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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Yokosuka Naval Base ups its health protection level after 6 new virus cases

BY JOSEPH DITZLER

Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Yokosuka Naval Base, home of the 7th Fleet in Japan, increased its health protection level Monday as expected to reflect a substantial risk of coronavirus infection a day after reporting six new cases on base.

Japan observed Mountain Day, a national holiday, on Monday and case reporting was light. On Sunday the country reported 1,343 new infections, according to the World Health Organization.

In Tokyo, a surge in new cases that began in early July receded Monday, when the city reported 197 infections, the first daily total below 200 since July 27, according to public broadcaster NHK.

Okinawa reported 52 new cases Monday, according to the Okinawa Times, citing prefectural authorities. The prefecture reported a pandemic one-day record of 159 new patients Sunday, according to local news reports.

Mass testing at nightclubs and cabarets in the Matsuyama district of Naha city found 86 new cases on Sunday, the Okinawa Times reported Sunday. One person died Sunday on nearby Miyako Island, the eighth death in the prefecture since the pandemic began and the first since July 8.

U.S. military bases in Japan reported just three new cases on Monday, one each at Misawa Air Base, Kadena Air Base and Camp Courtney, a reprieve from a month of cluster outbreaks and a continuous stream of infected new arrivals.

On Saturday, U.S. Army Japan reported a civilian affiliated with the command in western Japan had tested posi-

tive the day before. The patient, who was not further identified, fell ill Wednesday, was tested at a Japanese hospital and then placed on quarantine, according to an Army news release.

Yokosuka base commander Capt. Rich Jarrett imposed Health Protection Condition-Charlie to allow “time to analyze the developing trends with cases on base, as well as assess additional risks for spread” of the coronavirus, according to a video posted to the base’s Facebook page Monday.

Jarrett on Sunday reimposed restrictions he had lifted in time for the Fourth of July weekend. Four clusters had developed on base last week, he said in Monday’s video message.

“While we have enjoyed a nearly two-month retreat of COVID-19 cases here on our base, the storm clouds for this virus have been gathering for a couple weeks now in the local area,” Jarrett said in the video. COVID-19 is the respiratory disease caused by the coronavirus.

With the base moving to condition Charlie, Defense Department schools there will switch to virtual learning when school starts Aug. 24, according to an announcement by Yokosuka schools Monday on Facebook.

The Pacific East District of the Department of Defense Education Activity had offered parents and students concerned about the coronavirus the option of continuing to learn online, as they had in the spring when the pandemic took hold. Most students in the district opted for returning to physical classrooms.

Stars and Stripes reporters Caitlin Doornbos, Matthew M. Burke and Aya Ichihashi contributed to this report.

Quarantine done, USMC contingent set Down Under

BY SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

The contingent of Marines training in Australia has reached full strength for this year’s coronavirus-affected rotation after a final group of U.S. service members emerged from quarantine, according to the unit’s commander.

On Friday, the fourth and final element of Marine Rotational Force – Darwin finished the quarantine period prescribed by Northern Territory health officials and the Australian Defense Force, Col. David Banning told reporters during a press conference livestreamed Monday on Facebook.

“They were released from quarantine and have joined the unit and have integrated into the training schedule already in progress,” he said.

The rotational force, which has trained in Australia during the Southern Hemisphere’s winter months each year since 2012, has deployed just over 1,000 Marines this year, Banning said.

That’s fewer than the 1,200 the Marines had planned to rotate and well short of the 2,500 sent Down Under last year.

The mission was delayed two months by the coronavirus pandemic, which has forced Marines to quarantine for two weeks after they arrive in Australia.

Only one Marine tested positive for the coronavirus after arriving in Australia, according to Royal Australian

The mission was delayed two months by the coronavirus pandemic.

Air Force Grp. Capt. Stewart Dowrie, who leads Australia’s Northern Command.

“That Marine was detected early on and was able to get to Royal Darwin Hospital and get looked after appropriately,” he said at the press conference.

The Marines have been training at individual and small-unit levels since they arrived, Banning added.

During field exercises the Marines have steered clear of “biosecurity zones” designed to protect indigenous people, he said.

The force is made up of a ground combat element from Twentynine Palms, Calif., Combat Logistics Battalion 5 out of Camp Pendleton, Calif., and a command element from the III Marine Expeditionary Force on Okinawa.

The Marines are building up to Exercise Koolendong with Australian forces over 10 to 13 days in September, Banning added.

“We will be here through the mid part of October,” he said, adding that there would be quarantine procedures for the Marines heading back to their home bases that needed to be accounted for.

Breaking down Trump's 4 executive orders

The Washington Post

President Donald Trump took the unusual — and controversial — step Saturday of attempting to provide additional economic relief to millions of Americans on his own, without the approval of Congress.

At his golf club in Bedminster, N.J., Trump announced he was postponing payroll taxes through the end of the year, extending the unemployment “bonus” at \$400 a week (down from \$600), helping people “stay in their homes” and waiving student debt payments through the end of 2020. The details, however, are not as generous as he made them sound.

He is ordering a payroll tax deferral, not a cut, meaning the taxes won't be collected for a while but they will still be due at a later date. On housing, he instructed key officials to “consider” whether there should be a ban on evictions. He also insisted that state governments pick up the tab for some of the unemployment aid.

It is likely Trump will face

a legal challenge over these actions. The U.S. Constitution gives Congress the power of the purse. Any changes to taxes or spending are supposed to come from Congress.

Here's a rundown of what Trump actually did. He said he signed four “executive orders,” but in reality, only the one on housing is an actual executive order. The other three actions are marked as “memorandum,” which carries less weight:

1. He delayed payroll tax collection for those making under \$104,000.

Trump instructed the U.S. Treasury to halt collection of payroll taxes from Sept. 1 through Dec. 31 for workers who earn less than \$4,000 every two weeks (that's people earning under about \$104,000 a year).

This will feel like a tax cut for a few weeks because workers will end up with larger paychecks while the tax is not collected. But it is technically a tax deferral, meaning the taxes will still be due at a later date.

2. Unemployment aid is ex-

tended at \$400, with some help.

The United States currently has more than 30 million people on unemployment aid. They had been receiving an extra \$600 a week from the federal government on top of their state aid (which averaged \$330 a week), but Congress set the federal funding to expire at the end of July. Democrats want to continue at the \$600 a week level. Republicans proposed \$200. They have yet to agree.

Trump's memo calls for federal aid to restart at a level of \$400 a week. But there's a catch: The federal government is only paying for \$300 of that. States have to kick in the other \$100.

There are also a lot of legal questions about the money Trump is attempting to use to pay for this. He called for \$44 billion of funding from the Department of Homeland Security's Disaster Relief Fund that is normally used for hurricanes, tornadoes and massive fires to be shifted over to unemployment.

3. Top officials can “consid-

er” halting evictions.

The U.S. has about 110 million renters, and many have been hit hard by the layoffs in retail, restaurants and hospitality during the pandemic. Trump's executive order does little to help them.

Trump has said many times in recent days he wants to prevent evictions, but his latest executive order does not ban evictions. Instead, Trump calls for Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Robert Redfield to “consider” whether an eviction ban is needed.

4. Student loan payments are deferred until Dec. 31.

Trump's final memo waives all interest on student loans held by the federal government through the end of 2020 and allows people to delay payments until Dec. 31.

The Education Department does have the authority to defer or even cancel student loan payments to the federal government, says Alexis Goldstein of Americans for Financial Reform.

Higher profile for Joe Biden's running mate pick

Associated Press

NEW YORK — For all the secrecy and speculation that typically surrounds the search for a vice presidential candidate, the decision rarely sways an election. But ahead of Joe Biden's imminent announcement, this year could be different.

At a minimum, the decision will shift the force of the campaign — at least temporarily — away from Donald Trump's turbulent presidency onto Biden himself. That's not a place many Democrats are comfortable given Biden's proclivity for gaffes and the persistent lack of excitement behind his candidacy.

More fundamentally, the choice offers Biden an unusual opportunity to unify a party still reeling from Trump's 2016 win and solidify its future. He's already committed to selecting a woman and is considering several Black women. And since the 77-year-old Biden has not committed to

seeking a second term, his running mate could be strongly positioned to become the Democratic Party's presidential nominee in 2024 and shape national politics for the next decade.

Sen. Tim Kaine, of Virginia, Hillary Clinton's vice presidential nominee in 2016, said Biden's decision “may be the most closely held and personally driven vice presidential pick ever.”

“Nobody knows this job better than Joe Biden and nobody did the job better than Biden, so he's gonna really control this one on his own,” Kaine said in an interview.

He pushed back against those who discount the impact of running mates, estimating he added about 2 percentage points to Clinton's winning margin of 5 percentage points in Virginia.

While Biden has said a top priority is selecting someone who could step into the presidency on Day One, the politics of the moment have pushed the silver-haired

white man to the brink of making history. He could become the first presidential nominee of a major party to select a woman of color. While he promised months ago to pick a woman, the nation's reckoning with systemic racism has added pressure to pick a Black woman.

But it's not certain he will do so. Last weekend, he met privately with Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, who's white. Biden has said publicly she remains on his short list. Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, who also is white, has also been a leading contender.

Biden's campaign has refused to comment on his search, but his team has been in recent contact with a small group of finalists that includes at least four women of color: California Sen. Kamala Harris, former national security adviser Susan Rice, California Rep. Karen Bass and Illinois Sen. Tammy Duckworth.

Lebanon Cabinet resigns over explosion

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Lebanon's Cabinet has resigned over last week's devastating blast at the Beirut port, the health minister said, a decision that was made under pressure as several ministers quit or expressed their intention to step down.

The minister, Hamad Hassan, spoke with reporters at the end of a Cabinet meeting Monday, which came after two days of demonstrations over the weekend that saw clashes with security forces firing tear gas at protesters.

"The whole government resigned," Hamad said. He added that Prime Minister Hassan Diab will head to the presidential palace to "hand over the resignation in the name of all

the ministers."

The massive blast Aug. 4, which decimated the Beirut port and devastated large parts of the city, has brought a new wave of public outrage at the government and Lebanon's long entrenched ruling class. Protests were planned outside the government headquarters to coincide with the Cabinet meeting after large demonstrations over the weekend that saw clashes with security forces firing tear gas at protesters.

The explosion is believed to have been caused by a fire that ignited a 2,750-ton stockpile of explosive ammonium nitrate. The material had been stored at the port since 2013 with few safeguards despite numerous warnings of the danger.

The result was a disaster Lebanese blame squarely on their leadership's corruption and neglect. The blast killed at least 160 people and wounded about 6,000, in addition to destroying the country's main port and damaging large parts of the capital. Losses from the blast are estimated to be between \$10 billion to \$15 billion, and nearly 300,000 people were left homeless in the immediate aftermath.

Diab's Cabinet will assume a caretaker role until a new government is formed.

A Lebanese judge Monday began questioning the heads of the country's security agencies. Public Prosecutor Ghassan El Khoury questioned Maj. Gen. Tony Saliba, the head of State

Security, according to state-run National News Agency. It gave no further details, but other generals are scheduled to be questioned.

About 20 people have been detained over the blast, including the head of Lebanon's customs department and his predecessor, as well as the head of the port.

On Sunday, world leaders and international organizations pledged nearly \$300 million in emergency humanitarian aid to Beirut in the wake of the explosion, but warned that no money for rebuilding the capital would be made available until Lebanese authorities commit themselves to the political and economic reforms demanded by the people.

Israeli jeweler makes \$1.5M gold face mask

Associated Press

MOTZA, Israel — An Israeli jewelry company is working on what it says will be the world's most expensive coronavirus mask, a gold, diamond-encrusted face covering with a price tag of \$1.5 million.

The 18-karat white gold mask will be decorated with 3,600 white and black diamonds and fitted with top-rated N99 filters at the request of the buyer, said designer Isaac Levy.

Levy, owner of the Yvel company, said the buyer had two other demands: that it be completed by the end of the year, and that it would be the priciest in the world. That last condition, he said, "was the easiest to fulfill."

He declined to identify the buyer, but said he was a Chinese businessman living in the United States.

The glitzed-up face mask may lend some pizzazz to the protective gear that is now mandatory in public spaces in countries around the world. But at over

half a pound — nearly 100 times that of a typical surgical mask — it is not likely to be a practical accessory to wear.

In an interview at his factory near Jerusalem, Levy showed off several pieces of the mask, covered in diamonds. One gold plate had a hole for the filter.

"Money maybe doesn't buy everything, but if it can buy a very expensive COVID-19 mask and the guy wants to wear it and walk around and get the attention, he should be happy with that," Levy said.

Such an ostentatious mask might also rub some the wrong way at a time when millions of people around the world are out of work or suffering economically. Levy said that while he would not wear it himself, he was thankful for the opportunity.

"I am happy that this mask gave us enough work for our employees to be able to provide their jobs in very challenging times like these times right now," he said.

China sanctions politicians, institution heads from US

Associated Press

BEIJING — China on Monday announced unspecified sanctions against 11 U.S. politicians and heads of organizations promoting democratic causes, including Sens. Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz, who have already been singled out by Beijing.

Foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian on Monday said the 11 had "performed badly" on issues concerning Hong Kong, where China has cracked down on opposition voices following its imposition of a national security law in the semi-autonomous southern Chinese city last month.

The number of Americans named by the ministry exactly equals the number of Hong Kong and Chinese officials placed on a sanctions list by the U.S. last week over the crackdown.

China showed its determination to defy such pressure on Monday by arresting leading independent media tycoon Jimmy Lai and raiding the publisher's headquarters.

"The relevant actions of the U.S. blatantly intervened in Hong Kong affairs, grossly interfered in China's internal affairs and seriously violated international law and the basic norms of international relations," foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said at a daily briefing on Monday.

"China urges the U.S. to have a clear understanding of the situation, correct mistakes and immediately stop interfering in Hong Kong affairs and interfering in China's internal affairs."

Others named by the foreign ministry included Sens. Josh Hawley, Tom Cotton and Pat Toomey, and Rep. Chris Smith. National Endowment for Democracy President Carl Gershman, National Democratic Institute President Derek Mitchell, International Republican Institute President Daniel Twining, Human Rights Watch Executive Director Kenneth Roth and Michael Abramowitz, president of Freedom House, were also on the sanctions list, according to Zhao.

Ga. school shifts online after cases reported

Associated Press

DALLAS, Ga. — A Georgia high school plans to start the week with all classes shifting online after nine students and staff tested positive for the coronavirus when the school year opened last week with most students attending in-person.

North Paulding High School made headlines soon after students returned to school Aug. 3 when photos posted on social media showed hallways crowded with students, many of them not wearing masks. The school's principal notified parents Saturday that six students and three staff members had tested positive for the virus, though it's unknown if any were infected at school.

Now students will take online classes Monday and Tuesday, Paulding County Schools Superintendent Brian Ott said in a letter to parents Sunday. He said those two days will be used to clean and disinfect the school, and parents will learn Tuesday evening if in-person classes can resume later in the week.

In announcing the nine infections among students and staff, North Paulding High School principal Gabe Carmona wrote that each of them had been in the school building sometime in the prior week. But it was unclear whether the school would quarantine other students and staff who may have been exposed. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported it obtained the principal's letter from the school district.

California

SACRAMENTO — The head of California's public health department resigned late Sunday, just days after the state announced a fix for a glitch that caused a lag in collecting coronavirus test information that's used to make decisions about reopening businesses and schools.

Dr. Sonia Angell said she was departing from her role as director and state public health officer at the California Department of Public Health in a letter to staff released by the California Health and Human Services Agency. Angell did not give a specific reason for her departure.

Sandra Shewry, vice president of external engagement for California Health Care Foundation, will fill the role of acting health director, the health and human services department said. Dr. Erica Pan, who was recently appointed state epidemiologist, will be the acting state public health officer.

Iowa

The refusal of Gov. Kim Reynolds to require Iowans to wear masks in public has prompted at least three cities and a county

to adopt their own local ordinances, setting up what could be a legal battle over whether local officials have the authority to impose mask rules in the absence of a governor's mandate.

Local government control has also become an issue in Iowa as a few school boards have said they may refuse to abide by Reynolds' demands to send students back to classrooms if they feel it's unsafe due to coronavirus spread.

A court has not been asked to resolve these standoffs between Reynolds and local officials, but it appears likely as some local mask ordinances were set to take effect Monday.

Kentucky

BARDSTOWN — Bourbon fans will be doing virtual toasts at this year's Kentucky Bourbon Festival.

The festival's board has shifted the event to a virtual experience because of the coronavirus. This was done to help protect the safety of distilleries and the health of bourbon fans and the Bardstown community, where the annual event is held, festival organizers said. This year's event is set for Oct. 15-18.

Bourbon fans will be able to go online to view nearly 20 live and recorded "Spirits Education Sessions," festival organizers said. All will require free registration to attend.

Nebraska

LINCOLN — Lincoln Police closed down a bowling alley over the weekend for violating the city's coronavirus restrictions after the owner vowed to fight the rules requiring people to wear masks in public places.

On Saturday, Lincoln Police enforced the local health department's order to close Madsen's Bowling & Billiards for violating restrictions related to the coronavirus outbreak. Officials have said that employees at Madsen's Bowling & Billiards weren't wearing face coverings, patrons were told that masks were optional and people weren't far enough apart.

The bowling alley's owner, Benjamin Madsen, has challenged the city's health restrictions in court.

Officials with the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department said Madsen's will remain closed until it submits a plan to comply with the health rules.

New Hampshire

New Hampshire's hospitals are hurting financially and bracing for cuts due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The state's hospitals collectively lost

\$575 million in revenue between March and July, said Kathy Bizarro-Thunberg, executive vice president of the New Hampshire Hospital Association. The group estimates hospitals will lose \$700 million by the end of the year, The Concord Monitor reported.

Alex Walker, chief operating officer at Catholic Medical Center in Manchester, said the hospital laid off more than 70 employees last week, reduced hours for dozens of positions and froze hiring for all nonessential workers.

Massachusetts

Officials in a Boston suburb hit hard by the coronavirus are stepping up efforts to contain the disease.

Free coronavirus testing in Revere is being extended through Sept. 12.

Officials this weekend were handing out masks at the beach, where crowds have been gathering in the heat, and encouraging people to keep their distance.

Revere's daily positive testing rate is three times that of the average in Massachusetts, NBC Boston reported.

Wisconsin

Epic Systems told its employees that they were not required to return to in-person work Monday at the health care records company based in Wisconsin.

The company had planned to start a phased approach to bringing employees into work. Wisconsin Public Radio reported the company informed its employees they changed that plan after Public Health Madison and Dane County questioned whether they would comply with guidance on preventing coronavirus infections.

Epic employs about 10,000 people, and about 4,200 had already returned last week to its campus located in Verona.

West Virginia

GLEN JEAN — The New River Gorge National River is increasing access and services that were stopped in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

The National Park Service is using guidance from federal authorities, as well as state and local health officials, as it continues to increase access.

The park reopened some access beginning Saturday to Grandview Sandbar Campground, Glade Creek Campground and Stone Cliff Campground. Backcountry camping, hiking trails, river and river access points, vault toilets at heavy visitor use areas and group picnic shelters at Grandview continue to be available.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

7 cited for using illegal entrance into lake

OR KLAMATH FALLS — Seven people were cited for illegally entering the Crater Lake caldera, creating a hazardous situation and putting park staff at risk, officials said Saturday.

KOMO-TV reported Crater Lake National Park staff received a report Friday afternoon of multiple visitors in the caldera between Rim Village and Discovery Point. Law enforcement staff responded quickly to attempt to locate them, the park said.

Park officials said the Cleetwood Trail is the only safe and legal way to access the shore of Crater Lake.

"Climbing in the caldera at any other location is strictly prohibited," officials said. "The slopes are very unstable, and through the years, visitors have been seriously injured or even killed by illegally entering the caldera."

The group was eventually spotted near the shoreline below Rim Village. Seven people climbed out on their own and were cited.

Man pleads guilty in purchase of 10 rifles

NV LAS VEGAS — Federal prosecutors said a Las Vegas man could face prison time after pleading guilty to making a straw purchase of 10 semiautomatic rifles.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for Nevada said Ethan Erhardt, 37, pleaded guilty in connection with the February 2019 purchase.

According to the office, Erhardt falsely stated on a U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives form that he was the actual buyer of the guns, though he knew he would turn them over to

another person who provided \$80,000 for the purchase.

Man pleads guilty to altering checks

NH CONCORD — A New Hampshire man has pleaded guilty in federal court to trying to cash stolen checks after picking a community mailroom lock, rummaging through packages, and leaving with some mail.

Prosecutors said a video surveillance camera showed a man picking the lock in January and taking some of the items in the room.

Jon Daigle Jr., of Belmont, is accused of altering stolen checks and cashing or attempting to cash them at various banks in New Hampshire.

Man punches veteran over mask comment

WA SPOKANE — Spokane police said they've arrested the man accused of breaking a 72-year-old veteran's jaw in a hotel lobby.

KHQ-TV reported Spokane police said Cody P. Hansen, 35, was arrested at a home after police received an anonymous tip.

The victim told police he made a comment to Hansen's girlfriend about not wearing a mask before being attacked. Hansen punched the 72-year-old, partially disabled veteran in the face multiple times.

King County prosecutors have charged Hansen with second-degree assault.

Black bear tracks pizza scent, destroys car

AK JUNEAU — A black bear has destroyed a Juneau Pizza employee's car looking for food in a residential neighborhood, raising concerns

from wildlife experts that the animal will have future encounters with people.

"I think it was the delicious smell of the pizza that drove the bear to the point where he could not resist the urge to go into the car," said Andrew Fairchild, who owns the car. "It's pretty totaled on the inside. The seat belt was ripped completely out. The panel where the stereo is ripped off."

Fairchild said there was no pizza in the car, but the bear likely smelled the scent from his job.

Tribes sue over state's gambling deal

OK OKLAHOMA CITY — Four Oklahoma tribes are asking a federal court to void gambling compacts between the state of Oklahoma and two other tribes — agreements that the Oklahoma State Supreme Court recently invalidated.

The Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw and Citizen Potawatomi Nations filed a lawsuit Friday in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., asking for a declaration that the U.S. Department of Interior violated federal law by allowing the agreements Gov. Kevin Stitt signed with the Comanche Nation and the Otoe-Missouira Tribe to take effect.

Dam in historic 2015 floods to be repaired

SC LEXINGTON — Construction has begun to repair a historic dam nearly five years after it broke during the once-in-a-lifetime floods that swept through South Carolina in 2015.

Lexington's Old Mill Pond has stood empty since the flooding broke the pond's earthen dam and disrupted nearby businesses.

The dam's owner has worked with the state Department of Health and Environmental Control to create plans for the pond, which include a walking trail, WLTX-TV reported.

The construction, which started this week, is estimated to take about four months.

Restored Mayflower replica to return home

MA PLYMOUTH — A replica of the original Mayflower ship that brought the Pilgrims to America 400 years ago this year is returning home following extensive renovations.

The Mayflower II is slated to complete the final leg of its journey when it docks at Pilgrim Memorial State Park in Plymouth, Mass. The 64-year-old historic reproduction is also expected to travel from New Bedford to the Massachusetts Maritime Academy.

The ship began the slow return home last month after spending the last three years in Mystic, Conn., getting \$11.2 million worth of renovations.

Fish trap to open in October, largest in US

WA WHITE RIVER — The Army Corps of Engineers will complete a fish trapping facility 50 miles south of Seattle in October that will be the largest in North America.

The White River Fish Passage Facility will be able to handle an estimated one million salmon per year.

The \$131 million facility was built on the insistence of tribes and federal fisheries managers and will replace an old facility in the area that was only capable of trapping 20,000 fish per year, The Seattle Times reported.

From wire reports

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Athletics, Astros clear benches

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Oakland Athletics and Houston Astros apparently were tired of playing nice.

So following two quiet games at the Coliseum, tempers flared Sunday, months after Houston's sign-stealing scandal was brought to light by Oakland pitcher Mike Fiers.

Things got so angry the benches cleared — and the stands emptied, too, during Oakland's 7-2 victory over the AL West rival Astros.

The Athletics' ninth straight victory was far overshadowed by what erupted in the seventh inning. The skirmish came less than two weeks after the Astros tangled with the Los Angeles Dodgers, the team they beat in the 2017 World Series.

Oakland's Ramon Laureano got hit by a pitch — for the third time in the three-game series — this one by Humberto Castellanos with one out in the seventh, and pointed at the rookie right-hander.

Laureano then began exchanging words with animated Astros hitting coach Alex Cintron, left first base, threw down his batting helmet and began charging toward Cintron in the dugout.

Astros catcher Dustin Garneau left the bench to tackle Laureano before the A's outfielder reached Cintron, and a wild scene ensued.

"I was just trying to stop the situation before punches were really thrown and stuff got out of hand," Garneau said. "That's really what my whole goal was for that incident."

Players rushed out of both dugouts to join the fray. Players sitting in the seats, observing COVID-19 social-distancing protocols, also rushed onto the field. Several Astros streamed out from their tunnel area.

Laureano was ejected by plate ump Ted Barrett, and the umpiring crew could easily be heard yelling at the players to "get back to the dugout!" through a ballpark with no fans.

"Ramon's not going over

MLB roundup

Acuna hits 3 HRs in Braves' sweep

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Ronald Acuna Jr. homered twice and Freddie Freeman also went deep to spoil Spencer Howard's anticipated big league debut and lead the Atlanta Braves to a doubleheader sweep of the Philadelphia Phillies with an 8-0 victory on Sunday.

Acuna also homered in Atlanta's 5-2 victory in the first game. He had four hits in the second game and added his fourth career multi-homer game.

Indians 5, White Sox 4 (10): Delino DeShields snapped a tie with a perfectly placed squeeze bunt in the 10th inning to lift visiting Cleveland.

DeShields' bunt drove in Jose Ramirez, who started the inning on second as part of baseball's extra-inning rule for the pandemic-shortened season. Mike Freeman added an RBI single that gave Cleveland a 5-3 lead.

Padres 9, Diamondbacks 5: Dinelson Lamet was brilliant in taking a no-hitter into the seventh inning and Fernando Tatis Jr. continued his remarkable power surge with a two-run homer off winless Madison Bumgarner, who allowed four of San Diego's club-record six long balls as the Padres beat visiting Arizona.

Lamet (2-0) allowed only one baserunner, on a hit by pitch, until Kole Calhoun homered leading off the seventh. The right-hander struck out 11 and walked none in 6²/₃ innings.

Mets 4, Marlins 2: Jacob deGrom dodged trouble for five innings, rookie Andres Gimenez had three hits and scored three runs, and New York won a home series for the first time this season.

Jesus Aguilar hit a two-run homer in the fifth for the Marlins, who lost their second straight after getting off to a 7-1 start despite 18 players testing positive for the coronavirus.

Rangers 7, Angels 3: At Arlington, Texas, Los Angeles right fielder Jo Adell was charged with a rare four-base error when a fly ball from Texas' Nick Solak popped out of the rookie's glove and flew the few remaining feet over the fence in the Rangers' victory. The play was ruled a home run for Solak, but the official scorer changed it to an error after consulting with the Elias Sports Bureau.

Royals 4, Twins 2: Hunter Dozier hit a two-run single in his first at-bat since testing positive for COVID-19, and prized prospect Brady Singer earned his major league win to lead host Kansas City.

Brewers 9, Reds 3: Christian Yelich homered, tripled and drew a bases-loaded walk as Milwaukee got its first home victory. The Brewers avoided falling to 0-5 at home for the first time since 1970, the franchise's inaugural season in Milwaukee.

Red Sox 5, Blue Jays 3: Mitch Moreland hit two home runs, including a walk-off shot over the Green Monster to lead host Boston.

Dodgers 6, Giants 2: AJ Pollock and Mookie Betts hit three-run homers to rally Los Angeles past visiting San Francisco. The Dodgers have won nine of 12, and they took two of three in the series from their NL West rivals. Their 29 homers lead the majors.

Mariners 5, Rockies 3: Justus Sheffield pitched six shutout innings for his first major league win, Dylan Moore hit a two-run homer and host Seattle slowed down Colorado. Charlie Blackmon extended his hitting streak to 13 games with a double for Colorado.

Rays 4, Yankees 3: Michael Perez had an RBI single with two outs in the ninth inning to lift host Tampa Bay.

Tigers 2, Pirates 1: Spencer Turnbull pitched seven strong innings and Miguel Cabrera singled home the tiebreaking run in the eighth for visiting Detroit.

there for no reason," A's manager Bob Melvin said, adding of Cintron: "I think the league will know who that is and that person will get suspended. Hopefully that's the case. Nowadays without fans in the stands and mikes everywhere my guess is they know who it is."

Oakland batters were hit five times during the series, no

Houston hitters were plunked.

A's catcher Austin Allen was also ejected and Astros manager Dusty Baker was tossed a half-inning earlier for arguing balls and strikes. Houston lost its fifth in a row overall.

Oakland realized Laureano likely faces discipline.

"Look, we understand and you do the best you can with

these things," Melvin said. "Obviously we don't want to get into a brawl like that and we understand the protocol. Unfortunately, it happened."

Baker said he didn't see what happened because, having been ejected, he couldn't get the game feed on his clubhouse TV.

Incredible shot lifts Morikawa to PGA title

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The best shot of his life, the shot that made Collin Morikawa a major champion, was never supposed to happen.

He knew the tee on the 16th at Harding Park would be moved forward at the PGA Championship. He said during practice rounds that wouldn't tempt him to go for the green. But this was Sunday afternoon, right after Morikawa had chipped in for birdie to break out of a seven-way tie, and at this moment was tied again with Paul Casey.

"I knew I had to hit a good one," he said.

The shot will be remembered as one of the best in a major that hardly anyone witnessed, not with spectators banned during the COVID-19 era for majors.

Morikawa hit his driver on the 294-yard hole that was perfect in flight and even better when it landed, hopping onto the green and rolling to 7 feet for an eagle that all but clinched victory on a mostly quiet, chilly afternoon at Harding Park.

In the first major without spectators, the 23-year-old Californian finished with a bang. The chip-in for birdie and the tee shot for eagle added to a 6-under 64 and the best closing round by a PGA champion in 25 years, and a two-shot victory over Casey (66) and Dustin Johnson (68).

The only regret was the lack of a roar this shot deserved. He had no idea how good it was until he got closer to the green.

"This is one time I really wish there were crowds," he said with a broad smile. "I was just praying for a straight bounce ... and then after it bounced, it kind of got behind a tree that we couldn't see around the corner. So once it bounced, I was like 'OK, I will take it anywhere.'"

"I peeked around right and looked around the tree, and it looked really, really good."

The COVID-19 pandemic that moved the PGA Championship from May to August was allowed to be played only if spectators were not allowed. But there was one person who won't forget what he saw.

Casey, with his first good shot at winning a major, birdied the 16th to tie Morikawa for the lead. Standing on the tee at the par-3 17th, he looked back and saw the ball roll toward the cup.

"What a shot," was all Casey could say. "Nothing you can do but tip your cap to that. Collin had taken on that challenge and pulled it off. That's what champions do."

Golf's latest major champion was still in the vicinity of Harding Park just over a year ago, finishing up his degree at California and his All-American career, part of a new cast of young stars in a sport filled with them.

He only played Harding Park about a dozen times while in college, but it was never set up with rough like this or with the tees all the way back.

Now he has three PGA Tour victories

and is No. 5 in the world, taking his place among the young stars by beating a cast of world-class players on the public course in San Francisco.

"Those are moments I'm always going to remember," said Morikawa, who became the sixth player to capture this major before turning 24.

For Johnson, it was another major that got away. He had a one-shot lead and didn't do too much wrong on the day except for not keeping it in the fairway for better chances of birdie. He drove into the hazard on the 16th and chipped in for birdie when it was too late, and a birdie on the 18th gave him a tie for second.

It was his fifth runner-up finish in a major — his only title is the 2016 U.S. Open — and his second straight runner-up in the PGA Championship.

Brooks Koepka proved to be all talk. He looked at the crowded leaderboard on Saturday night and didn't see anyone with his experience of four major championships, even dishing on Johnson because he has "only won one."

Koepka didn't make a birdie until the 12th hole. He went from two shots behind to a 74, tying for 29th.

"It's my first bad round in a major in a while," said Koepka, who said he spent the back nine mostly trying to cheer on Casey and his bid to win a first major at age 43.

Harvick completes doubleheader sweep

Associated Press

BROOKLYN, Mich. — Kevin Harvick won just about everything he could in a stellar weekend at Michigan International Speedway, although fittingly, Denny Hamlin was the last driver to pressure him.

Harvick held off Hamlin on Sunday to complete a doubleheader sweep in the NASCAR Cup Series. He'd also won Saturday's race, and the two victories gave him six on the season — the most of any driver.

Hamlin, who has five wins, nearly chased Harvick down at the very end, and this weekend did nothing to dispel the notion that these two are top contenders for this year's championship.

"I have tremendous respect for everyone on that team and Kevin," Hamlin said. "As we've gotten older, we've gotten wiser and learned to really appreciate what each other does on the race track. Obviously, they're having a great season as well."

Hamlin was right behind Harvick for the final few laps and came close to passing him a couple of times, but Harvick stayed in front. Hamlin's final desperate bid came up short at the end when Harvick crossed the finish line 0.093 seconds ahead.

Harvick also won the first two stages Saturday and the second stage Sunday. Clint Bowyer won Sunday's first stage of the 156-lap, 312-mile race.

MLS resuming season

Associated Press

Buoyed by the MLS is Back tournament and confident of its coronavirus protocols, Major League Soccer will resume its regular season with teams playing in their home cities.

The league's 26 teams will each play 18 games, with the first between FC Dallas and Nashville set for Wednesday. Dallas and Nashville will play three games against each other, having been forced to withdraw from the MLS is Back tournament because of COVID-19 cases.

A majority of games will be played without fans because of local regulations. Teams will be subject to a rigorous testing protocol and will use charter flights or buses.

MLS continues to work with

the Canadian teams because of travel restrictions. Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver have not been included in the first phase of the schedule.

The monthlong MLS is Back tournament championship match is set for Tuesday between Portland and Orlando City. The group stage matches counted toward the regular season.

MLS suspended the season March 12 because of the pandemic after teams had played two games each.

MLS is Back appeared that it might be derailed at the start when Dallas and Nashville had to drop out. But apart from those two teams there have been only two confirmed positive tests — one from Sporting Kansas City and one from Columbus.

NBA roundup

Lillard leads Trail Blazers past 76ers

Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Damian Lillard scored 51 points after a frustrating finish a night earlier, and the Portland Trail Blazers beat the Philadelphia 76ers 124-121 on Sunday.

It was a day of redemption for the star point guard. On Saturday, he missed a pair of free throws with 18.6 seconds to go and a three-pointer with 9.5 seconds left in a 122-117 loss to the Los Angeles Clippers.

Portland bounced back and pulled within a half-game of Memphis for eighth place in the Western Conference. The Trail Blazers increased their chances of qualifying for the play-in series, which will start Saturday.

The 76ers lost much more than the game. All-Star center Joel Embiid left in the first quarter with what the team called a left ankle injury, and he did not return. He contested a shot, then backed up and stepped awkwardly into the stanchion. He had been averaging 30 points per game since the restart.

Josh Richardson scored a season-high 34 points and Alec Burks added 20 for Philadelphia. The 76ers would have moved into a tie with the Indiana Pacers and Miami Heat for fourth place in the Eastern Conference standings with a win.

Spurs 122, Pelicans 113: DeMar DeRozan scored 27 points, Rudy Gay added 19 off the bench and San Antonio wasted

much of a 20-point, second-half lead before hanging on to beat New Orleans.

The loss, combined with Portland's win over Philadelphia later Sunday, eliminated New Orleans from playoff contention.

The Spurs — bidding to become the first team in NBA history to make 23 consecutive playoff appearances — moved past idle Phoenix into 10th place in the West, percentage points behind Portland for the No. 9 spot that comes with a berth in the play-in series next weekend.

Raptors 108, Grizzlies 99: Pascal Siakam scored 26 points to help Toronto prevent Memphis from clinching a spot in the Western Conference play-in series.

Norman Powell scored 16 points and Kyle Lowry added 15 for the Raptors, who clinched the No. 2 seed in the Eastern Conference and their fifth consecutive season with at least 50 wins.

The Grizzlies dropped to 1-5 in the restart and are barely hanging on to eighth place in the West, with Portland, Phoenix and San Antonio close behind. There will be a play-in series in the West, starting Saturday.

Nets 129, Clippers 120: Caris LeVert had 27 points and 13 assists, and Brooklyn used the best-shooting quarter in the NBA this season on its way to a victory over Los Angeles.

Joe Harris added 25 points — 23 in the first half — for the Nets, who clinched sev-

enth place in the Eastern Conference and a first-round playoff matchup with the defending NBA champion Toronto Raptors.

Kawhi Leonard scored 39 points for the Clippers, who rested Paul George and had their lead over Denver for the No. 2 seed in the West trimmed to one game. They play the Nuggets on Wednesday in their next game.

Celtics 122, Magic 119 (OT): Gordon Hayward hit three free throws with 2:29 left in overtime, and Boston beat Orlando for its third straight victory.

Rockets 129, Kings 112: Austin Rivers scored a career-high 41 points off the bench and Houston used a big third quarter to pull away and cruise to a victory over Sacramento.

Rivers made six three-pointers as Houston improved to 4-1 at Disney on a night the Rockets played a second straight game without Russell Westbrook, who has a bruised right quadriceps.

The Kings fell to 1-5 in the bubble after being eliminated from playoff contention earlier Sunday when Portland beat the 76ers. Sacramento's playoff drought is now 14 years, which is the longest active streak in the NBA.

Thunder 121, Wizards 103: Rookie Darius Bazley scored a career-high 23 points off the bench, and Oklahoma City kept Washington the only winless team inside the NBA bubble.

NHL roundup

Blue Jackets shut out Maple Leafs, advance

Associated Press

TORONTO — Goalie Joonas Korpisalo and the Columbus Blue Jackets proved how they learned their lesson about holding three-goal leads.

They're advancing to the first round of the NHL playoffs because they weren't going to squander one for a second time in three days.

Korpisalo stopped 33 shots, Zach Werenski's floater from the left point in the first period held up as the winner, and the Blue Jackets defeated the Toronto Maple Leafs 3-0 win in a decisive Game 5 on Sunday

night.

Liam Foudy sneaked in a shot from a bad angle with 8:20 remaining, and captain Nick Foligno sealed the victory by scoring into an open net with 23 seconds remaining to close a rollicking best-of-five series in which the teams first traded shutout wins, and the Blue Jackets overcame a 3-0 deficit in a 4-3 OT win in Game 3.

"It's a group that we don't do it easy, the easy way," coach John Tortorella said. "As I said to you guys earlier today, we just try to go out and play. I'm proud them."

Capitals 2, Bruins 1: T.J. Oshie and Tom Wilson scored, Braden Holtby made 30 saves and Washington beat Boston to clinch the No. 3 seed in the Eastern Conference and set up a first-round matchup against former coach Barry Trotz's New York Islanders.

Boston, which won the Presidents' Trophy as the top team during the NHL regular season that was cut short in March, lost all three of its seeding games and fell to fourth in the East. The Bruins will face the Carolina Hurricanes in the first round.

Stars 2, Blues 1 (SO): Joe Pavelski tied it with 31.4 seconds left in the third period, Anton Khudobin stopped all three shots he faced in the shootout and Dallas beat St. Louis to clinch the No. 3 seed in the Western Conference.

Denis Gurianov scored the only goal of the shootout.

Dallas will face Calgary in the first round of the playoffs. Defending Stanley Cup champion St. Louis went winless in the round robin and will next face Vancouver.

Khudobin made 12 saves in regulation and OT for the Stars.