

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## US to pull 1,700 out of Iraq by November

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The United States plans to reduce its military force in Iraq from the current 5,200 to about 3,500 by November, U.S. officials said Friday. The cut would be in line with President Donald Trump's repeated call to bring troops home and his reelection campaign pledge to end what he calls "endless wars."

The plan to shrink the U.S. force in Iraq was first reported by the Wall Street Journal. Officials who confirmed the plan spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a matter not yet publicly announced.

American troops are in Iraq to train and advise Iraqi security forces battling the Islamic State, but the relationship has been rocky at times in large part because of periodic attacks by Iran-backed militia groups that are not fully controlled by the Iraqi government. U.S. troops, after invad-

ing Iraq and toppling President Saddam Hussein in 2003, had withdrawn from the country only to begin returning in 2014 after ISIS militants swept across the Syrian border and took control of large swaths of Iraqi territory.

Trump met last week at the White House with Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi.

"We look forward to the day when we don't have to be there," Trump said then. "We were there and now we're getting out. We'll be leaving shortly and the relationship is very good. We're making very big oil deals. Our oil companies are making massive deals. ... We're going to be leaving and hopefully, we're going to be leaving a country that can defend itself."

Last month, the top U.S. general for the Middle East said he believed the U.S. will keep a smaller but enduring presence in

the country. Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie, commander of U.S. Central Command, said he believes the Iraqis welcome U.S. and coalition troops, especially in the ongoing fight to keep ISIS fighters from taking hold of the country again.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said as recently as this month that the administration intends to get U.S. forces in Iraq to the lowest possible level as quickly as possible, but he has not cited specific numbers.

Pompeo said after meeting last week with Iraq's foreign minister that Washington was committed to helping Iraq regain and maintain security. Armed groups are not under the full control of the Iraqi prime minister, Pompeo said, adding that those groups should be replaced by local police as soon as possible and that the U.S. would help.

## La. residents won't have power, water for weeks

Associated Press

The destructive storm surge has receded, and the cleanup has begun from Hurricane Laura, but officials along this shattered stretch of Louisiana coast are warning returning residents they will face weeks without power or water amid the hot, stifling days of late summer.

The U.S. toll from the Category 4 hurricane stood at 14 deaths, with more than half of those killed by carbon monoxide poisoning from the unsafe operation of generators.

President Donald Trump planned to tour the damage in Louisiana and neighboring Texas on Saturday.

Across southwestern Louisiana, people were cleaning up from the hurricane that roared ashore early Thursday, packing 150 mph winds. Many were deciding whether they wanted to return home to miserable con-

ditions or wait until basic services are finally restored.

At First United Methodist Church in Lake Charles, a work crew was battling water that continued to pour into the church building as it rained Friday.

"This roof blew off. There's some of it over there," said Michael Putman, owner of Putman Restoration, pointing to part of the roof resting near the side of the building. A pile of black garbage bags sat outside the church, filled with insulation and ceiling tile.

Putman lives in Shreveport, which also got damage from the storm. But he said he drove down to Lake Charles to help the minister, who was his high school pastor.

"We slept in our truck in the parking lot last night," he said.

Simply driving was a feat in Lake Charles, a city of 80,000 residents hit head-on.

Power lines and trees blocked paths or created one-lane roads, leaving drivers to negotiate with oncoming traffic. Street signs were snapped off their posts or dangling. No stoplights worked, making it an exercise in trust to share the road with other motorists.

Mayor Nic Hunter cautioned that there was no timetable for restoring electricity and that water-treatment plants "took a beating," leaving barely a trickle of water coming out of most faucets.

"If you come back to Lake Charles to stay, make sure you understand the above reality and are prepared to live in it for many days, probably weeks," Hunter wrote on Facebook.

Caravans of utility trucks were met Friday by thunderstorms in the sizzling heat, complicating recovery efforts.

The Louisiana Department of Health estimated that more

than 220,000 people were without water. Restoration of those services could take weeks or months, and full rebuilding could take years.

Forty nursing homes were relying on generators, and assessments were underway to determine if more than 860 residents in 11 facilities that had been evacuated could return.

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards called Laura the most powerful hurricane to strike the state, meaning it surpassed even Katrina, which was a Category 3 storm when it hit in 2005.

He said Friday that officials now believe the surge was as high as 15 feet.

Saturday marks the 15th anniversary of Katrina.

Hurricane Laura also killed nearly two dozen people in Haiti and the Dominican Republic en route to the U.S. Gulf Coast.

# 2 soldiers killed, 3 hurt in helicopter crash

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON— Two special operations soldiers were killed Thursday and three others injured in a helicopter crash during routine training off the California coast, officials said Friday.

On Saturday, the Army identified the dead soldiers as Staff Sgt. Vincent P. Marketta, 33, of Brick, N.J., and Sgt. Tyler M. Shelton, 22, of San Bernardino, Calif.

An element of U.S. Army Special Operations Command was conducting the train-

ing in the vicinity of Coronado, Calif., when the “aircraft incident” occurred, a SOCOM spokesperson said in a statement. The area has been secured and an investigation into the incident is underway.

The helicopter was a Black Hawk and the soldiers killed and injured were from the Army’s 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, The San Diego Union-Tribune reported, citing a Defense Department official. The 160th SOAR is headquartered out of Fort Campbell, Ky., and provides rotary wing support to special operations forces.

The defense official also told The San Diego Union-Tribune that the helicopter crashed Thursday evening on San Clemente Island, which is about 70 miles west of Coronado and San Diego.

The island is where eight Marines and a sailor with the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit died June 30 off its coast in an amphibious assault vehicle accident as they were returning to their ship after finishing training there. Their bodies were recovered Aug. 7 and a memorial ceremony was held Aug. 21 by their unit.

## Top general says no role for military in election

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The U.S. armed forces will have no role in carrying out the election process or resolving a disputed vote, the top U.S. military officer has told Congress.

The comments from Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, underscore the extraordinary political environment in America, where the president has declared without evidence that the expected surge in mail-in ballots will make the vote “inaccurate and fraudulent,” and has suggested he might not accept the election results if he loses. Milley’s comments were released Friday.

Trump’s repeated complaints question-

ing the election’s validity have triggered unprecedented worries about the potential for chaos surrounding the election results. Some have speculated that the military might be called upon to get involved, either by Trump trying to use it to help his reelection prospects or as, Democratic challenger Joe Biden has suggested, to remove Trump from the White House if he refuses to accept defeat. The military has adamantly sought to tamp down that speculation and is zealously protective of its historically nonpartisan nature.

“I believe deeply in the principle of an apolitical U.S. military,” Milley said in written responses to several questions posed by two Democratic members of the House Armed Services Committee. “In the event

of a dispute over some aspect of the elections, by law U.S. courts and the U.S. Congress are required to resolve any disputes, not the U.S. military. I foresee no role for the U.S. armed forces in this process.”

Milley’s tone reflects the long-standing views of military leaders who insist that the nation’s military stays out of politics and that troops are sworn to protect the country and uphold the Constitution.

But the two Congress members, Reps. Elissa Slotkin of Michigan and Mikie Sherill of New Jersey, said Friday that Trump’s recent comments and his efforts to use the military to quell protests have fueled their concerns. The two lawmakers released Milley’s answers.

## GAO to review Army’s sexual harassment program

BY ROSE L. THAYER  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Government Accountability Office on Wednesday accepted a request from Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., to review the Army’s sexual harassment response program in the wake of the disappearance and death of Spc. Vanessa Guillen, the senator’s office announced Friday.

The review will look at the implementation and effectiveness of the Army’s Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention program after Guillen’s family said the soldier had experienced sexual ha-

arrassment on base at Fort Hood, Texas, but was too afraid to report the instances to her chain of command.

Those allegations have led to at least four internal Army reviews at Fort Hood. Demand for transparency grew as other veterans and service members shared stories similar to Guillen’s using the hashtag #IamVanessaGuillen.

“Sexual assault and harassment is a crisis in our nation’s military that impacts the lives of far too many women and men in uniform,” Duckworth said in a statement. “The military’s inability to address this problem

fails survivors and harms our military’s readiness, recruitment and retention efforts.”

Guillen, a 20-year-old from Houston, was last seen at work April 22. After a more than two-month search, her remains were found in a shallow grave about 20 miles from Fort Hood.

Spc. Aaron Robinson, a fellow soldier whom the family said was the person harassing Guillen, was blamed for her death. He shot himself dead in Killeen, the city outside of Fort Hood, when confronted by local law enforcement on the day Guillen’s body was found.

Duckworth, a 23-year veteran of the Reserve and member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, first requested the GAO look into the SHARP program in July along with the committee ranking member Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I.

In a letter confirming the review, Orice Williams Brown, managing director for congressional relations at the GAO, said the request was within the office’s scope of authority.

The review won’t begin for a few months, however, when staff become available, said Chuck Young, spokesman for the GAO.



# Chadwick Boseman dies of colon cancer

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Chadwick Boseman, who played Black American icons Jackie Robinson and James Brown with searing intensity before inspiring audiences worldwide as the regal Black Panther in Marvel's blockbuster movie franchise, died Friday of cancer. He was 43.

Boseman died at his home in the Los Angeles area with his wife and family by his side, his publicist Nicki Fioravante told The Associated Press.

Boseman was diagnosed with colon cancer four years ago, his family said in a statement.

"A true fighter, Chadwick persevered through it all, and brought you many of the films you have come to love so much," his family said. "From Marshall to Da 5 Bloods, August Wilson's Ma Rainey's Black Bottom and several more — all were filmed during and between countless surgeries and chemotherapy. It was the honor of his career to bring King T'Challa to life in Black Panther."

Boseman had not spoken publicly about his diagnosis. He is survived by his wife and a parent and had no children, Fioravante said.

Born in South Carolina, Bose-

man graduated from Howard University and had small roles in television before his first star turn in 2013. His striking portrayal of the stoic baseball star Robinson opposite Harrison Ford in 2013's "42" drew attention in Hollywood and made him a star.

A year later, he wowed audiences as Brown in the biopic "Get On Up."

Boseman died on a day that Major League Baseball was celebrating Jackie Robinson day.

Expressions of shock and despair poured in late Friday from fellow actors, athletes, musicians, Hollywood titans, fans and politicians. Viola Davis, who acted alongside Boseman in "Get On Up" and an upcoming August Wilson adaptation, tweeted: "Chadwick.....no words to express my devastation of losing you. Your talent, your spirit, your heart, your authenticity."

"This is a crushing blow" actor and director Jordan Peele said on Twitter.

"Captain America" actor Chris Evans called Boseman "a true original. He was a deeply committed and constantly curious artist. He had so much amazing work still left to create."

## Families decry justice system at march in DC

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Standing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, where the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. famously laid out a vision for harmony between white and Black people 57 years ago, his son issued a sobering reminder about the persistence of police brutality and racist violence targeting Black Americans.

"We must never forget the American nightmare of racist violence exemplified when Emmett Till was murdered on this day in 1955, and the criminal justice system failed to convict his killers," said Martin Luther King III, speaking to thousands who gathered Friday to commemorate the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

"Sixty-five years later (after Till's murder), we still struggle for justice — demilitarizing the police, dismantling mass incarceration, and declaring as determinately as we can that Black lives matter," King said.

Even in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, many felt compelled to join civil rights advocates in Washington to highlight a scourge of police and vigilante violence that gave way to what many feel is an overdue reckoning on racial injustice. Some stood in swelter-

ing temperatures in lines that stretched for several blocks, as organizers took temperatures as part of coronavirus protocols. Organizers reminded attendees to practice social distancing and wear masks throughout the program, although distancing was hardly maintained as the gathering grew in size.

They gathered following another shooting by a white police officer of a Black man — this time, Jacob Blake, 29, in Kenosha, Wis., last Sunday — sparking demonstrations and violence that left two dead.

"There are two systems of justice in the United States," said Jacob Blake Sr., the father of the man whose shooting by police in Kenosha left him paralyzed from the waist down. "There's a white system and a black system — the black system ain't doing so well."

"No justice, no peace!" he proclaimed.

Following the rally, participants marched to the Martin Luther King Jr. memorial in West Potomac Park, next to the National Mall, and then dispersed. Some participants headed toward Black Lives Matter Plaza, right outside of the White House, which was renamed from Pennsylvania Avenue during protests in June.

## Weather helps ease Cali. fires as many return home

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — California wildfires were slowly being corralled Friday as cooler, humid weather and reinforcements aided firefighters and tens of thousands of people were allowed back home after days of death and destruction.

In the past two days, evacuation orders were lifted for at least 50,000 people in the San Francisco Bay Area and wine country, officials with the state fire agency, Cal Fire, said.

In heavily damaged areas, crews were working to restore electricity and water so more people could return to their homes.

Around the state, hundreds of wildfires

— coming months earlier in the season than expected — have killed at least seven people, burned more than 2,000 square miles and pushed firefighter resources to the breaking point. Two are among the largest wildfires in recent state history.

Wildfires are so bad in the western United States that about 200 active duty U.S. Army soldiers are being mobilized to help fight them, said officials with the National Interagency Fire Center. This is the first active duty mobilization for wildfire support since 2018.

More than 5,900 square miles have burned so far this year, and 105 large wildfires are burning across the western United States.

States.

In California, about 170,000 people were under evacuation orders at the peak of the fires.

But a heat wave eased this week, and in the past few days cooler, more humid weather patterns slowed the spread of three massive complexes of wildfires in Northern California as aid poured in from out of state and California National Guard troops joined the fight.

Evacuation orders for more than 20,000 people were lifted over the past 24 hours in San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties, where a massive blaze caused by lightning was 27% surrounded, fire officials announced.



# FDA, CDC credibility at risk after week of gaffes

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The credibility of two of the nation's leading public health agencies was under fire this week after controversial decisions that outside experts said smacked of political pressure from President Donald Trump as he attempts to move past the devastating toll of the coronavirus ahead of the November election.

The head of the Food and Drug Administration grossly misstated, then corrected, claims about the lifesaving power of a plasma therapy for COVID-19 authorized by his agency. Then the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention quietly updated its guidelines to suggest fewer Americans need to get tested for coronavirus, sparking outrage from scientists.

Trump's own factual misstatements about COVID-19 are well documented, but the back-to-back messaging blunders by public health officials could create new damage, eroding public trust in front-line agencies. That's already raising concerns about whether the administration will be forthcoming with critical details about upcoming vaccines needed to defeat the pandemic.

On Friday, FDA Commissioner Stephen Hahn removed a conservative public relations official involved in the botched plasma announcement from her role heading the agency's press office, according to a person familiar with the matter, who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe private conversations.

The move came less than two weeks after the White House tapped Emily Miller for the role. Miller previously worked as a reporter for the right-wing One America News Network and as a staffer for Sen. Ted Cruz's reelection campaign. She did not return calls seeking comment Friday.

An FDA spokesperson said late Friday that Miller remains an appointee within the agency.

Trump administration officials said Wednesday that the CDC testing guidance was revised by the White House virus

task force "to reflect current evidence," but did not detail what that was. The new recommendations say it's not necessary for most people who have been in close contact with infected people but don't feel sick, to get tested. Outside experts said that flies in the face of the scientific consensus that wide-scale testing is needed to stamp out new infections.

## Alabama

MONTGOMERY — The University of Alabama reported Friday that an additional 481 students have tested positive for COVID-19, bringing the total to more than 1,000 infections since students returned to campus for the fall.

The University of Alabama System released new numbers on its dashboard of cases for all three campuses. The additional 481 cases on the Tuscaloosa campus were reported between Aug. 25 and Aug. 27. The university system said no students are hospitalized.

"We are closely monitoring our data daily, and we will continue to adjust operations as the situation warrants," said UA System Chancellor Finis St. John in a statement accompanying the release of the numbers. He said testing for the virus was a "key pillar" of the university's health and safety plan.

## Arizona

ELOY — Immigration and Customs Enforcement has reported 233 more confirmed cases of COVID-19 at one of its facilities in Arizona.

The infections are at the La Palma Correctional Center in Eloy, which has so far seen a total of 356 cases. No other facility reported even close to as many cases as La Palma did on Friday, with most detention centers seeing single-digit increases.

It's unclear how many people are detained at La Palma, but overall there are more than 21,000 people being held in ICE custody on civil immigration violations nationwide.

ICE spokeswoman Yasmeen Pitts O'Keefe said in a statement that the agency recently expanded virus testing at La Palma, testing 1,000 detainees. Most were asymptomatic.

## California

SACRAMENTO — With the hope of preventing another virus surge, California Gov. Gavin Newsom announced a new process Friday for re-opening businesses that's more gradual than the first attempt that eventually led him to close many businesses soon after they reopened.

"Simple, also slow," is how the Democratic governor described the new rules, which take effect Monday.

The four-tiered, color-coded system ranks counties based on the number of virus cases and infection rates. Businesses can add more customers or open more services as their county moves into lower tiers.

For example, counties in the most restrictive tier — purple — can only allow restaurant dining outside. But in lower red, orange and yellow tiers, they can serve people in indoor dining rooms at reduced capacity.

## Florida

MIAMI — Two South Florida men used fake and stolen identities to steal over \$3 million in coronavirus relief funds, authorities said.

Jean Fleuridor, 41, of Weston, and Hasan Brown, 44, of Miami, made separate appearances in Miami federal court on bank fraud conspiracy charges, according to court records.

According to a criminal complaint, Fleuridor, Brown and their co-conspirators began a scheme in 2017 to defraud a San Antonio, Texas, bank using about 700 fake identities, in addition to stolen identities, to create bank accounts and shell companies. From April to July this year, members of the group began using those fake identities and companies to fraudulently apply for federal loans meant to help small businesses

financially survive the COVID-19 pandemic, prosecutors said.

## Michigan

LANSING — Michigan on Friday crossed the threshold of 100,000 cases of the coronavirus confirmed since March.

Deaths related to COVID-19 reached 6,446 after six more were recorded, the state health department said.

Dr. Dennis Cunningham at McLaren Health Care said the number of people who were infected is likely higher than the confirmed cases of 100,699. He noted that enough tests weren't available in the early weeks of the outbreak.

Meanwhile, the state Education Department said 86% of public school districts are offering in-person instruction for the new year, even if it's just two to three days per week.

## Pennsylvania

HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania state utility regulators have effectively extended a moratorium preventing utilities from terminating service to non-paying customers for three more weeks while the state fights the spread of the coronavirus.

The four-member panel of two Democrats and two Republicans postponed a vote on Thursday's agenda until Sept. 17, after deadlocking twice on motions to lift the moratorium over the summer.

The Public Utility Commission slapped a moratorium on shutoffs in March as Gov. Tom Wolf was in the midst of a cascade of shutdown orders to help stop the spread of the virus.

In letters to the commission, Wolf, Attorney General Josh Shapiro, Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney and consumer advocates called on the commission to keep the moratorium in place, warning that people are still being hit hard economically by the fallout from the virus.

One theme of their comments is that the commission needs to construct a comprehensive plan to protect consumers when the moratorium does lift.



# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Drive-thru betting offered before derby

**KY** LEXINGTON — People wanting to place bets on the Kentucky Derby can make a wager in a drive-thru at Keeneland, the Lexington track announced.

The Kentucky Derby and the Kentucky Oaks were postponed to Sept. 4 and 5 this year at Churchill Downs in Louisville due to the coronavirus pandemic. The races will be run without fans.

Keeneland said drive-thru betting will be offered on all the races at Churchill Downs for those two days. Patrons will complete a health screening and temperature check.

## Officials: Mountain lion killed pastured horse

**ID** HAILEY — Wildlife officials in Idaho said a mountain lion attacked and killed a horse while it was pastured.

Idaho Department of Fish and Game officers investigated and confirmed the mare was killed in a pasture in the Red Elephant Gulch region of Croy Canyon, just west of Hailey.

Traps have been set to try and find the mountain lion responsible for the attack, officials said.

## Police seek information in theft of 2 gators

**PA** INDIANA — State police were searching for a pair of alligators stolen earlier this month from a pet store in western Pennsylvania.

Police in Indiana County said the alligators — a 6-foot-long female and a 4-foot-long male — were taken from an outdoor enclosure at Pearce's Pet Place in White Township.

Police said the animals weren't for sale, but the female alligator is valued at \$1,500 while the male is valued at \$500.

## Suspects arrested after ambushing officers

**MD** LARGO — Police in Maryland said that two men were charged with attempted murder after shooting three police officers who were responding to a home-invasion call.

WBAL-TV reported that Steven Maurice Warren, 27, and Andre Smith, 47, were taken into custody.

Meanwhile, two of the officers who were shot were released from the hospital, according to Prince George's County Interim Police Chief Hector Velez. The third officer successfully underwent surgery.

## School investigating post of swastika photo

**IN** DALEVILLE — A central Indiana school has launched an investigation after a photo posted to social media appeared to show students forming the shape of a swastika on the gymnasium floor, school officials said.

The photo shows students, most of whom are lying on their backs on mats on the gym floor, making the shape of a swastika. One is standing in the middle. All have their arms raised in an apparent Nazi salute.

"Daleville Community Schools will not tolerate acts of racism, bias, unlawful harassment, or discrimination of any kind and we are profoundly disappointed and shocked by the apparent actions of the students as depicted in the images we have seen posted on social media," Superintendent Paul Garrison said in a statement posted to the district's website.

## Club applies for city to be named a 'bee city'

**GA** DAWSONVILLE — A Georgia city wants recognition for its efforts to lure bees.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported that city officials in Dawsonville are supporting an effort to obtain the title, "Bee City USA." The Dawson County Women's Club was set to submit an application for the designation.

It recognizes a city's work to attract, protect and inspire the appreciation of bees and other pollinators.

Numerous other Georgia cities have the "Bee City USA" designation, including Atlanta and Decatur, according to the newspaper.

## Disney patron accused of threats over masks

**FL** ORLANDO — A man hit a security guard in the head and threatened to kill him at Epcot theme park when he was asked to follow Disney World's mask rules, sheriff's officials said.

Enrico Toro, 35, was charged with misdemeanor battery, an Orange County Sheriff's Office arrest report said.

According to deputies, Toro, his wife and three children arrived at Epcot's security area wearing "improper masks," the report said.

Toro "began cussing," and the security guard reached for his phone to notify a supervisor of the escalating situation when Toro struck the guard's head with an "open hand," the report said.

"The male continued cussing at (the security guard) and began threatening that he knew where he lived and was going to kill him," the report said.

## Boat from 1800s to be restored for display

**MI** HARBOR SPRINGS — A rusted and damaged boat built in the late 1800s by a northern Michigan inventor is undergoing an extensive restoration with the goal of putting the revamped vessel on display in the Lake Michigan resort community of Harbor Springs.

The Harbor Springs Area Historical Society began restoring the Aha after city officials requested the removal of the decaying boat near the city's Department of Public Works building.

Inventor Ephraim Shay built the vessel in 1891. The all-steel Aha was a rarity because most boats built during that time were made of wood.

## Police: Meth found in vehicle following chase

**ND** MINOT — Police said they found a large amount of methamphetamine in the vehicle of a Minot man who led officers on a high-speed chase in northwestern North Dakota.

The chase ended about 15 miles away in Burlington, officials said. The driver and a female passenger fled from the vehicle along a river bank.

The 36-year-old woman was found hiding in the brush and was arrested. While a large amount of methamphetamine was found in the vehicle, according to officials, Ward County Jail staff said they saw the woman flushing drugs down a toilet, the Minot Daily News reported.

The 40-year-old driver is wanted for fleeing from law enforcement, possession of methamphetamine and other charges.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

# Players ready for US Open without fans

Associated Press

One of the enduring images of the 2019 U.S. Open simply will not — could not — happen at the 2020 U.S. Open: Eventual runner-up Daniil Medvedev's heel turn, goading and taunting the folks in the stands jeering him.

By the end of the tournament, the charismatic Medvedev had won them over, receiving wildly positive support in 23,771-capacity Arthur Ashe Stadium while pushing Rafael Nadal to five sets in a rollicking final.

Neither those early boos nor late cheers will be heard this year at Flushing Meadows, where the American Grand Slam tournament begins Monday. All spectators were banned from the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center, one of several measures meant to protect players and others on-site from getting — or spreading — the coronavirus.

"It's going to be really sad without the New York crowd," Medvedev said. "It's going to be really strange, of course, for

us."

For everyone, really, changing the very fabric of the event.

Players can't get a welcome boost of energy or, conversely, don't need to fret about having people rooting against them — or simply the pressure of performing in front of thousands.

Coaches will find it easier to shout something to a player or, conversely, won't be bothered by kibitzing from a few rows away.

Chair umpires won't need to plead, "Quiet, please!" or delay starting the serve clock until after post-point noise dies down.

And, of course, the fans themselves don't get to go — while those watching on TV will find it oddly quiet after points and see large swaths of cloth stretched over empty seats.

"I absolutely love playing for people. I absolutely love when people come and enjoy a performance that myself and my opponent are able to put on for them," said Johanna Konta, a British player seeded ninth

in New York. "But obviously that's not the reality we have right now."

She and others got a chance to sample the silence during the Western & Southern Open, a tournament normally played in Ohio but moved to the U.S. Open's site this year because of the pandemic.

One benefit players noticed in the week before the U.S. Open: no packs of people to deal with while navigating the tournament grounds.

On court, it was lonely.

"You can hear yourself breathe," said Kristina Mladenovic, a four-time Grand Slam doubles champion from France. "But this is better than nothing — than being home on the couch."

After winning the first sanctioned ATP men's match since March at the Western & Southern Open, Felix Auger-Aliassime jokingly sent a ball toward his coach in the stands, the way players will offer a souvenir to spectators.

"To have nobody, to have

no crowd, it feels weird," said Auger-Aliassime, a Canadian seeded 15th for the U.S. Open. "I'm not a fan of it."

In team sports in empty arenas, such as Major League Baseball or the NBA, someone wearing the same uniform can offer a pat on the back or words of encouragement.

In tennis, players are on their own out there. No teammates and no coach standing right there on the sideline to suggest a quick adjustment or draw up a play.

"Tennis is such a mental sport, and I guess it makes it way more difficult without fans, because I just imagine playing in the fifth set on Arthur Ashe, night session, way past midnight — and in a normal year, you get so much energy from the fans. They give you so much, all this atmosphere," said Dominic Thiem, an Austrian seeded No. 2 in New York behind Novak Djokovic and a three-time runner-up at Grand Slam tournaments.

## Unrest in Kenosha hits home with Broncos RB Gordon

Associated Press

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. — The latest flashpoints in the racial justice movement hit home for Melvin Gordon and the rest of his new teammates.

The veteran running back who joined the Denver Broncos in free agency this spring is a native of Kenosha, Wis., where a Black man was shot in the back seven times by police last weekend and a white teenager shot two protesters in the unrest that followed.

"It was just sad to see, just do so much for the community and to see on TV what's going on, it was just heartbreaking," Gordon said Friday when the Broncos returned to practice a day after joining eight other NFL teams in cancelling their workout in light of the shooting of Jacob Blake.

"And seeing people from my

community getting shot in the street and then the kid getting offered water (by police officers) before or after, I don't care when it was, it was just sad to see, man," Gordon said.

Safety Justin Simmons, who spoke out during peaceful protests in Colorado and Florida following the George Floyd killing in Minneapolis in June, said Gordon's heart-felt speech before the team on Thursday really resonated with his new teammates.

"He said maybe two words and he got choked up and emotional and the atmosphere in that room just changed," Simmons said.

Gordon said it wasn't easy to open up in front of his new team, which he joined in free agency after four seasons with the division rival Chargers.

"Yeah, it was tough, just still trying to get a feel for every-

one on the team," Gordon said. "It's just tough in general being a man and having to stand up in front of a group of men and show emotion, show weakness in a sense. No man likes to do that. But any time Kenosha was brought up, I just get emotional about it and I just had to get it off my chest."

Simmons wondered if the NFL and its players would do more than sit out practice in protest if a player's family was directly impacted by racial injustice or police brutality.

"This is a problem that's recurring weeks after weeks on end and we're kind of just doing the bare minimum," Simmons said. "And I get frustrated thinking about it because I feel like the NFL — and the Broncos and Colorado — we hold such big platforms and we have such power that we can really make great change."

Simmons pointed to a players-supported bill in the state Legislature this summer that called for mandatory body cameras on police officers, among other reforms, suggesting it's something every state should adopt.

Simmons and Gordon said they hope the league follows in the footsteps of the NBA, which on Friday issued a joint statement with its players saying they were committed to establishing a social justice coalition, using arenas as voting locations in November and working with network partners to create advertising spots for the playoffs promoting greater civic engagement in national and local elections.

"We have all the examples out there to follow — with the NBA leading the way. So, just take note," Gordon said.



# New commitments as NBA playoffs resume

Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — NBA players want change that makes their communities safer. They want people to vote — hopefully in their home arenas.

And they want to keep playing basketball.

Teams returned to the court Friday after the NBA and the National Basketball Players Association agreed on commitments that made players comfortable continuing.

An emotional Chris Paul, the union president, detailed the events of the previous two days, when players upset by the latest police shooting of a Black man left them considering leaving the Disney campus and going home.

“We’re all hurt, we’re all tired of just seeing the same thing over and over again and everybody just expects us to be OK just because we get paid great money,” Paul said. “We’re human, we have real feelings and I’m glad that we

got a chance to get in a room and talk with one another and not just cross paths and say good luck in your game today.”

Play stopped Wednesday when the Bucks didn’t take the court for their playoff game against Orlando, showing their frustration with the police shooting of Jacob Blake in Wisconsin and acts of racial injustice.

Games were postponed the last two days, during which players met among themselves and with coaches and owners before an agreement to resume was reached.

“The key to this thing is that I think we all needed to take a breath,” Clippers coach Doc Rivers said. “We needed a moment to breathe. It’s not lost on me that George Floyd didn’t get that moment. But we did and we took it. And the players took it, and they got to refocus on the things that they wanted to focus on outside of their jobs.”

High on that list is voting, mentioned frequently in a joint

statement by the league and the NBPA.

Many within the league of primarily Black players have focused on the importance of voting, and the need for places in inner cities where minorities can do so safely. With no NBA games to be played in November, arenas are an ideal place for it.

Atlanta, Detroit, Charlotte and Sacramento were already on board. Houston’s Toyota Center was locked in this week, Madison Square Garden and the arenas for the Clippers, Dallas and Utah were added Friday and Rivers said Miami is working hard to make its facility available.

All team owners who also control their arena property will work with local officials to turn their buildings into a voting location for the 2020 general election to allow for safe, in-person voting.

Paul pointed out that practice facilities would be helpful if arenas can’t be secured.

The players and the league will also immediately establish a social justice coalition, made up of players, coaches and owners, that will focus on issues such as voting access and advocating for meaningful police and criminal justice reform.

And the NBA and players will work with TV networks to create advertising spots during the remainder of the postseason to promote greater engagement in the election process and their communities.

Paul said he’d never seen anything like the events of the previous days during his 15 years in the league. He also spoke with Blake’s father.

“We understand how strong our voice is, how powerful our voice is and ultimately we decided if we go away from this stage we don’t necessarily have that same platform so we stood in solidarity,” Paul said. “We’re going to continue to play but we’re also going to continue to make sure that our voices are heard.”

## NHL players use pause to focus on racial injustice

Associated Press

Braydon Coburn was polite but stern in declining to answer the question.

A day after NHL players showed a united front, prompting the league to postpone two nights of playoff games to focus on racial injustice concerns, the veteran Tampa Bay Lightning defenseman wasn’t deviating from the message.

“Thanks for the question. I appreciate that,” Coburn began during the Lightning’s Zoom conference call Friday. “But for the most part, and especially today and yesterday, we kind of want to make sure we keep our attention and the conversation around the issues.”

Questions about lineup changes, power plays and competing on consecutive nights were placed on pause along with Friday’s two scheduled games.

The emphasis was instead on more important societal matters taking place outside the playoff bubbles in Toronto and Edmonton, Alberta, and on the player-driven conversations that led to the NHL joining North America’s other pro sports leagues in stopping play.

“I think the other leagues initiated this,” Coburn said, referring to the NBA and other sports, which postponed games on Wednesday while the NHL continued to play. “I think for us, we’re at the table now, and that’s really the important thing.”

The NHL altered its schedule with three games each set for Saturday and Sunday.

While players and coaches representing the four Eastern Conference teams spoke on video calls, the four West teams went silent a day after making a powerful statement shortly

after games were postponed.

As five players, three of them minorities, stepped in front of an array of microphones, dozens of others — all wearing masks — assembled in rows behind them in a significant show of support in a league predominantly made up of white players.

“It’s great that the NBA did this and MLB and the WNBA, they have a lot of Black players in those leagues. But for all these athletes in here to take a stand and say, ‘You know what? We see the problem, too, and we stand behind you,’” said Vegas forward Ryan Reaves, who is Black. “I go to war with these guys, and I hate their guts on the ice, but I couldn’t be more proud of these guys. The statement they’ve made today is something that’s going to last.”

Reaves was among many in noting a two-day pause isn’t

going to solve the issue of racism in the wake of the the police shooting of Jacob Blake in Wisconsin last weekend. And yet, the chance to spend two days to allow players to hold in-depth conversations on social justice was deemed an important start.

“We all realize nothing is going to be fixed by tomorrow morning,” Tampa Bay defenseman Luke Schenn said. “But this is a situation where everyone needs to learn and ask questions and do what’s right and be a good person in the world.”

The day, however, couldn’t end without a racial concern being raised: The NHL is investigating whether former Florida Panthers general manager Dale Tallon made racially insensitive comments before the team was eliminated by the New York Islanders in Toronto earlier this month.

# Mets sweep doubleheader from Yanks

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Dominic Smith wept on Wednesday night, disheartened and drained by another long 24 hours as a Black man in America. A day later, he said he felt uplifted after teammates joined him in a memorable protest.

Back in his comfort zone Friday, the New York Mets outfielder took a starring role in a Subway Series instant classic.

No place the earnest, jovial — and sweet-swinging — Smith would rather be.

“Baseball is my safe haven,” he said. “This is where I get away from all the stresses of my life.”

Smith hit the go-ahead home run in his first game since tearfully pleading for help combating racial inequality, Pete Alonso also connected and the Mets beat the crosstown Yankees 6-4 in the opener of a doubleheader.

Pinch-hitter Amed Rosario

then hit a walk-off, two-run homer to lift the Mets to a 4-3 victory in the nightcap — a bizarre scene in the Bronx, where the Yankees batted first as the visiting team in the makeup of a game postponed last weekend.

“We all were extremely happy to just be back on the field and be back playing baseball,” Smith said. “You could just see how guys feel extremely emotional about what happened for me and for my community and stuff like that.”

“You could definitely feel (us being) closer knit over the last 24 hours. I think really, yesterday was obviously bigger than baseball, but it’s going to bring this team together.”

The sweep sent the Yankees to their seventh straight loss, their worst skid since 2017.

Smith, a 25-year-old Black man, cried Wednesday night reflecting on a recent shooting by police of a Black man in Wisconsin. Back on the baseball field, he and the Mets were

all smiles after his decisive solo shot against Chad Green in the sixth inning on what was Jackie Robinson Day around the majors. Both teams wore No. 42 for the second game only.

Inspired by the emotional comments from the usually upbeat Smith, the Mets staged a walkout protest against racial injustice with the Miami Marlins on Thursday night.

Then they went wild on the bench as Smith rounded the bases, Alonso pounding on the dugout railing and hollering to his close friend.

“With what he’s lived in the last two days emotionally, and what we lived, too, supporting him as well, it was pretty special for sure,” Mets manager Luis Rojas said.

“We’re here to pick each other up,” Smith added.

Rosario, batting for Luis Guillorme, connected off closer Aroldis Chapman (0-1) with pinch-runner Billy Hamilton at second base. Chapman walked

Jeff McNeil to open the inning, and Hamilton promptly stole second despite being picked off by the All-Star left-hander.

Rosario then cranked his third home run of the season into the left-field seats, setting off the second rowdy celebration in the visiting dugout as the Mets swept the Yankees in a doubleheader for the first time.

“I forgot that we were the home team and that that was the end of the game,” Rosario said through a translator. “As I rounded the bases, I saw the players coming out of the dugout and I was like, ‘Wow, we just won the game.’”

The teams are set to play five games in three days to make up for games at Citi Field postponed last weekend after two members of the Mets tested positive for the coronavirus. Two of them, including Friday’s late game, will be Mets home games.

## MLB roundup

# Scherzer strikes out 11 as Nationals roll past Red Sox

Associated Press

BOSTON — Juan Soto grew up in the Dominican Republic watching Manny Ramirez play left field in Boston, and the Nationals slugger was looking forward to playing in the shadow of the Green Monster in his first visit to Fenway Park.

Instead, Soto was in the lineup at designated hitter and had to settle for imitating Ramirez at the plate.

Soto and Howie Kendrick hit back-to-back homers in Washington’s five-run third inning, and Max Scherzer struck out 11 to lead the Nationals to a 10-2 victory over the Red Sox on Friday night.

“Juan is a big Manny fan. He was disappointed” he didn’t play the field, Nationals manager Davey Martinez said. “We’ll see. He’ll be back out there tomorrow.”

A day after both teams’ games were postponed in the sport’s racial justice awakening, they returned for Jackie Robinson Day, lining up along the baselines before the game to listen to a recorded speech from the player who broke baseball’s color barrier. Boston’s Jackie Bradley Jr. — the only Black player on the last team in the majors to integrate — knelt for the national anthem, with teammate Alex Verdugo also taking a knee.

**Rangers 6, Dodgers 2:** Derek Dietrich led off his team’s seventh inning with a tiebreaking home run and Texas beat visiting Los Angeles.

**Rays 2, Marlins 0:** At Miami, Ryan Yarbrough and two relievers combined on a five-hitter, and AL East-leading Tampa Bay won its third game in a row.

**Blue Jays 5, Orioles 4 (10):** At Buffalo, N.Y., Randal Grichuk hit a two-run homer with two outs in the 10th inning, lifting Toronto to the win.

**Reds 6, Cubs 5:** Eugenio Suarez and Jesse Winker homered, helping host Cincinnati to its third consecutive victory.

**Phillies 7, Braves 4:** Scott Kingery hit a three-run homer off Mark Melancon with two outs in the 11th inning and host Philadelphia won its fourth straight.

**Brewers 9, Pirates 1:** Jedd Gyorko homered twice and Corbin Burnes struck out 10 in six innings to lead host Milwaukee.

**White Sox 6, Royals 5:** Yasmani Grandal hit his third career game-ending home run in the ninth after a defensive miscue as Chicago beat visiting Kansas City.

**Indians 14, Cardinals 2:** Franmil Reyes homered and drove in five runs, Carlos Santana hit a home run and scored four times and Cleveland routed host St. Louis.

**Padres 10, Rockies 4:** Eric Hosmer and Wil Myers each contributed four hits as part of San Diego’s 19-hit attack, Ty France had four RBIs, and visiting San Diego overcame an early four-run deficit.

**Angels 3, Mariners 2:** At Anaheim, Calif., Mike Trout homered, Justin Upton delivered the tiebreaking RBI single in the sixth inning to help Los Angeles win back-to-back games for only the second time all season.

**Diamondbacks 7, Giants 4:** Zac Gallen earned his first win of the season, Starling Marte had two hits and two RBIs and host Arizona snapped an eight-game losing streak.