemployment benefit that’s credited with propping up the economy. Republicans have yet to offer any aid to states to pre-

vent furloughs, layoffs and cuts to services. Both will have to compromise before a deal can be agreed upon.

“The \$600 unemployment insurance benefit is essential because there are no jobs to go back to,” House Democratic Caucus Chair Hakeem Jeffries of New York said on MSNBC on Tuesday morning. “We’ve got to help out everyday Americans. That’s a line in the sand.”

Senate Republicans facing reelection in this fall’s turbulent political environment are among those most anxious for an agreement. Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, said Monday that the chamber should not go on recess without passing the relief measure.

Coronavirus case count surges in Midwestern states

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The coronavirus is surging in several Midwestern states that had not seen high infection rates, while average daily deaths remained elevated Monday in Southern and Western states hit with a resurgence of the disease after lifting some restrictions earlier this summer.

Missouri, Montana and Oklahoma are among those witnessing the largest percentage surge of infections over the past week, while, adjusted for population, the number of new cases in Alabama, Florida

and Mississippi still outpaced all other states, according to a Washington Post analysis of health data.

Experts have also seen worrying trends emerging in major East Coast and Midwestern cities, and they anticipate major outbreaks in college towns as classes resume in August.

The University of Texas at Austin notified students that parties are prohibited when the campus reopens in three weeks. The school cited city health guidelines prohibiting groups larger than 10 people and requiring a mask when out in public.

President Donald Trump continued his push to fully reopen schools, even as some of the nation’s largest districts are delaying in-person instruction amid continuing spread of the virus.

“Ideally, we want to open those schools. We want to open them,” Trump said during a White House news conference.

Trump also said the United States is doing much better dealing with the virus than most other countries — a claim inconsistent with facts — and accused the news media of trying to make him and the country look “as bad as possible.”

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Reward offered after sticker put on bear

NC ASHEVILLE — A wildlife group in North Carolina is offering a \$5,000 reward to identify a person they said is responsible for putting a “Trump 2020” sticker on the collar of a bear.

“Bears are NOT Billboards!” Help Asheville Bears said on a Facebook post Friday while announcing the reward.

The group said they received pictures that showed the sticker on the animal in Asheville, a city about 274 miles west of Raleigh. The bear had been “trapped, tranquilized and collared unnecessarily,” the post said.

The Asheville Citizen-Times previously reported that a bear was found in the city last year with a similar sticker.

Baby elephant dies at zoo weeks after birth

MO ST. LOUIS — A baby elephant has died several weeks after it was born at the St. Louis Zoo.

Zoo officials said the Asian elephant calf named Avi was euthanized Sunday because he had developmental problems that limited his ability to feed. The zoo said Avi’s condition had deteriorated quickly in recent days despite feeding assistance and intravenous treatments.

Zoo President and CEO Jeffrey Bonner said everyone at the zoo is “just devastated right now” at the loss of Avi.

The calf was born July 6 to a 24-year-old Asian elephant at the zoo. The zoo’s 27-year-old bull elephant was the father. An elephant pregnancy lasts about 22 months and a calf weighs between 250 and 350 pounds at birth.

Police: Man rode truck hood down highway

FL BOYNTON BEACH — A Florida man went for a nine-mile ride down a busy highway, but in a highly unusual fashion: on the hood of a tractor-trailer.

The South Florida Sun Sentinel reported that the unidentified man climbed onto the hood Saturday after stopping his vehicle along Florida’s Turnpike and walking out onto the highway.

The Florida Highway Patrol said the tractor-trailer driver continued on down the road as the man clung to the hood and began pounding on the windshield with his fists and his forehead.

Eventually, a Highway Patrol trooper stopped the tractor-trailer and took the man into custody. He was committed for a 72-hour mental health evaluation under the state’s Baker Act. No serious injuries were reported.

Man finds alligator swimming in his pool

AL MOBILE — An Alabama homeowner woke up to an unexpected visitor swimming in his pool: an alligator.

WALA-TV reported that Steven McCulland of Mobile recorded the unwanted guest on video and posted it on social media.

In the video, McCulland shows the alligator and sounds stunned as he says: “How is there an alligator in my pool, swimming around in my pool? What in the blue blazes is this?”

McCulland told the news station he had no idea how the alligator got into his backyard Friday, but he’ll be double-checking now before entering the pool. The reptile eventu-

ally retreated to McCulland’s fence line and a wildlife agent removed it.

Boat operators arrested after collision injures 3

WI OSHKOSH — Authorities have arrested two boat operators on suspicion of operating while intoxicated after their boats collided on Lake Butte des Morts in Oshkosh, injuring three people.

The crash happened around 9 p.m. Saturday. The Winnebago County Sheriff’s Office said a 26-foot Glastron boat with six people aboard was having mechanical problems and was traveling slowly toward Rainbow Park when it was struck by a 17-foot Lund boat heading in the same direction with two people aboard. Three people were taken to hospitals with minor injuries. The damaged boats were still merged together from the impact when they were towed to shore.

Man arrested in failed kidnappings of women

OR SALEM — A man was arrested after police said he tried to kidnap women working at two drive-thru coffee stands, Salem Police detectives said Saturday.

Christopher Santibanez, 39, of Independence, visited two coffee stands in Salem around 5:30 a.m. and 6:30 a.m. July 25, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported. In both instances, he approached the women, displayed a handgun and demanded the employee leave with him, police said. Both times, the employees were able to get away from him and call police.

The Human Bean, another nearby drive-thru coffee shop, reported a man attempting to get into their business the same day. Police believe it was the same man. They identified him

using community tips, photographs and surveillance video.

Police charge officer with stealing firearms

MD ANNAPOLIS — Authorities in a Maryland county have arrested a police officer on burglary and theft charges involving stolen firearms and other property.

Anne Arundel County police announced in a news release late Saturday that Cpl. Jacob Miskill has been charged with first-, third- and fourth-degree burglary, theft and misconduct in office. The five-year veteran of the department has been suspended without pay.

County police said officers were called to a report of an unattended death in April at a house in Pasadena, Md. On Friday, the police chief received information that Miskill may have stolen firearms and other property from the house. Police said investigators executed a search warrant at Miskill’s house and subsequently arrested him.

Archaeologists find 100-year-old artifacts

GA ALBANY — Archaeologists have completed an excavation in a Georgia city that found century-old artifacts left behind by the African Americans who lived in homes that once stood there.

The dig in downtown Albany was done to learn more of the history of the Harlem neighborhood, where people had lived since at least 1885. WALB-TV reported people working on the project found glass and clay marbles, buttons and bottles.

The site will soon be covered back up, and a new transportation center will be built at the location.

From wire reports

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Reporting
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Koepka has rare shot at major 3-peat

Associated Press

Peter Thomson might have been up to his old tricks. He once described the Americans as the “greatest collection of golfers in the world” right before he captained an International team that annihilated the U.S. in the 1998 Presidents Cup.

So what to make of his prediction at Carnoustie nine years later? Tiger Woods was going for a third consecutive British Open title, a feat accomplished only six times in major championship history, most recently by Thomson in 1956.

“He has a chance to win eight in a row,” Thomson replied.

It wasn’t clear if Thomson was joking or trying to create even more attention for Woods. By the end of the week, it was a moot point as Woods tied for 12th. Woods won majors at a faster clip than anyone. He remains the only player to win multiple majors in consecutive years. But he never won the same major three successive times.

Neither did Jack Nicklaus. The one chance he had, Nicklaus missed the cut going for a third straight Masters. Tom Watson shared the 54-hole lead at St. Andrews in 1984 in his bid for a third consecutive British Open. He closed with 73 and finished two shots behind Seve Ballesteros.

Arnold Palmer. Ben Hogan. Harry Vardon.

The list of men who failed is much longer than the six who won the same major back-to-back-to-back.

That’s why the biggest challenge facing Brooks Koepka as he goes for a third consecutive PGA Championship this week at the TPC Harding Park in San Francisco is more about history than his troublesome left knee and recent form.

“I just want to play good golf. It’s simple,” Koepka said when he went to the Bay Area in February to preview a PGA Championship that was supposed to be held in May before the COVID-19 pandemic upended golf’s calendar.

“You start thinking about all the things that could happen, that’s when nerve, everything else kind of creeps in. Just stay in the moment.”

Koepka already has had one crack at a three-peat and showed why he can’t be overlooked. Trying to become the first player in more than a century to win the U.S. Open three consecutive times, he chased Gary Woodland to the finish line at Pebble Beach and finished second.

Then it was all about Willie Anderson, the only player to win three successive U.S.

Opens. Now it’s about Walter Hagen, who won the PGA Championship four straight times (1924-27) when it was match play.

“Walter Hagen is a name every golf fan knows,” Koepka said. “To even have a chance to put my name with his would be incredible and it would be super special.”

Koepka won a thriller at Bellerive in 2018, when he set the PGA Championship scoring record at 264 and matched the lowest score at any major. He nearly blew a seven-shot lead last year at Bethpage Black before winning by two.

This isn’t the same player. Koepka had stem cell treatment after last season because of a partially torn patella. Two weeks later, he slipped on a wet slab of concrete at the CJ Cup in South Korea and injured his left knee further, keeping him out for three months. Then he lost another three months to the pandemic.

He has gone a year without winning. Last week at the World Golf Championship, he said he is adjusting his swing to accommodate his left knee and Koepka had his best chance of winning, tied for the lead until hitting into the water off the tee on the final hole.

First chance at glory: PGA opens majors

Associated Press

The PGA Championship in August seems familiar enough. That’s the place at the end of the major championship season that it once occupied for the better part of 70 years when it was known as “Glory’s Last Shot.”

Now it’s the first shot.

It’s one reminder just how much the COVID-19 pandemic, which shut down golf for three months, has led to a year like no other even for sports that have been able to resume. They can be seen, but they’re not heard.

Kerry Haigh was reminded of that one week out from the 102nd PGA Championship at the TPC Harding Park.

Haigh is the chief championships officer for the PGA of America in charge of preparing the public course in San Francisco for the world’s best players. He was in a cart one

evening, driving the cypress-lined fairways to mark them for stakes and ropes. It’s one of his favorite jobs. He considers it the finishing touch.

“To me, that’s what makes a championship. Once you have the ropes and the stakes up, you have a stadium to perform in,” Haigh said, pausing before returning to the reality of this PGA Championship.

“Even if no one will be on the outside of them.”

Golf has spent the last eight weeks playing in silence, with only the broadcast crew, photographers, a few media, maybe a swing coach and a few neighbors if houses were on the perimeter of the course.

The stakes, however, were never this high.

Brooks Koepka will try to become the first player to win the PGA Championship three straight times in stroke play.

Tiger Woods has a chance to join Jack Nicklaus and Walter Hagen as five-time PGA champions, and surpass Sam Snead for career PGA Tour victories if he can win No. 83. Jordan Spieth gets another crack at the career Grand Slam.

Maybe the PGA Championship should bring back another slogan that used to be the butt of jokes and now might be a necessary reminder: “This is major.” Without thousands of fans, without cheers coming from all corners of the course, how else would they differentiate this from any other tournament?

“We’ve experienced no fans, and that’s been very unusual,” said Webb Simpson, who won his lone major at the 2012 U.S. Open across the street from Harding Park at Olympic Club. “We’re starting to get used to it. But I think next week will feel

unusual again, being a major, when there’s tens of thousands lining the fairways, 10 rows deep. We’re used to that — every major being sold out long in advance.

“It won’t feel like a normal major.”

There has been little anticipation in the weeks leading up to a major, especially considering it will have been more than a year — 382 days, to be precise — since the last one.

So much attention has been on following protocols — coronavirus tests when players arrive at a tournament, before they leave if they’re on a charter, the regulations for positive tests with or without symptoms. Still on the horizon is the FedEx Cup playoffs and the \$15 million payoff, and two more majors (U.S. Open and Masters) before Thanksgiving.

NBA roundup

Lakers top Jazz, clinch top seed in West

Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Anthony Davis had 42 points and 12 rebounds, and the Los Angeles Lakers clinched the No. 1 seed in the Western Conference playoffs by beating the Utah Jazz 116-108 on Monday night.

The Lakers (51-15) own a six-game lead over the second-place Los Angeles Clippers and have five seeding games left before starting their first playoff run since 2013. Utah (42-25) has clinched a playoff berth and is fifth in the West, a half-game behind Houston and a half-game ahead of Oklahoma City.

Davis' final basket resulted in a four-point play with 42 seconds left, as he sank a three-pointer while getting fouled by Rudy Gobert and made the ensuing free throw to give the Lakers a 114-104 lead.

LeBron James scored 22 points, Dwight Howard had 11 and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope added 10 for Los Angeles.

Donovan Mitchell scored 33 and Mike Conley had 24 for the Jazz. Gobert added 16 points and 13 rebounds for Utah.

Raptors 107, Heat 103: Fred VanVleet scored a career-high 36 points and made seven three-pointers, and defending NBA champion Toronto added to its strong restart by beating Miami.

VanVleet finished 7-for-12 from beyond the three-point arc and was a perfect 13-for-13 from the foul line, besting his 34-point total against the Pelicans last December.

Pelicans 109, Grizzlies 99: Brandon Ingram scored 24 points and New Orleans got a much-needed victory over Memphis.

Williamson had 23 points, seven rebounds and tied a career high with five assists in his most extensive playing time since returning to the NBA bubble.

After being limited to a combined 29 minutes in his first two games since the restart, Williamson played 25 minutes, al-

though he appeared to get fatigued when he didn't hustle back on defense and was taken out with 6 minutes to play. But he returned a short time later and helped the Pelicans close on a 12-6 run.

Nuggets 121, Thunder 113 (OT): Michael Porter Jr. scored a career-high 37 points and Nikola Jokic had a triple-double to help Denver top Oklahoma City.

Jokic had 30 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists. He scored 13 points in the fourth quarter and overtime to help the Nuggets strengthen their hold on third place in the Western Conference standings.

76ers 132, Spurs 130: Shake Milton made a go-ahead three-pointer with 7.2 seconds remaining and Philadelphia beat San Antonio. Joel Embiid had 27 points and nine rebounds for the 76ers.

Pacers 111, Wizards 100: T.J. Warren kept up his red-hot restart with 34 more points, helping Indiana pull away from Washington.

MLB roundup

Mets beat Braves; Soroka out for year with injury

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Jacob deGrom struck out a season-high 10 in six innings and the New York Mets snapped a five-game skid Monday night with a 7-2 victory over the Braves that was overshadowed by a season-ending injury to Atlanta ace Mike Soroka.

Soroka tore his Achilles tendon in the third inning as he took a step toward first to cover the bag — a huge blow to the two-time defending NL East champions.

"There's no sugarcoating this night," Atlanta slugger Freddie Freeman said. "It stinks. It really does."

"When you lose, in my mind, one of the top pitching arms in this entire game for the whole season, it's pretty tough."

Robinson Cano had three RBIs before leaving the game himself — one of three New York infielders who went down with injuries.

Wilson Ramos added a two-run homer for the Mets, who avoided a four-game sweep and ended Atlanta's five-game winning streak.

Soroka (0-1) allowed three hits, walked four and wound up being charged with four earned runs in 2¹/₃ innings, the second-shortest outing of his career.

Yankees 6, Phillies 3: Gerrit Cole earned his 19th consecutive regular-season victory, leading host New York past Philadelphia.

Gio Urshela broke open the game with a three-run homer in the sixth.

Cole (3-0) allowed one run and five hits. He left after a 67-minute rain delay ahead of the seventh.

Padres 5, Dodgers 4: Jake Cronenworth singled home the go-ahead run in the sixth inning for host San Diego, which hit three solo home runs off Walker Buehler and beat Los Angeles.

Trent Grisham, Wil Myers and Fernando Tatis Jr. homered off Buehler.

Rockies 7, Giants 6: Nolan Arenado hit his first homer of the season to ignite a five-run sixth inning and host Colorado matched its best start in franchise history by beating San Francisco.

The Rockies are 7-2 for the fifth time in team history. They also had that mark in 1995, '97, 2011 and '15.

Reds 3, Indians 2: Joey Votto hit a two-run, go-ahead homer, Nick Castellanos also connected and Cincinnati beat Cleveland.

Sonny Gray (3-0) shook off a tough start to complete six strong innings, and Cincinnati ended a six-game home losing streak against their in-state rival.

Twins 5, Pirates 4: Nelson Cruz's RBI single in the bottom of the ninth inning lifted host Minnesota over Pittsburgh for its fourth straight victory.

The Pirates lost their fifth consecutive game and have the worst record in the major leagues.

Cole Tucker homered on the first pitch of the night while batting leadoff for the first time in his career for Pittsburgh, which squandered a 4-0 lead.

Cubs 2, Royals 0: Kris Bryant homered in his return to the lineup and Alec Mills pitched seven effective innings, helping host Chicago beat Kansas City for its fourth consecutive win.

White Sox 6, Brewers 4: Jose Abreu hit a tying, two-run homer in the seventh inning, Leury Garcia scored on a wild pitch in the eighth and Yoan Moncada added a solo shot in the ninth to lift visiting Chicago over Milwaukee.

Athletics 11, Mariners 1: Ramon Laureano and Chad Pinder had two-run singles during visiting Oakland's big fifth inning against Seattle.

Kucherov lifts Lightning to shootout win

Associated Press

TORONTO — Nikita Kucherov scored a goal in the first period and the winner in the shootout to help the Tampa Bay Lightning beat the Washington Capitals 3-2 on Monday in Eastern Conference round-robin play.

The teams played 5 minutes of 3-on-3 overtime before going to a shootout because the games for seeding follow regular-season rules. Tampa Bay's win puts it in a tie with Philadelphia at two points apiece in the Eastern Conference race, while Washington is third with one and Boston fourth with zero.

"All around, I thought that was a playoff game," Lightning winger Patrick Maroon said. "Obviously we're trying to get as

many points as we can to seed ourselves in a good position."

Tampa Bay goaltender Andrei Vasilevski stopped two of the three Capitals players he faced in the shootout after making 31 saves in regulation and overtime.

Before OT, Capitals winger Tom Wilson and Lightning center Anthony Cirelli exchanged words and shoves at the third-period buzzer. These teams can't meet again until at least the second round, if not the East final.

"We were in their face," Maroon said. "That was the kind of team we need to be, just to have the mentality to push back and not let them run around."

After Kucherov's goal opened the scoring, Mitchell Stephens made it 2-0 Lightning in the second. Washington followed

its regular-season blueprint by digging out of a hole and tying it on goals by Richard Panik and Evgeny Kuznetsov before intermission.

"We were down 2-0 and we came back, so we showed our character," Panik said. "Just from now on bring the 'A' game, bring our physicality and I think we're going to be good."

Captain Alex Ovechkin played more than 21 minutes and put three shots on net. Asked how he felt, this season's co-Rocket Richard Trophy winner put the focus on his team and what's ahead.

"We know we can play better," Ovechkin said. "It's kind of a wake-up call. That's why we play those three games. Every game is going to be much harder and harder."

NHL roundup

Oilers, McDavid even series with Blackhawks

Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — Connor McDavid recorded his first playoff hat trick to lead Edmonton to a 6-5 win over Chicago, tying their best-of-five qualifying series at one game apiece.

McDavid scored 19 seconds into the game, then off an electrifying solo rush just past the four-minute mark, and once more on the power play late in the second period.

"It was just our work ethic. (We) kept it simple. It sounds all very cliched, but that's all stuff we didn't do in game one and did tonight," McDavid said.

Given that the rink was fan-free, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, arena staff hustled down the stairs and honored hockey tradition by tossing ball caps over the glass and onto the ice to mark the hat trick.

"I found the hats a little unnecessary," McDavid said. "I'd rather just drop the puck and keep on going."

"Connor led the way, especially early (and) set tone for us, gave us a spark. That's exactly what we needed and everybody followed," Oiler forward Tyler Ennis.

Olli Maatta, Patrick Kane and defenseman Slater Koekkoek scored for the Blackhawks.

Chicago's top line of Jonathan Toews, Brandon Saad and Dominik Kubalik, which torched the Oilers for 10 points in Saturday's win, were held in check.

Hurricanes 4, Rangers 1: Carolina's Andrei Svechnikov scored three times for the first postseason hat trick in franchise history and the Hurricanes beat New York for a 2-0 lead in the Stanley Cup qualifier series in Toronto.

The 20-year-old Svechnikov beat Henrik Lundqvist for the first goal less than 5 minutes into the game. He followed with a power-play one-timer early in the second off a feed from Sami Vatanen, then buried a third at 14:02 of the third off a feed from Sebastian Aho — who assisted on all three of Svechnikov's goals.

Jordan Martinook also scored for Carolina. Petr Mrazek added 23 saves.

Artemi Panarin scored for the Rangers. Lundqvist finished with 30 saves.

Jets 3, Flames 2: Nikolaj Ehlers scored a power-play

goal in the third period, lifting Winnipeg past Calgary as the teams drew even in their qualifying round in Edmonton.

Adam Lowry led the Jets with a goal and an assist in Game 2 of the best-of-five series. Rookie Jansen Harkins also scored for Winnipeg and Jack Roslovic contributed a pair of assists. Vezina Trophy finalist Connor Hellebuyck made 28 saves for the win.

Elias Lindholm and Sam Bennett scored for the Flames. Calgary starter Cam Talbot stopped 23 shots in the loss.

Calgary won Saturday's opener 4-1.

Golden Knights 5, Stars 3: Will Carrier scored the tie-breaker with 5:12 left, Robin Lehner had 24 saves and Vegas beat Dallas in Western Conference round-robin play in Edmonton.

Carrier backhanded a rebounded shot through his own legs and past Stars goaltender Ben Bishop after the Golden Knights rallied from a 3-1, third-period deficit. Vegas scored three times in 5:02 and added an empty-netter with 21 seconds left.

Chandler Stephenson, Mark

Stone, Nate Schmidt and William Karlsson also scored for the Knights.

Before the game, two players from each team knelt in support of Black Lives Matter and other social causes. Joe Pavelski, Jamie Oleksiak and Corey Perry scored for Dallas, and Bishop had 28 saves.

Penguins 3, Canadiens 1: Sidney Crosby, Jason Zucker and Jake Guentzel scored for Pittsburgh in a win over Montreal, tying the best-of-five qualifying series in Toronto at one game apiece. Crosby beat Montreal's Carey Price early in the first period and Zucker scored with about five minutes left in the third. Guentzel sealed the win with an empty-net goal. Jesperi Kotkaniemi ended Matt Murray's shutout bid with 2:09 left.

The Canadiens opened the series with a 3-2 overtime win on Saturday, but were flat from the start in Game 2 and never recovered. Game 3 is Wednesday night.

It was the 188th playoff point of Crosby's NHL career, moving him into an eighth-place tie with Joe Sakic and Doug Gilmour.