

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Navy will lead new task force on UFOs

Stars and Stripes

The Navy will lead a new task force charged with detecting, analyzing and cataloging encounters with what used to be called UFOs that could threaten the United States, the Pentagon announced in a statement Friday.

The Unidentified Aerial Phenomena Task Force, approved Aug. 4 by Deputy Secretary of Defense David Norquist, was established so the Department of Defense can improve its “understanding of, and gain insight into, the nature and origins” of mysterious flying objects, the statement said.

The Department of the Navy will head up the task force and report to the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intel-

ligence and Security.

The announcement comes about two months after the Senate Intelligence Committee voted to require the Defense Department and intelligence agencies to compile an unclassified analysis of data on “unidentified aerial phenomena” that includes several unexplained encounters recorded by Navy pilots over the years.

In April, the Pentagon declassified and released three video clips that had been unofficially circulating “to clear up any misconceptions by the public on whether or not the footage ... was real, or whether or not there is more to the videos.”

The To The Stars Academy of Arts and Science group, which had released one of the clips, said the unidentified aircraft “demonstrate flight characteristics of ad-

vanced technologies unlike anything we currently know, understand, or can duplicate with current technologies.”

The Pentagon, in its statement Friday, said its primary concerns are the safety of personnel and the security of its operations.

“The Department of Defense and the military departments take any incursions by unauthorized aircraft into our training ranges or designated airspace very seriously and examine each report,” the statement said. “This includes examinations of incursions that are initially reported as [unidentified aerial phenomena] when the observer cannot immediately identify what he or she is observing.”

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About 1,000 troops to redeploy to Poland

Associated Press

WARSAW — U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Saturday sealed a defense cooperation deal with Polish officials that will pave the way for the redeployment of American troops from Germany to Poland.

In Warsaw at the end of a four-nation tour of central and eastern Europe, Pompeo and Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak signed an Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement that sets out the legal framework for the additional troop presence.

“This is going to be an extended guarantee: a guarantee that in case of a threat our soldiers are going to stand arm-in-arm,” Poland’s President Andrzej Duda said during the signing ceremony. “It will also serve to increase the security of other countries in our part of Europe.”

The deal would also further

other aspects of U.S.-Polish cooperation, he added, citing primarily investment and trade ties.

The pact supplements an existing NATO Status of Forces Agreement and allows for the enhancement and modernization of existing capabilities and facilities by allowing U.S. forces to access additional Polish military installations. It also sets out a formula for sharing the logistical and infrastructure costs of an expanded U.S. presence in the country.

President Donald Trump said in a statement that the pact was the culmination of months of negotiations with Poland.

“The agreement will enhance our military cooperation and increase the United States’ military presence in Poland to further strengthen NATO deterrence, bolster European security, and help ensure democracy, freedom, and sovereignty,” Trump’s statement said.

Some 4,500 U.S. troops are currently based in Poland, but about 1,000 more are to be added, under a bilateral decision announced last year. Last month, in line with Trump’s demand to reduce troop numbers in Germany, the Pentagon announced that some 12,000 troops would be withdrawn from Germany with about 5,600 moving to other countries in Europe, including Poland.

Trump has long and loudly complained that Germany does not spend enough on defense and has repeatedly accused Germany of failing to pay NATO bills, which is a misstatement of the issue. NATO nations have pledged to dedicate 2% of their gross domestic product.

After the signing ceremony, Pompeo joined Duda and other Polish leaders at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier to mark the centennial of Poland’s landmark victory against the Russian Bolsheviks in 1920 during

the Polish-Soviet war.

Saturday’s signing came just a day after the Trump administration suffered an embarrassing diplomatic loss at the United Nations when its proposal to indefinitely extend an arms embargo on Iran was soundly defeated in a UN Security Council vote that saw only one country side with the U.S. Pompeo will visit that country, the Dominican Republic, on Sunday for the inauguration of its new president.

Pompeo has used his Europe trip to warn the region’s young democracies about threats posed by Russia and China and has received a warm welcome.

In Poland, the reception was particularly kind given the friendship between Trump and conservative Polish President Duda, who was sworn in for a second five-year term earlier this month after a hotly contested election.

Midshipman sentenced to 25 years in assault case

Associated press

WASHINGTON — A U.S. Naval Academy midshipman has been sentenced to 25 years after a military panel found him guilty of sexual assault and other charges.

The Capital Gazette reported Friday that Nixon Keago also was dismissed from the service and sentenced to forfeit all pay and allowances.

The 25-year-old also was found guilty of attempted sexual assault, obstruction of justice and burglary during a court-martial at the Washington Navy Yard. The charges stem from four separate incidents involving three women who were Naval Academy midshipmen at the time of the assaults.

The court-martial was delayed after Keago showed symptoms of COVID-19. He has since tested negative for the disease caused by the coronavirus.

Reneau Kennedy, a psychologist and government witness who studies forensic recidivism, testified last month that Keago has a low rehabilitation potential.

In closing arguments, Lt. Cmdr. Chris Cox said criminal charges did not prevent him from attempting to sexually assault women. He noted the last incident, which happened after Keago knew he was charged with sexual assault.

"Confinement is the only way to stop it," Cox said.

Defense attorney Lt. Cmdr. Andrea Kissner urged the members to focus on Keago as a father, a son, a brother and a midshipman.

"Midshipman Keago is a person," Kissner said. "And as a person, Midshipman Keago deserves a fair sentence."

The sentence represented nearly a middle ground between the defense and government.

Woman on Afghan peace team survives assassination attack

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — A female member of Afghanistan's peace negotiating team was lightly wounded in an assassination attempt, officials said Saturday.

Tariq Arian, a spokesman for the Interior Ministry, said Fawzia Koofi, who is also a former parliamentarian, was attacked Friday afternoon near the capital of Kabul while returning from a visit to the northern province of Parwan.

Koofi is part of a 21-member team charged with representing the Afghan government in upcoming peace talks with the Taliban, following a U.S. deal with the militants that was struck in February.

The head of the Afghan peace delegation, Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai, tweeted that Koofi had survived the attack and was "in good health."

Fawzia Koofi and her sister Maryam Koofi stopped at a market in the Qarabagh district when gunmen attacked, Arian said.

Both the Taliban and an Islamic State affiliate

continue to carry out attacks against Afghan government figures, but Zabihullah Mujhid, a Taliban spokesman, denied the group was involved.

Koofi is also a women's rights activist who has been a vocal Taliban critic. A message on her Facebook page said she suffered a wound to her right arm. "Thankfully not a life threatening injury," it said.

The U.S. peace deal aims to recruit the Taliban to fight Islamic State militants in Afghanistan, a mutual enemy. The Taliban and ISIS are staunch rivals.

The peace deal also paved the way for U.S. and NATO forces to begin withdrawing from Afghanistan and for the Taliban and Afghan government to begin direct talks.

The Afghan government said on Friday that it had released the first 80 of a final 400 Taliban prisoners ahead of direct negotiations between the two sides.

Talks are expected to be held in Qatar where the Taliban maintain a political office. Several Afghan leaders told The Associated Press talks could begin by Aug. 20.

Guillen honored at Houston high school

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Flags from the U.S., Texas and Mexico flew at half-staff Friday as a white, horse-drawn carriage embellished with white flowers brought in the custom green casket that carried the remains of a slain soldier.

Vanessa Guillen, who was last seen on April 22, was memorialized nearly four months after she is said to have been killed by a fellow soldier at Fort Hood, a U.S. Army base in Texas. Mourners gathered at Cesar Chavez High School in Houston, where Guillen grew up playing soccer and dreaming of joining the military.

"She's very happy where she is next to God and the Virgin Mary," Lupe Guillen said. "We are not here for justice or politics today. We are here to remember, honor and respect Vanessa Guillen and her beautiful life, her tender heart and her beautiful face."

In a private moment just before entering the school's auditorium — where flowers in green and yellow hues, balloons, religious images and pictures of Guillen adorned the stage — family and friends walked behind the casket, accompanying Guillen on a last lap around the field she frequented as a teenager. Guillen's mother and grandmother grasped each other as they prayed over the casket through sobs.

Standing in front of the casket, Guillen's grandmother shared a story about the chocolates she carried in her purse. She said they were her granddaughter's favorite, and she brought them for her from Mexico every visit. Her last memory of her granddaughter is from December, when Guillen was leaving for work and turned back, gave her a hug and money and told her to buy herself a treat, a soda, or something she liked that was just for

her to enjoy.

"Now, I am here to lay these, her favorite chocolates, at my Vanessita's grave," Guillen's grandmother said in Spanish.

Guillen's best friend, Jocelyn Sierra, said they met at Cesar Chavez High School five years ago. She said although it has been 114 days since Guillen died, she feels her presence with her every day. Sierra said the last time she saw Guillen was a week before she went missing, when they ate pizza together and watched the movie "G.I. Jane."

The Roman Catholic service was open to the public and was being streamed online. The memorial was scheduled to last until 8 p.m., with praise sessions, prayers and testimonials. Guests included U.S. Rep. Sylvia Garcia, D-Texas, and friends of the Guillen family. Guillen's remains were expected to be laid to rest after a private ceremony Saturday.

TikTok owner is ordered to sell US assets

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Friday gave the Chinese company ByteDance 90 days to divest itself of any assets used to support the popular TikTok app in the United States.

Trump's executive order said there is "credible evidence that leads me to believe that ByteDance ... might take action that threatens to impair the national security of the United States."

Trump last week ordered sweeping but vague bans on dealings with the Chinese owners of TikTok and the messaging app

WeChat, saying they are a threat to U.S. national security, foreign policy and the economy.

It remains unclear what the TikTok orders mean for the app's 100 million U.S. users, many of them teenagers or young adults who use it to post and watch short-form videos. Trump on Friday also ordered ByteDance to divest itself of "any data obtained or derived" from TikTok users in the U.S.

Microsoft is in talks to buy parts of TikTok.

White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany defended Trump's earlier Tik-

Tok and WeChat orders Thursday, telling reporters he was exercising his emergency authority under a 1977 law enabling the president to regulate international commerce to address unusual threats.

"The administration is committed to protecting the American people from all cyber threats and these apps collect significant amounts of private data on users," said McEnany, adding that the Chinese government can access and use such data.

TikTok said it spent nearly a year trying to engage in "good faith" with the U.S. government to address these concerns.

Court ends California ban on high-capacity magazines

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — A three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on Friday threw out California's ban on high-capacity ammunition magazines, saying the law violates the U.S. Constitution's protection of the right to bear firearms.

"Even well-intentioned laws must pass constitutional muster," appellate Judge Kenneth Lee wrote for the panel's majority. California's ban on magazines holding more than 10 bullets "strikes at the core of the Second Amendment — the right to armed self-defense."

He noted that California passed the law "in the wake of heart-wrenching and highly publicized mass shootings," but said that isn't enough to justify a ban whose scope "is so sweeping that half of all magazines

in America are now unlawful to own in California."

California Attorney General Xavier Becerra's office said it is reviewing the decision and he "remains committed to using every tool possible to defend California's gun safety laws and keep our communities safe."

Gun owners cannot immediately rush to buy high-capacity magazines because a stay issued by the lower court judge remains in place.

But Becerra did not say if the state would seek a further delay of Friday's ruling to prevent an immediate buying spree if the lower court judge ends that restriction. Gun groups estimated that more than a million high-capacity ammunition magazines may have legally flooded into California during a one-week window before the judge stayed his ruling three years ago. Becerra also

did not say if he would ask a larger 11-judge appellate panel to reconsider the ruling by the three judges, or if he would appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Gov. Gavin Newsom, who championed the magazine ban when he was lieutenant governor, defended the law as a vital gun violence prevention measure.

"I think it was sound, I think it was right, and ... the overwhelming majority of Californians agreed when they supported a ballot initiative that we put forth," he said Friday.

California Rifle & Pistol Association attorney Chuck Michel called Friday's decision "a huge victory" for gun owners "and the right to choose to own a firearm to defend your family," while a group that favors firearms restrictions called it "dangerous" and expects it will be overturned.

New border wall endangered water supply of refuge

Associated Press

PHOENIX — The agency in charge of building the border wall received repeated warnings: tap water from nearby wells, and the unique wetlands of southeastern Arizona — yes, Arizona — home to a variety of wildlife and endangered fish will go dry.

Immigration officials didn't heed those warnings. Then, several ponds at the San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge found themselves without water or with an extremely low supply, according to documents obtained by two different environmental groups.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the agency in charge of the refuge, said in a

statement on Thursday that ponds "remain intact and the refuge continues to manage for endangered fish and wildlife."

Contractors working for U.S. Customs and Border Protection began building a new stretch of border wall there in October, pumping millions of gallons of groundwater to mix cement for the 30-foot steel fencing that has been a signature promise of President Donald Trump. The Trump administration has promised to build 450 miles of wall along the border with Mexico by the end of this year; it has so far built 275 miles.

The San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1982 to protect the rare wetlands in the middle of the desert that are home to a variety of wildlife,

including several species of fish that are protected by the Endangered Species Act. Sitting on over 2,300 acres on the U.S.-Mexico border in southeastern Arizona, close to New Mexico, the refuge is home to hummingbirds, 75 species of butterflies, bats and, most importantly, to fish native to Rio Yaqui, which the refuge was set up to protect.

"It's a pretty magical place," said Randy Serraglio, Southwest conservation advocate for the Center for Biological Diversity. "The analogy is an oasis, really. That's why the water withdrawals are so damaging."

The refuge itself is supposed to be protected under environmental laws, but the government has waived those in the name of border security.

County seeks court order against school

Associated Press

FRESNO, Calif. — Students at a private school in California attended their second day of in-person classes Friday despite state and county orders to close the campus.

Fresno County will now seek a court restraining order to close Immanuel Schools in Reedley, county Director of Public Health David Pomaville said at an afternoon briefing.

Immanuel Schools offers kindergarten through 12th grade classes on a single campus. It was ordered to close Thursday after it reopened classrooms in violation of a state health order aimed at slowing the spread of the coronavirus.

Fresno County said the private Christian school with about 600 students cannot use its classrooms until the county is removed from a state monitoring list for two weeks.

"Immanuel Schools and all Fresno County schools have an obligation to protect the health and safety of all students and faculty," Pomaville said in an earlier statement.

The order also is designed to "address the strain upon the health care system" from COVID-19, the statement said.

News reports said students gathered in groups at the school for the first two days of the new school year without practicing social distancing or wearing masks.

One parent told the Fresno Bee that it was the parents' right to send their students to class.

The school's Board of Trustees and Superintendent Ryan Wood issued a statement that said they believe "our mission is best achieved through in-person education."

Gov. Gavin Newsom on Friday urged school officials to reconsider, saying he was disappointed to learn officials violated the health order.

"This school, unfortunately, is choosing not to model good behavior and do the right thing," he said. "We'd all do well to abide by our local health officers."

Florida

FORT LAUDERDALE—Florida's high school athletic board voted Friday to begin practices for football and other fall sports Aug. 24 and games less than two weeks later, pushing aside the advice of its medical experts who said competition should not resume for at least six weeks because of the coronavirus outbreak.

The Florida High School Athletic Association board voted 11-5 to begin practices this month. It's a plan endorsed by its executive director, George Tomy, although it could mean the state's largest counties — Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach — plus some others with major outbreaks might choose to delay their seasons and forgo participation in the statewide playoffs.

Football games and other competitions could start Sept. 4, but the 67 countywide school districts plus private schools will have until Sept. 18 to resume if they want to participate in the state playoffs. If a district decides to delay its season and not participate in the playoffs, its teams will be allowed to extend their regular seasons. Other fall sports affected are swimming and diving, cross country, golf, bowling and girl's volleyball.

Michigan

LANSING — Michigan schools that deem it safe to provide in-person classes during the coronavirus pandemic would have to prioritize the option for K-5 students under legislation that would also largely base districts' state funding on last year's pupil count to account for enrollment uncertainty in coming weeks.

The bills, which will be approved by the Senate in a rare Saturday session, reflect a deal announced late Friday by legislative leaders and Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. The House will vote Monday.

The agreement, which was criticized by superintendents and does not include school

funding for the state fiscal year that begins in one-and-a-half months, would waive a requirement that schools have 1,098 hours and 180 days of instruction. They must still provide the educational or course content that would have been delivered in a typical academic year.

Republicans agreed to remove a House-proposed requirement that schools offer in-person learning to K-5 students. Many districts, facing pressure from teachers and mixed reaction among parents, are starting with remote-only instruction due to COVID-19.

Minnesota

MINNEAPOLIS — As students prepare to return to Minnesota's colleges and universities, health officials made a plea Friday for them to stay home and avoid crowded bars, house parties and road trips during what's left of their summer vacation so that they don't bring the coronavirus to campus.

"Lay low before you go," said Kris Ehresmann, the infectious disease director at the Minnesota Department of Health. The choices that students make on whether to follow social distancing and masking guidance could have "a dramatic impact" on whether their college or university is able to continue offering in-person classes amid the pandemic this fall, she said.

"The bottom line is students will really decide how successful this is," Ehresmann said in a briefing for reporters. "And students will decide whether or not they have to close down and send everybody home again."

The department has posted new guidance on its website urging college and university students to interact only with the people they live with for at least 14 days before they return to school.

North Carolina

RALEIGH — School is back in session this week at many North Carolina college campuses, and so is the coronavirus.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill announced on Friday it had two separate clusters of COVID-19 occur among residents of Ehringhaus Community and Granville Towers.

At least five students in each area tested positive for the virus after being in close proximity with their peers, according to UNC.

"The individuals in these clusters have been identified and are isolating and receiving medical monitoring," the university said in an email to students, faculty and staff. "We have also notified the Orange County Health Department and are working with them to identify additional potential exposures."

UNC said those with a fever, shortness of breath, muscle aches or a cough, should immediately contact their medical provider or Campus Health.

News of the outbreak comes as the school works to shut down campus parties and mass gatherings of students. Fall classes resumed at UNC on Monday, with students beginning to move into their residence halls on Aug. 3.

Nevada

LAS VEGAS — The Clark County School Board approved a set of policies meant to improve students' access to technology needed for online classes.

Trustees approved a plan to use \$37 million to purchase Chromebooks, iPads and internet hotspots for qualifying students. An additional \$4.8 million will go toward providing 20,000 internet connections for students who need them.

About 84,000 students in the county have reported a need for new devices and 19,000 reported needing internet access, according to Superintendent Jesus Jara.

The purchases will be made using money from the board's general fund and through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Grant, a federal award for educational agencies impacted by the coronavirus.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

3 charged in woman's death after dog attack

TN MEMPHIS — Three relatives were charged in a dog attack that resulted in the death of a Tennessee woman.

The Shelby County district attorney's office said Phyllis Jones, her daughter, Kimberly Jordan, and Jordan's son, Detricz Perry, were indicted on reckless homicide charges in the death of Doris Arrington, 59, in April.

Authorities said Arrington's body was found in a north Memphis neighborhood with severe injuries to her legs and arms from animal bites. The cause of death was massive blood loss, prosecutors said.

Police found four dogs in a nearby house. They had blood on their mouths and bodies. The dogs' owners were identified as the three relatives, authorities said.

Victims fight back when man takes car with kid

FL DAYTONA BEACH — A man and a woman fought off a carjacker who tried to take a vehicle from a Daytona Beach gas station with a child in the back seat, police said.

Surveillance video from the 7-Eleven showed a man get out of a Dodge Charger and walk to the passenger side, where a woman got out of the vehicle. As they stood there, a man later identified as Ayodele Akiode got in the car and started to drive away, Daytona Beach police said.

The woman jumped halfway through the passenger's side window, trying to stop the man, according to WKMG. The man who was with her went to the driver's side and began punching the alleged carjacker

through the window of the moving vehicle.

The car rolled through the parking lot and crashed into a pole, police said.

Man shot while playing disc golf sues shooter

ME AUBURN — A Lewiston man is suing the person who shot him in the face while he was playing disc golf two years ago.

Cameron Hart was playing disc golf in Turner when Troy Jordan fired a handgun on a neighboring property. A bullet hit Hart in the face.

In a lawsuit, Hart said he and a friend yelled at Jordan to stop shooting because they heard the bullets coming toward them on the disc golf course but that Jordan continued to fire shots, eventually hitting Hart, the Sun Journal reported.

At the time, Maine state police said Jordan was firing the gun at targets to practice and that the bullet likely ricocheted off something and struck Hart.

2 accused in explosives theft from mining firm

NV LAS VEGAS — Two convicted felons face federal conspiracy, theft and explosives possession charges alleging they stole almost 90 pounds of explosives from a Las Vegas mining business, prosecutors said.

Defense attorneys for Sergio Bautista, 34, and Eric Golden, 54, declined immediate comment about the seven-count indictment stemming from the theft from Hinton Mining.

They are accused of stealing a 50-pound bag of ammonium nitrate fuel oil and 18 sticks of ammonium nitrate weighing almost 40 pounds.

Man jailed for dumping hazardous waste

NE OMAHA — A western Nebraska man was sentenced to nearly three years in federal prison for illegally dumping hazardous waste at sites around south-central Nebraska.

Edward Miller, 44, was a resident of Sidney in October 2017 when he loaded a truck and flatbed trailer with pesticides and other chemicals from a warehouse at Renkoski Property Development in Sidney, federal prosecutors said in a news release.

Investigators said Miller then drove east and dumped the chemicals at three undeveloped sites along a county road south of Aurora.

Federal Environmental Protection Agency investigators said Miller did not have a permit to dump the waste.

Theme park employee assaulted in mask fight

PA LANGHORNE — A teenage employee at a children's theme park near Philadelphia was assaulted after reminding a couple about the requirement to wear a mask, authorities said.

A man and woman assaulted the 17-year-old employee of Sesame Place, police in Middletown Township said.

Detective Lt. Steve Forman said the worker had reminded the couple about the mask requirement amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The employee was then punched in the face before the two fled, he said.

Detectives were interviewing witnesses and viewing surveillance footage but said the suspects fled in a vehicle with New York plates.

Man drove drunk with kids, caused fiery crash

NJ NORTH BRUNSWICK — A man who was driving drunk with his two young children in his car rear-ended an SUV, which rolled over and caught fire, authorities said.

Christopher Mertens, 40, of Monmouth Junction, faces several counts, including aggravated assault, assault by auto and child endangerment, according to the Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office.

The SUV's driver, a 19-year-old Chesterfield man, was being treated at a hospital for burns, while his passenger, a 21-year-old Suffern, N.Y. woman, was treated at a hospital for undisclosed injuries.

Rescued tortoise struck on highway will recover

CA LODI — An injured tortoise is being treated at a veterinary clinic in northern California after being struck by a vehicle on a busy highway, authorities said.

Cal Fire Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit said in a Facebook post that Adam Frese rescued the tortoise near Highway 49 in San Andreas, the Los Angeles Times reported.

The 95-pound tortoise had a cracked shell and deep gashes in its flesh but is expected to make a full recovery, authorities said.

"This was definitely a first for me," Brandon Milo, owner of Milo's Misfits Reptile Rescue, told KTXL-TV. "There were fractures from corner to corner."

The tortoise was transferred to Arbor Pet Clinic in Lodi, where it was scheduled for surgery and to have its shell patched and secured.

From wire reports

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Pricey NFL vets have something to prove

Associated Press

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. — Von Miller is determined to show 2019 was an oddity, not an omen. Miller's season was nothing to scoff at considering he had eight sacks and made his eighth Pro Bowl. But his five-year run as an All-Pro first- or second-team selection came to an end and the Denver Broncos' playoff drought persisted.

"I didn't play to the 'Sack Master's' standards," Miller said. "My coaches felt like there was more for me to give. Most of all, I feel like I can give more and I can be more. I don't feel like I'm finished yet."

Neither does Tom Brady nor JuJu Smith-Schuster nor Baker Mayfield, among the other big names looking for big bouncebacks in 2020.

Miller, the biggest NFL star to contract COVID-19, made the most of his home gym after recovering from the virus, hitting the weights hard and sharing videos and photos of his bulging muscles and extreme workouts on social media.

"I didn't take any days off, I didn't go on any vacations and I didn't do anything but work out," Miller said.

Joining Miller on a comeback campaign in Denver this season is Chubb, Miller's pass-rushing partner who blew out a knee in September.

Chubb expects to be ready to go on opening night Sept. 14.

"I'm easing back into practice and getting my flow back to where it was," Chubb

said. "I feel like I'll be good for Week 1, for sure."

Tom Brady (and Rob Gronkowski)

Like Miller, Brady put up decent numbers in 2019, but he sputtered down the stretch along with the rest of the Patriots, who followed their 8-0 start with a 4-5 finish, capped by their home loss to Tennessee in the playoffs. That was Brady's farewell to New England after two decades and six rings. Gronkowski came out of retirement to join Brady in Tampa, where the Bucs are sure they'll end their 12-year playoff drought.

JuJu Smith-Schuster (and Ben Roethlisberger)

Smith-Schuster paid the price after Roethlisberger suffered a season-ending elbow injury in Week 2. After catching 111 passes for 1,426 yards and seven TDs in 2018, Smith-Schuster had 42 catches for 552 yards and three TDs. Big Ben is back and so is James Washington (16.7 yards per catch). Pittsburgh also drafted Notre Dame's big receiver Chase Claypool. That should open things up for Smith-Schuster underneath to return to his 2018 form.

T.Y. Hilton (and Philip Rivers)

Like Schuster, Hilton was adversely affected by injuries and spotty quarterback

play last year when he set career lows with 45 receptions for 501 yards. Now he has Rivers throwing to him. Rivers was intercepted a whopping 20 times last year in L.A. to go with his 23 TD tosses. That followed an effective two-year stretch in which Rivers averaged 30 touchdown throws and 11 interceptions.

Odell Beckham Jr. (and Baker Mayfield)

Mayfield followed a 27-TD rookie season with a step back under Freddie Kitchens, and Beckham was never himself as he played through a sports hernia. Beckham is healthy again following offseason surgery and seems a better fit in new coach Kevin Stefanski's play-action system, which also should help settle Mayfield, who had 21 interceptions in 2019 to go with 22 touchdown passes.

Khalil Mack (and the Bears)

The league's highest-paid defender followed his smashing debut season in Chicago with a rather pedestrian 2019 that saw him tally 8½ sacks, his fewest since his rookie season in 2014. Although he had the same number of tackles — 47 — as he did in 2018, Mack's 14 QB hits ranked 46th in the NFL and his eight tackles for loss ranked 61st, numbers not befitting his \$141 million contract.

Sports briefs

Andretti cars fastest at Indy 500 qualifying

INDIANAPOLIS — Andretti Autosport claimed the top of the speed chart midway through Indianapolis 500 qualifying, with former winners Ryan Hunter-Reay and Alexander Rossi leading a strong Honda showing.

Rossi moved to the top of the board with a four-lap average of 231.268 mph at Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Teammate Hunter-Reay was waiting on pit lane to make his run when Rossi radioed feedback from his four laps.

Hunter-Reay made a quick adjustment then bumped Rossi with a qualifying run of 231.330 mph.

"We knew we had the speed," Hunter-Reay said.

Five NFL officials opt out for 2020 season

NEW YORK — The NFL's longest-serving on-field official was among five who have opted to take a leave of absence for the 2020 season.

Line judge Jeff Bergman, who was entering his 29th year of service, headlined the list released Friday by the NFL.

Back judge Steve Freeman, entering his 20th year and part of the league's only father-son duo in the officials ranks, joined the group. His son, Brad, is a back judge is entering his seventh season.

Also opting out are field judges Greg Gautreaux and Joe Larrew and back judge Tony Steratore.

Bruins goalie Rask opts out of playoffs

BOSTON — Boston Bruins goalie Tuukka Rask has opted out of the team's playoff run to be with his family.

The defending Eastern Conference champions announced the decision Saturday morning, less than two hours before Game 3 of their playoff series against the Carolina Hurricanes.

A Vezina Trophy finalist who won the NHL's top goaltender award in 2014, Rask is the highest-profile player to opt out of the return to play from the coronavirus pandemic shutdown. After leading Boston to the Stanley Cup Final last season, he led the NHL with a 2.12 goals-against average.

World Series MVP Strasburg goes on IL

WASHINGTON — World Series MVP Stephen Strasburg was put on the 10-day injured list by the Washington Nationals on Saturday because of the recurring nerve issue in his throwing hand that delayed his start to the 2020 season and cut short his second appearance.

The team classified his injury as "carpal tunnel neuritis of the right hand."

Strasburg is 0-1 with a 10.80 ERA in two starts this season.

In other baseball news:

■ The last two games of a series between Cincinnati and Pittsburgh were called off Saturday because a Reds player tested positive for COVID-19.

— Associated Press

NBA roundup

Pacers beat Heat in injury-marred finale

Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Doug McDermott scored 23 points and the Indiana Pacers beat Miami 109-92 on Friday in a game delayed for several minutes late in the third quarter when Heat forward Derrick Jones Jr. was carted off the court.

The Heat said on Twitter that Jones had a neck strain and had undergone an MRI, CT scan and concussion test. The team said Jones would be re-evaluated over the weekend.

The injury to the NBA's reigning slam dunk champion came on a day when both teams were trying to stay as healthy as possible for their upcoming first-round playoff matchup.

Miami and Indiana entered the day tied for fourth in the Eastern Conference at 44-28 records. Typically, this regular-season finale would have decided which team got home-court advantage in their first-round series. But nobody has a home-court edge this year with the entire postseason taking place at Disney's Wide World of Sports, so nothing was really at stake Friday.

The Heat sat All-Stars Bam Adebayo and Jimmy Butler as well as Goran Dragic, Jae Crowder and Andre Iguodala. T.J. Warren, Domantas Sabonis, Victor Oladipo and Myles Turner didn't play for Indiana.

Sabonis, the Pacers' leading rebounder, hasn't played any games since the restart due to plantar fasciitis and is out indefinitely. Many of the other notable names who didn't play were simply getting some recovery time as they gear up for the postseason.

Malcolm Brogdon had 16 points, six rebounds and six assists for the Pacers. Alize Johnson had 11 points and 17 rebounds to set career highs in both categories. Kendrick Nunn scored 23 points for Miami.

Raptors 117, Nuggets 109:

Stanley Johnson scored 19 of his 23 points in the second half, and Toronto beat Denver to close the regular season.

Johnson hit three three-pointers and a floating bank shot during a span of less than four minutes in the fourth quarter, helping the Raptors push their lead to 103-92 with six minutes to go.

Paul Watson scored 22 points and Norman Powell 15 for the Raptors, who've won four straight and seven of their eight regular-season games in Central Florida.

Both teams entered the game already locked into playoff position — Denver the No. 3 seed in the Western Conference and Toronto No. 2 in the Eastern Conference. Regulars for each club played, but some of their minutes were dialed back. Denver's Nikola Jokic and Jamal Murray each played about 10 minutes, during which Murray hit three threes for the bulk of his 11 points.

Denver's PJ Dozier made five of six three-pointers and scored 20 points.

Clippers 107, Thunder 103:

Terance Mann hit a go-ahead three-pointer with 2:30 left in overtime and had 25 points and 14 rebounds for Los Angeles against Oklahoma City.

The Clippers rested Kawhi Leonard, Paul George and Lou Williams for the playoffs starting next week. They wrapped up the second seed in the Western Conference playoffs with a 124-111 victory over Denver on Wednesday night.

76ers 134, Rockets 96:

Tobias Harris scored 18 points and Philadelphia closed the regular season by trouncing Houston.

The 76ers and Rockets played most of their regulars for about the first 2½ quarters even though both teams already were locked into playoff matchups.

Tatar, Kotkaniemi score twice in Canadiens' rout

Associated Press

TORONTO — Montreal won this playoff game for its absent coach.

Kirk Muller and the rest of the Canadiens just had to dedicate the Game 2 victory to Claude Julien.

"To Claude, I'm sure you're listening, this win's for you," Muller said.

Tomas Tatar and Jesperi Kotkaniemi each scored twice, Carey Price stopped 30 shots and the Canadiens rebounded without Julien to rout the Philadelphia Flyers 5-0 on Friday and tie the series at a game apiece.

"We have a job and he would expect that as well," forward Max Domi said. "So we were just trying to stay focused here and get ready to go. And I think we did a great job of that."

Julien was home in Montreal a day after a stent was placed in a coronary artery. The

team said doctors expect a full recovery.

Julien was rushed to St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto overnight Wednesday with chest pain. He had surgery Thursday. Because Julien left the NHL bubble in Toronto, he will have to follow quarantine protocol if he wishes to re-enter it. Muller will serve as interim head coach for the rest of the Eastern Conference quarterfinal series.

"Claude steers the ship for us and he guides what we do out there," defenseman Ben Chiarot said. "We'll just play as hard as we can for him."

The Canadiens continued their sensational surge through Toronto hockey and bounced back fine after a 2-1 Game 1 loss. Montreal was the last team in the East to qualify for the expanded playoffs, then needed four games to win its best-of-five series over Sidney Crosby and the Pittsburgh Penguins.

NHL roundup

Canucks up 2-0 on Blues

Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — Bo Horvat scored on a breakaway at 5:55 of overtime Friday night to give the Vancouver Canucks a 4-3 victory over the defending champion St. Louis Blues and a 2-0 lead in the Western Conference series.

Horvat took a stretch pass from Quinn Hughes and chipped the puck through Jordan Binnington's legs.

Avalanche 3, Coyotes 2:

At Edmonton, Alberta, Andre Burakovsky scored late in the third period, Philipp Grubauer stopped 30 shots and Colorado beat Arizona to take a 2-0 series lead.

Burakovsky scored with 2:53 left in regulation when a shot by Kazem Kadri hit Arizona defenseman Jakob Chychrun's

shin pad and left goalie Darcy Kuemper out of position.

Islanders 5, Capitals 2: At Toronto, Brock Nelson scored the go-ahead goal on a second-period breakaway 15 seconds after Alex Ovechkin tied it, and New York beat Washington to take a 2-0 series lead.

Flames 2, Stars 0: At Edmonton, Alberta, Mikael Backlund scored his team's second short-handed goal in as many nights, Cam Talbot stopped 35 shots in his second shutout this postseason and Calgary beat Dallas to take a 2-1 series lead.

The goal by Backlund in the second period hit the stick of goalie Anton Khodobin, who couldn't get the puck in his glove before it fell back onto the pads of his left leg, hanging there briefly before falling to the ice and rolling over the line.

Cole, Yanks beat BoSox

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Gerrit Cole posted his 20th straight regular-season win, becoming the sixth pitcher to ever reach the mark by throwing seven sharp innings to lead the New York Yankees over the Boston Red Sox 10-3 Friday.

A noted Yankees fan growing up in Southern California, Cole (4-0) allowed one run and four hits in his first taste of the storied rivalry, albeit in front of empty seats. He struck out eight, walked none and threw 95 pitches.

"It was a tight game for a while," Cole said. "We needed to make some pitches and we did."

Cole, who came within one strike of a win his previous start before getting pulled, moved closer to the all-time record of 24 consecutive victories by Carl Hubbell in 1936-37. Roy Face is next at 22, followed by Roger Clemens, Jake Arrieta and Cole at 20 each.

"Best pitcher in the game and that's what you're seeing," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said. "You're seeing a guy that's great at his craft with elite stuff and the ability to command it."

Cole's only defeat since May 2019 was in the World Series opener last year, when he pitched for Houston and lost to Washington.

Since his last loss in the regular season, Cole is 20-0 with a 1.94 ERA in 27 starts. His 27-game unbeaten streak is tied with Firpo Marberry for the fourth-longest in baseball history. Roger Clemens holds the record with a 30-game unbeaten streak in 1998-99 followed by Kris Medlen and Dave McNally at 28 games apiece.

"That's impressive but it speaks to his consistency and his work ethic," Yankees right fielder Mike Tauchman said.

The Yankees improved to 7-0 at home for the fourth time since 1959 (also 2017, 1998 and 1987). New York also beat Boston for the seventh straight time.

Alex Verdugo homered for Boston, which lost its fifth straight to fall to 6-14. The Red Sox also lost to the Yankees for the 12th time in the past 13 meetings since July 28, 2019.

J.D. Martinez went 0-for-4 with three of his four strikeouts against Cole.

"Obviously a great pitcher makes you chase a lot more," Boston manager Ron Roenicke said. "Every time I looked up at a strikeout it was on a corner somewhere and it was great stuff. Whether it's 97 fast-ball or a great slider or a curveball, it's a great pitch."

MLB roundup

Kershaw brilliant as Dodgers win series opener against Angels

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Clayton Kershaw allowed one hit over seven brilliant innings, Cody Bellinger hit a pair of two-run homers and Los Angeles opened the Freeway Series with a 7-4 win over the Angels.

Justin Turner had two hits and drove in a run as the surging Dodgers opened the annual interleague series with their first win over the slumping Angels since 2018. The Dodgers (14-7) also moved back into sole possession of first place in the NL West.

Anthony Rendon homered in his fourth consecutive game for the Angels.

Kershaw (2-1) struck out six and improved to 7-2 in his career against the Angels while decreasing his interleague ERA to 2.23 — the lowest in major league history among pitchers with at least 15 starts. He also retired Mike Trout three times.

Athletics 8, Giants 7, (10): Stephen Piscotty hit a tying grand slam in the ninth inning, Mark Canha's sacrifice fly put visiting Oakland on top in the 10th, and the Athletics beat San Francisco in the Bay Bridge Series opener.

Oakland trailed by five in the ninth inning but rallied to win from such a deficit for the first time since July 15, 1952, according to STATS. The Giants hadn't lost after leading by five or more runs in the ninth inning or latter since June 25, 1929.

Marlins 8, Braves 2: Jesus Aguilar drove in three runs, Jon Berti stole home and NL East-leading Miami won its long-awaited, coronavirus-delayed home opener, beating Atlanta.

Miami returned to Marlins Park following a 23-day road trip, interrupted when 18 players and two coaches tested positive for the virus. The Marlins improved to 9-4.

Phillies 6, Mets 5: Bryce Harper's RBI single in the bottom of the ninth inning lifted Philadelphia to a victory over visiting New York.

Roman Quinn led off the inning with a single off Seth Lugo (1-2), and Andrew McCutchen followed with a single. After Rhys Hoskins struck out, Harper ripped an 0-2 pitch to right. Quinn slid headfirst ahead of Michael Conforto's throw. The Phillies had to wait for a video review to confirm it before they celebrated with air-fives.

Blue Jays 12, Rays 4: At Buffalo, N.Y., Teoscar Hernandez hit two of his team's six home runs, Bo Bichette connected for the fourth straight game and Toronto beat Tampa Bay.

Along with its seven homers in a 14-11 loss to Miami on Wednesday night at Sahlen Field, Toronto became the fourth team in

major league history to hit at least six homers in back-to-back games. The Blue Jays joined the Dodgers (1996), Angels (2003) and Washington (2012).

Reds 8, Pirates 1: Jesse Winker had his first career two-homer game and Sonny Gray continued his torrid strikeout pace as host Cincinnati broke open a close contest with five runs in the last two innings in a win over Pittsburgh.

Gray (4-1) struck out 10, raising his season total to 45, a franchise record for a pitcher's first five appearances. Luis Castillo set the previous mark of 41 in 2019.

Astros 11, Mariners 1: Yordan Alvarez hit a three-run homer in his first at-bat of the season after recovering from COVID-19, connecting during a nine-run burst in the first inning that sent host Houston over Seattle.

Alvarez drove in four runs in his 2020 debut, including his opposite-field shot off Nestor Cortes in the first.

Diamondbacks 5, Padres 1: Merrill Kelly pitched shutout ball into the seventh inning, Kole Calhoun hit a solo homer and a run-scoring single, and host Arizona beat San Diego.

Kelly (3-1) gave up just three hits and two walks while striking out seven and lowered his season ERA to 1.71. The D-backs have won six of nine games to improve to 9-11. The Padres fell to 11-10.

Indians 10, Tigers 5: Franmil Reyes homered and drove in three, and Cleveland beat host Detroit for a club-record 18th consecutive time.

Aaron Civale (2-2) improved to 3-0 in four career starts against the Tigers, allowing four runs, eight hits and a walk in six innings.

Rangers 3, Rockies 2: Lance Lynn allowed two hits in the first inning on the way to his first complete game in six years, Nick Solak hit his first homer of the season, and visiting Texas beat Colorado.

Brewers 4, Cubs 3: Christian Yelich hit a three-run homer and visiting Milwaukee beat major league-leading Chicago.

Orioles 6-3, Nationals 2-15: Baltimore finished what it started, beating visiting Washington in a game suspended five days earlier because of a tarp malfunction at another ballpark, stretching its winning streak to six games.

In the nightcap, the Nationals used a 19-hit attack to beat the Orioles.