

Taliban is warned against military takeover

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — A U.S. peace envoy brought a warning to the Taliban on Tuesday that any government that comes to power through force in Afghanistan won't be recognized internationally after a series of cities fell to the insurgent group in stunningly quick succession.

Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. envoy, traveled to Doha, Qatar, where the Taliban maintain a political office, to tell the group that there was no point in pursuing victory on the battlefield because a military takeover of the capital of Kabul would guarantee they would be global pariahs. He and others hope to persuade Taliban leaders to return to peace talks with the Afghan government as American and NATO forces finish their pull-out from the country.

The insurgents have captured six out of 34 provincial capitals in the country in less than a week, including Kunduz in Kunduz province — one of the country's largest cities. On Sunday, they planted their flag in the main square, but government forces still controlled the strategic airport and an army base on the city's outskirts.

They are now battling the Western-backed government for control of several others. Late on Tuesday, Taliban forces entered Farah and were seen in front of the provincial governor's office.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahed tweeted the insurgents had taken the city, which is the capital of a province with the same name. But Abdul Naser Farahi — a lawmaker from the area who is in Kabul — said the government still retained control of the intelligence department and a military base.

After a 20-year Western military mission and billions of dollars spent training and shoring up Afghan forces, many are at odds to explain why the regular forces have collapsed, fleeing the battle sometimes by the hundreds. The fighting has fallen largely to small groups of elite forces and the Afghan air force.

The success of the Taliban blitz has added urgency to the need to restart the long-stalled talks that could end the fighting and move Afghanistan toward an inclusive interim administration. The insurgents have so far refused to return to the negotiating table.

Khalilzad's mission in Qatar is to "help formulate a joint international response to the rapidly deteriorating situation in Afghanistan," according to the U.S. State Department.

He plans to "press the Taliban to stop their military offensive and to negotiate a political settlement, which is the only path to stability and development in Afghanistan," the State Department said.

Meanwhile, the Taliban military chief released an audio message to his fighters on Tuesday, ordering them not to harm Afghan forces and government officials in territories they conquer. The recording was shared on Twitter by the Taliban spokesman in Doha, Mohammad Naim.

In the nearly five-minute audio, Mohammad Yaqoob, the son of late Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar, also told the insurgents to stay out of abandoned homes of government and security officials who have fled, leave marketplaces open and protect places of business, including banks.

It was not immediately clear if Taliban fighters on the ground would heed Yaqoob's instructions.

Cuomo resigns as NY governor; still could be charged

Associated Press

NEW YORK — New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo resigned over a barrage of sexual harassment allegations Tuesday in a fall from grace a year after he was widely hailed nationally for his detailed daily briefings and leadership during the darkest days of COVID-19.

The three-term Democratic governor's decision, which will take effect in two weeks, was announced as momentum built in the Legislature to remove him by impeachment. It came after New York's attorney general released the results of an investigation that found Cuomo sexually harassed at least 11 women.

Investigators said he subjected women to unwanted kisses; groped their breasts or buttocks or otherwise touched them inappropriately; made insinuating remarks about their looks and their sex lives; and created a work environment "rife with fear and intimidation."

tion."

Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul, a 62-year-old Democrat and former member of Congress from the Buffalo area, will become the state's 57th governor and the first woman to hold the post.

The #MeToo-era scandal cut short not just a career but a dynasty: Cuomo's father, Mario Cuomo, was governor in the 1980s and '90s, and the younger Cuomo was often mentioned as a potential candidate for president, an office his father famously contemplated seeking. Even as the scandal mushroomed, Cuomo was planning to run for reelection in 2022.

Cuomo still faces the possibility of criminal charges, with a number of prosecutors around the state moving to investigate him.

The string of accusations that spelled the governor's downfall began to unfold in news reports last December and went on for months.

Cuomo called some of the allegations fabricated, forcefully denying he touched any-

one inappropriately. But he acknowledged making some aides uncomfortable with comments he said he intended as playful, and he apologized for some of his behavior.

He portrayed some of the encounters as misunderstandings attributable to "generational or cultural" differences, a reference in part to his upbringing in an affectionate Italian American family.

As a defiant Cuomo clung to office, state lawmakers launched an impeachment investigation, and nearly the entire Democratic establishment in New York deserted him — not only over the accusations, but also because of the discovery that his administration had concealed thousands of COVID-19 deaths among nursing home patients.

The harassment investigation ordered up by the attorney general and conducted by two outside lawyers corroborated the women's accounts and added lurid new ones. The release of the report left the governor more isolated than ever.

Emotional support animals must now fly solely as pets

BY KAREN ZEITVOGEL
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — Emotional support animals are no longer a recognized category on Defense Department flights, including the Patriot Express, and must fly as pets at their owners' expense, Air Mobility Command officials said.

Under new regulations that went into effect last week, only cats and canines will be transported as pets on DOD flights, and only dogs are recognized as service animals, which can fly for free in the passenger cabin.

The section on emotional support animals was removed when the rules were updated in December by the Transportation Department. They were implemented on U.S. commercial flights at the start of this year, but AMC needed time to update the DOD instruction, command spokesman Capt. Frederick Wallace said in an email Monday.

Prior to the rule change, emotional support animals were considered service animals for the purpose of air travel, even though they don't go through the rigorous training a service animal does.

Passengers wishing to travel with an emotional support animal only needed to provide a document from a licensed health professional that said the traveler has a mental or emotional disability and needed the animal during the flight or at their destination.

Traveling with a service animal, on the other hand, requires

passengers to submit a signed statement prior to departure, detailing the training the dog received, attesting that it is in good health and pledging to keep it under control and prevent it from relieving itself in the plane or the terminal, according to a Pentagon memorandum announcing the rule change.

Before the changes, some air passengers flew — or tried to fly — with emotional support animals such as horses, hamsters, pigs, ducks, turkeys and an anteater.

One passenger was turned away from a New Jersey airport in 2018 after showing up for a United flight with an emotional support peacock, according to media reports at the time.

It was unclear whether anyone had tried to fly with animals other than dogs or cats on DOD flights prior to the rule change.

The new regulations limit the definition of pets to cats and dogs.

"Other animals, such as horses, fish, birds, rodents, ferrets, spiders and other reptiles are excluded as pets under this authority because of their size, exotic nature, shipping restrictions, host nation restrictions and special handling difficulties," the rules state.

Spaces on AMC flights for service animals and pets can be booked up to 90 days ahead of travel. Passengers traveling under permanent change of station orders can ship up to two pets per family if the number of animals allowed on their flight has not been exceeded, the new rules state.

3rd Fleet HQ deploys to Hawaii for Navy's unprecedented drills

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii — For the remainder of August, the San Diego-based 3rd Fleet will be headquartered in a scrum of tents in Hawaii while its command takes part in unprecedented, worldwide Navy drills.

Large Scale Exercise 2021 kicked off last week, with synchronized training taking place among five numbered fleets within U.S. Fleet Forces Command, U.S. Pacific Fleet and U.S. Naval Forces Europe.

"The training is based on a progression of fleet battle problems and scenarios that will assess and refine modern warfare concepts, including distributed maritime operations, expeditionary advanced base operations and littoral operations in a contested environment," the Navy said in a news release last week.

The worldwide exercise is a subset of the even more extensive Large Scale Global Exercise 21, according to a separate news release last week by U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, whose job it is to make the joint force, multinational exercise a reality.

Large Scale Global Exercise 21 incorporates the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps for training with military forces from the United Kingdom, Australia and Japan through Aug. 27.

Roughly a dozen dark-green tents were pitched a week ago at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam to serve as 3rd Fleet's temporary home.

"I've brought the entire headquarters function here,

inside this expeditionary mock capability," fleet commander Vice Adm. Steve Koehler told reporters while standing near the tents.

"So, I'm command-and-controlling all of 3rd Fleet — both within the exercise and real world — from here," he said. The fleet includes 100 ships, 400 aircraft and roughly 68,000 personnel, he said.

The global exercise force — which also includes elements of the Navy's 2nd, 4th, 6th and 7th Fleets — includes about 36 vessels at sea, from carriers to submarines, as well as "an unlimited array of constructive, or computer-generated units," 3rd Fleet said in a news release Monday.

The exercise fleet Koehler oversees includes the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson and some of its strike group, which arrived in the Hawaiian Islands on Sunday.

The guided-missile cruiser USS Lake Champlain and guided-missile destroyers USS Chafee and USS Stockdale from Destroyer Squadron 1 are also taking part in the exercise.

A preliminary, four-day drill wrapped up Sunday on the Coral Sea off Australia, during which the USS America Expeditionary Strike Group, along with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, trained beside the Royal Australian Navy's amphibious assault ship HMAS Canberra and frigate HMAS Ballarat, and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force destroyer JS Makinami.

The Navy expects to hold similar worldwide exercises every three years, the 3rd Fleet news release said.

Sex offender jailed for Navy Exchange theft

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

A former Guam Navy Exchange employee convicted of stealing over \$250,000 worth of electronics was given two years in federal prison by a district court judge last week.

Jesse Cruz Camacho, 57, of Harmon, Guam, pleaded guilty on April 6 to 16 counts of theft of government property, the Pacific Daily News reported at the time.

Prosecutors called Camacho a sexual predator who concealed past sexual assault convictions to obtain his position at the military retail store, The Guam Daily Post reported after the sentencing on Wednesday. After stealing the items, he sold some online while giving others as gifts to high school students, according

to the report.

"What we have here is a very disturbing pattern from a sexual predator," assistant U.S. Attorney Benjamin Petersburg said during the sentencing, the Post reported.

Camacho, a level-one sex offender, spent several years in custody and was dishonorably discharged after being convicted of sexually assaulting three younger service members in the early 1990s, Petersburg said, according to the Post. Information on Camacho's prior service was unavailable Tuesday.

The Navy Exchange on Guam on Monday referred Stars and Stripes to its home office in Virginia.

An exchange spokeswoman, Courtney Williams, ignored questions posed to her by email

Monday on whether the exchange command completed a pre-employment background check on Camacho. She referred further questions to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service. NCIS did not return an email request from Stars and Stripes on Monday for further information.

Camacho worked as a chargeback clerk at the exchange store on Naval Base Guam from January 2014 to October 2019, Williams said.

Camacho received returned items, logged those that needed repair and took them to a repair facility if needed, the Daily News said. He reportedly stole 11 Apple laptops, two iPad Pros and three Microsoft personal computers for a total value of \$261,036.96.

The store noticed the missing

goods in 2019 and alerted NCIS, Williams said.

Investigators reportedly found a false wall where Camacho was hiding the stolen items, the Post reported, citing prosecutors. He was caught in the act once investigators installed security cameras, the report said.

Camacho pleaded guilty and said he had donated some of the items to charity, the Post reported. His attorneys requested 18 months in prison due to a "severe" medical condition.

In addition to two years in prison, Camacho received two years of supervised release and 100 hours of community service; he was ordered to pay a \$1,375.00 special assessment fee and to pay back the \$261,036.96 he had stolen, a Justice Department statement from Wednesday said.

Abbott seeks out-of-state pandemic help for Texas

Associated Press

Gov. Greg Abbott appealed for out-of-state help to fight the third wave of COVID-19 in Texas while two more of the state's largest school districts announced mask mandates in defiance of the governor.

Abbott's request Monday came as a county-owned hospital in Houston raised tents to accommodate their COVID-19 overflow. Private hospitals in the county were already requiring their staff to be vaccinated against the coronavirus.

In the meantime, the Dallas and Austin school districts announced Monday that they would require students and staff to wear face masks. The Houston school district already announced a mask mandate for its students and staff later this week if its board approves.

The Republican governor has directed the Texas Department of State Health Services to use staffing agencies to find addi-

tional medical staff from beyond the state's borders as the delta wave began to overwhelm its present staffing resources. He also sent a letter to the Texas Hospital Association to request that hospitals postpone all elective medical procedures voluntarily.

Hospital officials in Houston said last week that area hospitals with beds had insufficient numbers of nurses to serve them.

Abbott also directed the state health department and the Texas Division of Emergency Management to open additional COVID-19 antibody infusion centers to treat patients not needing hospital care and expand COVID-19 vaccine availability to the state's underserved communities.

The governor is taking action short of lifting his emergency order banning county and local government entities from requiring the wearing of masks and social distancing to lower the COVID-19 risk.

Fla. capital schools go against DeSantis, will require masks

Associated Press

MIAMI—The superintendent of the school district in Florida's capital said Monday that he will require students to wear masks amid an increase in COVID-19 hospitalizations fueled by the delta variant, defying the governor's attempts to block schools from imposing such a mandate.

Gov. Ron DeSantis' office responded by saying the state's Board of Education could move to withhold salaries from the superintendent or school board members. Though the Leon County mandate allows exemptions for students with a physician's or psychologist's note, it doesn't give parents the authority to opt out, as DeSantis wanted.

Leon County Schools Superintendent Rocky Hanna announced in a livestreamed announcement that children from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade will be required to wear masks when classes resume in Tallahassee on Wednesday.

"I did a lot of soul-searching, a lot of thinking," Hanna said. "If, heaven forbid, we lost a child to this virus, I can't just simply blame the governor of the state of Florida. I can't."

Ordered by DeSantis, the Florida Department of Health issued an emergency rule last week saying districts must allow parents to decide whether their children will wear masks. DeSantis' office said in a statement that the Leon County district's new policy "blatantly violates the spirit of the executive order and the rules."

The Republican governor issued an executive order in late July for the education and health departments to come up with ways of punishing school districts that mandate mask-wearing in classrooms. DeSantis maintains that enforcing masks violates parental rights. He cites Florida's new Parents Bill of Rights law that says parents have the freedom to make decisions about their children's health and education.

Senate passes bipartisan infrastructure bill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — With a robust vote after weeks of fits and starts, the Senate approved a \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure plan on Tuesday, a rare coalition of Democrats and Republicans joining to overcome skeptics and deliver a cornerstone of President Joe Biden's agenda.

The 69-30 tally provides momentum for this first phase of Biden's "Build Back Better" priorities, now headed to the House. A sizable number of lawmakers showed they were willing to set aside partisan pressures, eager to send billions to their states for rebuilding roads, broadband internet, water pipes and the public works systems that underpin much of American life.

Infrastructure was once a mainstay of lawmaking, but the weekslong slog to strike a compromise showed how hard it has become for Congress to tackle routine legislating, even on

shared priorities.

"There's been detours and everything else, but this will do a whole lot of good for America," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y.

The outline for Biden's bigger \$3.5 trillion package is next up for the Senate — a more liberal undertaking of child care, elder care and other programs that is much more partisan and expected to draw only Democratic support. That debate is expected to extend into the fall.

Tuesday's Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act started with a group of 10 senators who seized on Biden's campaign promise to draft a scaled-down version of his initial \$2.3 trillion proposal, one that could more broadly appeal to both parties in the narrowly divided Congress, especially the 50-50 Senate. It swelled to a 2,700-page bill backed by the president and also business, labor and farm inter-

ests. It drew an expansive alliance of senators and a bipartisan group in the House. In all, 19 Republicans joined all Democrats in voting for Senate passage.

While liberal lawmakers said the package doesn't go far enough as a down-payment on Biden's priorities and conservatives said it is too costly and should be more fully paid for, the coalition of centrist senators was able to hold. Even broadsides from former President Donald Trump could not bring down the bill.

"This infrastructure bill is not the perfect bill," said Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, one of the negotiators. She said the senators kept at it, believing, "It's better to get some of what our constituents want rather than none of it."

The measure proposes nearly \$550 billion in new spending over five years in addition to current federal authorizations for public works that will reach virtually every corner of the country.

There's money to rebuild roads and bridges, and also to shore up coastlines against climate change, protect public utility systems from cyberattacks and modernize the electric grid. Public transit gets a boost, as do airports and freight rail. Most lead drinking water pipes in America could be replaced.

Rather than pressure his colleagues, Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, of Kentucky, has stayed behind the scenes for much of the bipartisan work. He allowed the voting to proceed, and may benefit from enabling this package in a stroke of bipartisanship while trying to stop Biden's next big effort. He voted for passage on Tuesday.

Unlike the \$3.5 trillion second package, which would be paid for by higher tax rates for corporations and the wealthy, the bipartisan package is to be funded by repurposing other money, including some COVID-19 aid.

Supervisor: Calif. wildfire 'continues to challenge us'

Associated Press

California's largest single wildfire in recorded history kept pushing through forestlands as fire crews tried to protect rural communities from flames that have destroyed hundreds of homes.

Thick smoke cleared for several hours along one edge of the Dixie Fire on Monday, allowing aircraft to join nearly 6,000 firefighters in the attack. Many were battling to protect more than a dozen small mountain and rural communities in the northern Sierra Nevada.

Crews managed to cut thousands of acres of new fire lines and the fire's southern edges were in good shape but the fire's future was an unknown, authorities said.

"We don't know where this fire is going to end and where it's go-

ing to land. It continues to challenge us," said Chris Carlton, supervisor for Plumas National Forest.

But high pressure building over the Western United States meant the weather would heat up and dry out again in the next few days, possibly hitting triple-digit high temperatures on Wednesday and Thursday along with a return of strong afternoon winds, fire meteorologist Rich Thompson warned.

Those are the conditions that have caused the fire to spread rapidly since it began on July 13.

California's raging wildfires are among some 100 large blazes burning across 15 states, mostly in the West, where historic drought conditions have left lands parched and ripe for ignition. The Dixie Fire was the largest wildfire burning in the U.S.

Prince Andrew sued by Epstein accuser, citing sex assault at 17

Associated Press

NEW YORK — One of Jeffrey Epstein's longtime accusers sued Prince Andrew on Monday, taking accusations that she has repeatedly publicly lodged against him, including that he sexually assaulted her when she was 17, to a formal venue.

Lawyers for Virginia Giuffre filed the lawsuit in Manhattan federal court, where Epstein was charged criminally with sex trafficking a month before he killed himself at age 66 in August 2019 in an adjacent federal jail where he was ordered to await trial.

Giuffre has repeatedly made her allegations against Epstein, his onetime girlfriend Ghislaine Maxwell, and Andrew, but the lawsuit was the first time she has directly confronted Andrew in such a formal setting. It steps up public relations pressure on the prince, even if he remains beyond

the reach of the courts.

In a statement, Giuffre said she was "holding Prince Andrew accountable for what he did to me."

"I did not come to this decision lightly," Giuffre said. "As a mother and a wife, my family comes first — and I know that this action will subject me to further attacks by Prince Andrew and his surrogates — but I knew if I did not pursue this action, I would be letting them and victims everywhere down."

In late 2019, Prince Andrew told BBC Newsnight that he never had sex with Giuffre, saying, "It didn't happen." The interview was widely panned by critics who said Andrew seemed insensitive to Epstein's victims. Afterward, the prince quit royal duties.

According to the lawsuit, the prince abused Giuffre on multiple occasions when she was under the age of 18.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police: Man intentionally drove into laundromat

CA SANTA BARBARA — Police said a motorist intentionally drove his truck through the front window of a Southern California laundromat in order to strike a man inside.

The victim was hospitalized with moderate injuries after the crash at Mesa Laundromat in Santa Barbara, KEYT-TV reported.

An initial investigation found that the driver is an acquaintance of the victim, though it's unclear why he wanted to hit him.

The driver backed into a bystander while trying to flee, officials said. The bystander wasn't hurt and a group of witnesses detained the driver until police arrived.

Passengers saved after bus gets stuck in forest

CO DOTSERO — Authorities are warning drivers not to try to find shortcuts to avoid the lengthy detours around a prolonged closure of Interstate 70 in western Colorado after about 20 people had to be rescued from a bus that got stuck on an unpaved forest road.

The Greyhound bus had trouble navigating the road generally used by four-wheel-drive vehicles, ripping a hole in the engine's oil pan and causing a leak, the Garfield County Sheriff's Office said.

An older woman with heart problems was rescued first followed by passengers, the driver and luggage on other vehicles, the sheriff's office said.

I-70 through nearby Glenwood Canyon is shut down because of damage by mudslides triggered by rain over an area burned by a large wildfire last year.

Middle school teacher tried to burn school

GA DECATUR — A suburban Atlanta teacher has been arrested after school police said he tried to set fire to a school and fired a gun there.

Antonio Bailey, 23, a Snellville resident, was arrested on first degree arson, second degree criminal property damage and possessing a gun while committing a felony charges, DeKalb County jail records showed.

WSB-TV reported that Bailey is a teacher at Chapel Hill Middle School in southern DeKalb County.

School district police said Bailey tried to set fire to the school's main office before dawn and also fired a gun.

Man yelled and caused panic at movie theater

OH COLUMBUS — A man will face a charge of causing a panic after his actions prompted a rush out of an Ohio mall movie theater over the weekend, authorities said.

Columbus police said that, contrary to earlier reports, no shots were fired and no weapon of any kind was involved.

Sgt. James Fuqua said a man walked into the Easton Town Center movie theater — just before the end of a showing of "The Suicide Squad" — and began screaming "that he was the

king" accompanied by "many obscenities."

Fuqua said the man then ran to the top of the theater and, still screaming obscenities, started to reach into his bag — and that sent everyone else racing for the exits, even jumping over railings to reach them, in fear that he had a weapon of some kind.

Fuqua said officers working special duty at the mall rushed inside and restrained the man without incident. The man, who refused to give his name but has since been identified, will face a charge of "inducing panic," police said.

3 people get stuck in flooded elevator, escape

NE OMAHA — Three people narrowly escaped a flooded elevator following a storm that hit Omaha.

Tony Luu said he and his two friends got in his apartment elevator to check out storm damage, KTRK-TV reported. Before the elevator doors could open, Luu said water started pouring in through the vents as they descended.

Luu called his roommate for help as they waited in chest-high water for emergency responders to arrive.

Luu's roommate and two other people managed to open the elevator from the lobby by the time the water was up to his neck. None of them were hurt.

Recent unrest scares away Greek festival

MN MINNEAPOLIS — An annual Greek festival in the Uptown neighborhood of Minneapolis has been canceled because of recent un-

rest in the district, sponsors said.

St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church sponsors the festival, which showcases food, music, dancing and other celebrations of Greek heritage.

The church said on the festival's website said it "would be unable to find a successful solution to ensure the safety and security" for people or property during the festival.

Organizers said they plan to resume the festival next year, the Star Tribune reported.

Protests and violent crime have occurred more frequently in the Uptown neighborhood since Winston Smith Jr. was shot and killed by a U.S. Marshals task force on June 3.

Missing backpacker rescued in national park

WA OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK — A backpacker missing for four days in Olympic National Park was found and rescued, authorities said.

A helicopter spotted Cheri Keller, 56, of Olympia, in a basin near Mount Steele, and was able to land and evacuate her, park spokeswoman Penny Wagner said in a news release. Once flown to the airport in Shelton, Keller was taken to a hospital by ambulance in stable condition for evaluation, she said.

Keller became separated from her group as they hiked toward Camp Pleasant.

Her group waited for her there but she did not arrive, and two members of the group hiked out to report her missing. The others hiked back to look for her but did not find her.

— From wire reports

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Scrimmages break up monotony in camp

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The monotony of training camp is starting to settle in around the NFL.

The sun beats down even hotter. The practices feel longer. And tempers are shorter.

Many players are understandably tired of looking at the same faces and plays. That's where scrimmages against other teams can spice it up a bit.

"Everyone's kind of different with how they view those preseason joint practices," Jets coach Robert Saleh said. "I think they're fantastic. Especially when teams go about it and they're not looking to fight, they're looking to get work in."

New York is one of 23 teams scheduled to participate in joint practices, a rising trend around the league that could increase with the preseason schedule cut to three games other than Dallas and Pittsburgh — who played in the Hall of Fame game last week. The Jets are also one of seven squads, along with the Giants, Carolina, Miami, New England, Philadelphia and the Los Angeles Rams, that will practice against two teams this summer.

Scrimmages weren't allowed last year because of the coronavirus pandemic, but they were popular in 2019 when 20 teams participated — including six that went up against two opponents during camp.

"I've always felt like you get more out of

those joint practices than you do the actual preseason game," said Saleh, a longtime assistant in his first year as a head coach. "It's just different because it's a more controlled environment. You're not exposing yourself to being tackled or having to tackle, and you can get a lot of work in with it, where it's a little bit more structured in terms of situations. A lot more things can happen."

"And you're getting a really good view of the players."

Because it has been eight months since many teams played a game, players can get riled up when going up against another team in the heat of camp. Punches might be thrown in between passes. And mundane drills can sometimes turn into melees.

Wild skirmishes have marked — and in some cases, marred — joint practices around the league over the years, with players shoving, swinging and piling onto each other. The Jets and Giants haven't practiced together since 2005, when Giants tight end Jeremy Shockey fought with two Jets players on the second play of practice in Albany, N.Y. — and Giants coach Tom Coughlin and Jets defensive coordinator Donnie Henderson got into an epic argument.

Saleh said there were discussions about the teams practicing together this year, and he hopes the squads will get together next year. Then again, that was before the Giants got rowdy with each other earlier this

week when an all-out scrum ended with quarterback Daniel Jones on the bottom of the pile.

The Giants will have sessions on the road at Cleveland and New England.

Each of the NFL's 32 teams held training camp at home last summer because of the pandemic. That's mostly the case this year with only five — Carolina, Dallas, Indianapolis, Kansas City and Washington — hitting the road for all or a portion of camp. With 27 clubs training at home, the most since 2000, and the preseason cut by a game, scrimmaging became a popular option.

"When you get a couple weeks in, you're ready to see somebody new," said Chicago coach Matt Nagy, whose team will host Miami. "It's nice to see. To me, it's almost like a mini-preseason thing. You're just not tackling live."

The Rams and Cowboys were the first teams to square off, last Saturday at Dallas' training facility in Oxnard, Calif. Dallas coach Mike McCarthy chatted with Los Angeles coach Sean McVay, whose team will also host Las Vegas this summer, about some of the ground rules.

"I'm not interested in any extracurricular activity nonsense," McCarthy said. "That's not what this is about. We want the quality work, and that's why we agreed to do the work with the Rams."

Barkley cleared to practice 10½ months after ACL injury

Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — While he isn't in football shape and is unlikely to play in a game anytime soon, star running back Saquon Barkley is back practicing with the New York Giants.

The Giants activated Barkley from the physically unable to perform list Monday and had him participate in some light drills as the team opened its third week of training camp.

The move came roughly 10½ months after Barkley tore the ACL in his right knee in the second game of last season.

"It felt good to just be back out there playing football," Barkley said after practice. "The most fun part I would say is being

back out there with your teammates. Obviously, (this is) the next step in my rehab process and just thankful to be able to go back out there and play football with my teammates and be able to get to practice. It's what I love."

Neither Barkley nor coach Joe Judge would put a timetable on when he will play in a game. Judge got a laugh saying Barkley would not play in the preseason opener against the Jets on Saturday.

Barkley said what he has repeated for months: When the doctors say he can play in a game, that's when he will play.

The Penn State product smiled telling the media he lobbied to return to practice and

laughed when asked if he took any grief from fellow players at the workout.

Barkley has rushed for 2,344 yards and 17 touchdowns in his first three seasons. He has also caught 149 passes, including six for TDs.

Watson returns to practice with Texans

HOUSTON — Deshaun Watson returned to practice with the Houston Texans on Monday after not taking part in workouts for almost a week.

Watson reported to camp on time and was on the field for the team's first five days of practice, participating in individual drills only. When the players

wore pads for the first time this season last Tuesday, he did not participate and was not on the field.

He continued to be absent from practice until Monday when he trotted onto the field with the rest of the team. He only worked during individual drills and went into the indoor practice facility after the first five periods of work. He returned to the field near the end of the two-hour practice and watched as his teammates went through 11-on-11 work.

Watson's future is uncertain after he asked for a trade in January before 22 women filed lawsuits alleging that he sexually assaulted or harassed them in March.

Swinney confident in Clemson newcomers

Associated Press

CLEMSON, S.C. — For a coach with several huge offensive holes to fill, Clemson's Dabo Swinney sounded like someone without a lot to worry about.

Swinney's Tigers entered fall camp Friday without two of their most important and dominant stars of the past few seasons in NFL first-rounders in quarterback Trevor Lawrence and tailback Travis Etienne.

But there was the 51-year-old Swinney, discussing his 40th year of football as a player and coach and confident his offense won't miss a beat this fall.

"One thing I can tell you is it never gets old," said Swinney, a wide grin as he spoke.

Lawrence and Etienne were two of the most prominent faces in the college game the past few years and accounted for the past three Atlantic

Coast Conference player of the year awards (Etienne in 2018 and 2019, Lawrence last fall).

Lawrence was 34-2 in his three seasons as the starter, his lone losses coming to LSU in the 2019 title game and to Ohio State in last season's national semifinal.

Etienne broke several ACC marks including the career rushing record of former North Carolina State great Ted Brown that stood for more than four decades.

Swinney said that Clemson has the talent at both positions to keep clicking toward a seventh straight ACC title and College Football Playoff berth.

Sophomore passer D.J. Uiagalelei proved a stellar replacement when Lawrence missed two games last fall after contracting COVID-19.

Uiagalelei rallied the Tigers from 18 points behind Boston College in the second half for a

42-38 victory. Still starting a week later at Notre Dame as Lawrence recovered from the virus, Uiagalelei threw for 439 yards — the most ever against the Fighting Irish — in a 47-40 overtime loss.

Swinney said he thinks Uiagalelei has only deepened his knowledge of the offense and his hold on the team as starting quarterback.

"He was way ahead last year from a typical freshman," Swinney said of his new starter. "His whole mindset is different. His maturity, his leadership role, I've seen him assert himself a lot better."

Right now, there's no clear choice as Etienne's replacement as the featured back. Senior Lyn-J Dixon was the primary backup the past three seasons and stuck around when Etienne chose to pass up the NFL and play his senior year in 2020.

Along with Dixon are a host of eager, talented runners looking to make their mark on the program like junior Michael Dukes, sophomore Kobe Pace and five-star freshman Will Shipley.

First-year running backs coach C.J. Spiller said it will take a group effort from the tailbacks.

"Having just that one lead dog, I don't think we need that," said Spiller, the ACC player of year for Clemson in 2009.

The Tigers got a boost with Justyn Ross' medical clearance to return to football after missing 2020 due to a congenital fusion condition of his neck and spine that required surgery.

Ross was the offensive MVP of Clemson's 2018 national title win over Alabama and has caught 112 passes for 1,865 yards and 17 touchdowns in his two seasons.

Rangers commit to future in goal, re-sign Shesterkin

Associated Press

The New York Rangers locked up their goaltender of the future Monday by agreeing to re-sign Igor Shesterkin to a four-year, \$22.6 million contract.

The 25-year-old Shesterkin was a restricted free agent who went 16-14-3 last season in taking over the starting duties following Henrik Lundqvist's departure.

The Rangers announced the signing while a person with direct knowledge of the contract revealed its value to The Associated Press. Shesterkin will make \$3 million this season, followed by \$6 million the following year, \$7 million in 2023-24 and \$6.6 million in the final season of the deal. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because the team did not release those numbers.

The amount makes Shesterkin's annual average salary of \$5.65 million the highest awarded to an NHL goalie in his second contract, and ahead of Sergei Bobrovsky, who made \$5.625 million per year over a two-year deal he signed with Columbus in 2013.

From Moscow, Shesterkin was selected

by New York in the fourth round of the 2014 draft. He has an overall record of 26-16-3 over two seasons with the Rangers.

Shesterkin wasn't the only restricted free agent goalie to sign on Monday: The Philadelphia Flyers re-signed Carter Hart to a three-year, \$11.9 million deal, and the Washington Capitals re-signed Ilya Samsonov to a one-year, \$2 million contract.

The 22-year-old Hart is coming off a season in which he struggled maintaining the starter's job in his third season with the team.

Hart's numbers plummeted in finishing with a 9-11-5 record and a 3.67 goals-against average in 27 appearances, including 25 starts. He allowed four or more goals 13 times, and missed the final 12 games with a sprained left knee. That was a significant drop-off from his previous season in which Hart went 24-13-3 to help the Flyers finish fourth in the Eastern Conference standings.

His struggles last season were part of a second-half collapse in which the Flyers won 13 of their final 36 games and missed

the playoffs by finishing sixth in the East Division standings.

Hart will have competition for the starting job this season after the Flyers signed former San Jose Sharks starter Martin Jones in free agency last month.

The 24-year-old Samsanov went 13-4-1 with two shutouts, and lost all three playoff starts in playing behind starter Vitek Vanecek last season. Samsanov was pegged to take over the starting duties this year before the Capitals re-acquired Vanecek in a trade with the expansion Seattle Kraken last month.

In Anaheim, the Ducks re-signed restricted free agent forwards Max Comtois and Max Jones.

Comtois signed a two-year contract after leading the Ducks with 16 goals and 33 points in 55 games. At 22, Comtois was the second-youngest NHL player to lead his team in points last season, behind Ottawa's 21-year-old forward Brady Tkachuk.

Jones, who signed a three-year contract, has 17 goals and 11 assists for 28 points in 135 career games with Anaheim.

Rockies: Fan yelled mascot's name, not slur

Associated Press

DENVER — The Colorado Rockies said a fan was yelling the name of team mascot Dinger and not a racial slur. The Black player who was batting at the time isn't so sure.

Miami Marlins outfielder Lewis Brinson said he didn't hear the fan shouting during Sunday's game at Coors Field. But a day later, he'd reviewed the tape and had a different opinion.

"So I watched the video at least 50 times in the past 15-16 hours," Brinson said on a Zoom call before Monday night's game at San Diego. "I watched it a lot, especially when I heard that he said Dinger instead of the N-word."

"I personally — this is again my personal opinion — I personally keep hearing the N-word. It's not that I want to hear it, I never want to hear it. Personally I've never been called that in person to my face on the baseball field, outside the baseball field, ever, so I don't know what my reaction would be if I got called that," he said.

"But to now, saying that again, I haven't talked to the Rockies or that fan personally. If that's the case, then I'm sorry for any backlash or anything he's getting right now," he said.

Brinson hit a home run and a single and scored twice Monday night in an 8-3 loss to the Padres.

The Rockies said Monday that the fan, who was not identified, was actually holler-

ing at the club's purple, polka-dotted dinosaur mascot.

"After a thorough investigation that included calls, emails and video clips from concerned fans, media and broadcast partners, the Colorado Rockies have concluded that the fan was indeed yelling for Rockies mascot Dinger in hopes of getting his attention for a photo, and there was never any racial slur that occurred," the team said in a statement.

"The Rockies remain dedicated to providing an inclusive environment for all fans, players and guests at Coors Field," the team added, "and any fan using derogatory language of any kind will be ejected from Coors Field."

The team said fans who were seated nearby contacted the club in defense of the fan after it put out a statement Sunday night saying it was disgusted by epithets hurled at Brinson when he was up in the ninth inning of Colorado's 13-8 victory in Denver.

The club then contacted the fan, who explained it was just a big misunderstanding and that he was only trying to get the attention of Dinger, who was two sections over.

The man's shouts were picked up by both teams' broadcasts although the Bally Sports Florida broadcast was clearer than Colorado's because Rockies broadcaster Drew Goodman was talking at the time.

Nobody on the field, including Brinson, reacted to the shouts.

After the game, Marlins spokesman Jason Latimer said the team was aware of the clip.

"Neither Lewis, nor any other Marlins on the field or in the dugout, heard what was shouted," he said in a text message to The Associated Press. "We brought the matter to the attention of the Rockies. How the matter is being handled, I would have to defer to them."

The Rockies condemned the suspected conduct in a statement released Sunday night.

Brinson said he didn't hear the fan during his at-bat and had no idea what was going on until after the game and started getting messages on Instagram. "My initial reaction was upset, man. Nobody wants to be called that. It's a disrespectful, disgusting word that belittles my people, Black people. It's a disgusting word and nobody wants to hear it," Brinson said Monday. "I was in shock."

"I'm getting a lot of love and support on Instagram and I'm sure on Twitter. I appreciate that wholeheartedly, 100%. Again I'm a human, I have sympathy. If he was yelling for the mascot, I am sorry for any backlash or any unnecessary attention he's getting right now," he said.

"But this does happen in our game. I don't know if a lot of people know this. Again personally, I've never been called that ... but I know a lot of Black players have and it's disgusting and needs to stop like right now."

White Sox rip Twins, Jiménez again hits 2 homers

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Eloy Jiménez hit two homers with five RBIs for the second straight game, Tim Anderson led off with a home run for the second day in a row, and the Chicago White Sox cruised past the Minnesota Twins 11-1 Monday night.

Lucas Giolito pitched two-hit ball for eight innings as the White Sox won their fourth in a row. Center fielder Luis Robert came off the 60-day injured list and delivered an RBI double and single for the AL Central leaders.

Jiménez became the first Chicago player with consecutive games of at least two homers and five RBIs, and the first in the ma-

jors since Bryce Harper for Washington in 2015.

Giolito (9-8) faced the minimum over the first seven innings. The first hit he allowed came on a hard grounder from Luis Arraez to start the fifth inning that glanced off Giolito's leg.

Miguel Sanó homered off Giolito.

Beau Burrows (0-1) allowed seven runs, six earned, over two innings in his first career start.

Yoán Moncada homered in the ninth for Chicago.

Yankees 8, Royals 6 (11): DJ LeMahieu led off the 11th inning with an RBI double and New York, after blowing four late leads, won at Kansas City.

Brett Gardner drove in three runs for the Yankees, two on a sharp infield single in the 11th that made it 8-5. The Royals got a two-out RBI single from Edward Olivares and brought the potential winning run to the plate before Carlos Santana grounded out to end a game that took 4 hours, 52 minutes.

Clay Holmes (4-2) earned the win. Greg Holland (2-5) took the loss. Wandy Peralta earned his third save.

Luke Voit hit a go-ahead single in the seventh and a tiebreaking homer in the ninth for New York.

Kansas City became the first team since 1900 to erase a deficit in the seventh, eighth, ninth and 10th innings of a game, accord-

ing to STATS.

Padres 8, Marlins 3: Joe Musgrove relied heavily on his breaking ball and tossed six strong innings with eight strikeouts in San Diego's win over visiting Miami.

Musgrove (8-7) kept the Marlins off-balance, surrendering one run and five hits.

Indians 9, Reds 3: José Ramírez hit a two-run homer and an RBI triple, leading host Cleveland to a victory over Cincinnati.

Wilson Ramos also hit a two-run homer, Amed Rosario was 4-for-5 with an RBI and the Indians used five pitchers in a planned bullpen game to end the Reds' five-game winning streak.