

Emergency directive issued after hacks

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. government agencies were ordered to scour their networks for malware and disconnect potentially compromised servers on Monday after authorities learned that the Treasury and Commerce departments were hacked in a global cyber-espionage campaign tied to a foreign government.

In a rare emergency directive issued late Sunday, the Department of Homeland Security's cybersecurity arm warned of an "unacceptable risk" to the executive branch from a feared large-scale penetration of U.S. government agencies that could date back to mid-year or earlier.

"This can turn into one of the most impactful espionage campaigns on record," said cybersecurity expert Dmitri Alperovitch.

The campaign was first discovered when a prominent cybersecurity firm, FireEye, learned it had been breached. FireEye would not say who it suspected — many experts believe the operation is Russian giv-

en the careful tradecraft — and noted that foreign governments and major corporations were also compromised.

News that federal agencies were hacked, first reported by Reuters, came less than a week after FireEye disclosed that nation-state hackers had broken into its network and stolen the company's own hacking tools.

The apparent conduit for the Treasury and Commerce Department hacks — and the FireEye compromise — is a hugely popular piece of server software called SolarWinds. It is used by hundreds of thousands of organizations globally, including most Fortune 500 companies and multiple U.S. federal agencies, which will now be scrambling to patch up their networks, said Alperovitch, the former chief technical officer of the cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike.

The DHS directive said U.S. agencies should immediately disconnect or power down any machines running the impacted SolarWinds software.

FireEye, without naming any specific targets, said in a blog post that its investigation into the hack of its own network had identified "a global campaign" targeting governments and the private sector that, beginning in the spring, had slipped malware into a SolarWinds software update.

Austin, Texas-based SolarWinds sent a message urging about 33,000 potentially affected customers to quickly update a software product known as Orion. The attack, it said Monday, was "likely conducted by an outside nation state and intended to be a narrow, extremely targeted and manually executed attack, as opposed to a broad, system-wide attack."

FireEye said it had confirmed infections in North America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East, including in the health care and oil and gas industry — and had been informing affected customers around the world in the past few days.

Its customers include federal, state and local governments, as well as top global corporations.

Largest vaccine effort in US history underway

Associated Press

The largest vaccination campaign in U.S. history got underway Monday as health workers in select hospitals rolled up their sleeves for shots to protect them from COVID-19 and start beating back the pandemic — a day of optimism even as the nation's death toll neared 300,000.

"I feel hopeful today. Relieved," said critical care nurse Sandra Lindsay after getting a shot in the arm at Long Island Jewish Medical Center in New York.

Shipments of precious frozen vials of vaccine made by Pfizer Inc. and its German partner BioNTech began arriving at hospitals around the country Monday.

"This is the light at the end of the tunnel. But it's a long tunnel," New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said as he watched Lindsay's vaccination via video.

Several other countries have also approved the vaccine, including the United Kingdom, which started vaccinating last

week.

For health care workers who, along with nursing home residents, will be first in line for vaccination, hope is tempered by grief and the sheer exhaustion of months spent battling a coronavirus that still is surging in the United States and around the world.

Packed in dry ice to stay at ultra-frozen temperatures, the first of nearly 3 million doses being shipped in staggered batches this week made their way by truck and by plane around the country Sunday from Pfizer's Kalamazoo, Mich., factory. Once they arrive at distribution centers, each state directs where the doses go next.

Some hospitals across the country spent the weekend tracking their packages, refreshing FedEx and UPS websites for clues.

More of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine will arrive each week. And later this week, the FDA will decide whether to greenlight the world's second rigorously studied COVID-19 vaccine, made by Moderna Inc.

Now the hurdle is to rapidly get the vaccine into the arms of millions — not just doctors and nurses, but also other at-risk health workers such as janitors and food handlers — and then deliver a second dose three weeks later.

"We're also in the middle of a surge, and it's the holidays, and our health care workers have been working at an extraordinary pace," said Sue Mashni, chief pharmacy officer at Mount Sinai Health System in New York City.

Plus, the shots can cause temporary fever, fatigue and aches as they rev up people's immune systems, forcing hospitals to stagger employee vaccinations.

A wary public will be watching closely to see whether health workers embrace vaccination. Just half of Americans say they want to get vaccinated, while about a quarter don't and the rest are unsure, according to a recent poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Health Research.

Retiring sergeant major reflects on years

By JAMES BOLINGER
Stars and Stripes

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWA-KUNI, Japan — Joe Gregory was with the Marines on the road to Baghdad and has swaggered beneath a drill instructor's cover on a San Diego parade deck, but he faced his final trial in Japan.

Gregory, a 30-year Marine, hung up his eagle, globe and anchor Dec. 8, retiring from active life as the sergeant major at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, though he's still on the Corps' roster until March.

At MCAS Iwakuni, he and base commander Col. Lance Lewis navigated nine months of the coronavirus, doing what they could to maintain the health and safety of more than 15,000 Marines, Defense Department civilians, contractors, Japanese employees and their families as the pandemic flared outside the gates.

Gregory said he changed the way he viewed the virus when the Marines postponed physical fitness tests until January.

"It's just who we are as Marines; it's in our DNA," he told *Stars and Stripes* on Nov. 16. "When they said no more PFTs, that may seem small, but I thought that was a huge step based on who we are and the things we do."

The Defense Department decision to give base commanders leeway to impose restrictions that fit their situations was especially apt, Gregory said. It was key to corralling the coronavirus when it inevitably appeared at the air station.

Under Lewis and Gregory, the air station

experienced only a handful of coronavirus cases, many of them from the United States, until November, when a third wave in Japan contributed to 34 cases.

The military culture helped keep infection rates statistically lower than those in the civilian world, Gregory said.

"One, we are young and healthy," he said, "and two, when someone tells us to wear a mask, we wear a mask."

Son of Colorado

In 1991, Gregory was a 20-year-old grocery store clerk in Colorado Springs, Colo., whose horizon stopped at the Rocky Mountains. Then he joined the Marines.

"Boot camp was a life-changer for me," he said. "The first day on the parade deck and hearing the national anthem playing, that was awesome. My parents did a fine job raising me, but the Marine Corps fine-tuned me."

He spent the next seven years as a mechanic on CH-53E King Stallion heavy-lift helicopters. He deployed once to Afghanistan and three times to Iraq, including the 2003 drive to Baghdad.

His next stop was Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego and the life of a drill instructor. The day he earned the distinctive Smokey Bear campaign hat that sets drill instructors apart is his most memorable day in the Corps.

"Walking across that stage, putting on the cover with my mom and dad in the audience, that was probably the best moment," he said.

Yelling at recruits is fun, Gregory said, but that's not really the job. That's turning a young man or woman into a Marine.

"These kids come from all walks of life, and you don't know their stories," he said. "But on graduation day, their mom or dad walks up and tells you all the nice things that kid has written about you after you did your best to wear him out every day for 12 weeks. You find out maybe he didn't have a dad in the family and wrote to his mom that you were the most positive male influence in his life. That is when it definitely hit home for me."

Educate, educate, educate

Gregory tells younger Marines to take advantage of the Corps' tuition assistance program and further their educations. He starts his next chapter in life without a degree, and that makes a difference.

"As I'm trying to put in résumés, I'm seeing that it's a struggle," he said. "Everyone wants education. They want to see a bachelor's in something."

Gregory plans to split his time between Colorado and San Diego before settling with his family somewhere in between. But first, he's just going to take a break. He and Debbie, his wife of 18 years, have three children: Timothy, 14, Madeline, 10, and Tucker, 6.

One thing missing from Gregory's sea bag when he turns toward home: any thought that a grocery clerk from Colorado Springs made the wrong move 30 years ago.

"This is a pretty good life," he said, "and a pretty rewarding career I've had."

'Family remembers Roosevelt sailor who went overboard

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

Just three days into his first deployment, Airman Apprentice Ethan Garrett Goolsby on Thursday went missing from the USS Theodore Roosevelt, his father wrote in a public Facebook post on Sunday.

The Navy on Saturday ended its 55-hour search for the 20-year-old sailor after the Coast Guard, six Navy vessels and aircraft searched more than 607 square miles for Goolsby, who went overboard Thursday morning off the coast of Southern California.

Goolsby, an aviation ordnanceman from

San Antonio, had been in the Navy about a year and reported to the Theodore Roosevelt in July, the Navy's 3rd Fleet said in a statement confirming his identity Monday.

Goolsby's father, Kelly Goolsby, in his Facebook post said the carrier's commander, Capt. Eric Anduze, called on Saturday and said his son was considered "dead, lost at sea."

Though the formal search was called off, Kelly Goolsby wrote that Anduze told him "the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Coast Guard and their supports would continue to remain vigilant for a probable recovery of our son's remains."

"We are grateful for the search and recov-

ery efforts related to us by the U.S. Navy," Kelly Goolsby wrote.

Ethan Goolsby had a "kind heart, warm sense of humor" and was "very proud of the U.S. Navy and the service he was providing to our country," his father wrote in the post.

It remains unclear what led to Ethan Goolsby's disappearance. He was last seen on board between 7 and 7:15 a.m. Thursday for morning quarters after working the night shift, according to Kelly Goolsby's post. The search began about 15 minutes later when a lookout "spotted what appeared to be a person in the water," according to a Navy statement on Friday.

USMC to let armor Marines out early

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

Marines in tank-related fields could qualify to leave the service up to one year early under a “surgical reduction in personnel” as the Corps sheds its heavy armor in favor of a lighter, more agile force.

Eligible enlisted armor Marines, senior armor staff noncommissioned officers, tank officers and main battle tank repairer/technicians may be approved to separate up to 365 days before the end of their expiration of active service, the Marine Corps announced last week.

The programs are part of the Corps’ efforts to pare down its armor job fields, which began this spring after Marine Commandant Gen. David Berger announced plans to divest the service of its M1A1 Abrams main battle tanks and M1150 Assault Breacher Vehicles.

Early this year, Berger announced plans to shutter the service’s tank battalions as part of

a 10-year redesign.

“As we implement Force Design to modernize the force for naval expeditionary warfare ... we will begin a surgical reduction in personnel and realignment of specific capabilities and units,” said Col. Christopher Escamilla, branch head for Marine Corps Plans, Programs and Budget, in a statement last week.

Plans also call for reducing and restructuring infantry battalions, eliminating law enforcement units, slashing the number of cannon artillery battalions and disbanding aircraft squadrons as the service aims to trim 12,000 troops from its ranks by 2030.

Some of the cuts are meant to free up resources for modernization without asking Congress for more money.

“These redesign efforts will enable the Marine Corps to reinvest time, money and resources into higher priority areas, which includes emerging technologies and significant

changes in force structure,” Escamilla said in the statement.

Tank battalions began casing their colors this summer, as have combat logistics, engineer support and wing support units. The 2nd Law Enforcement Battalion of the North Carolina-based II Marine Expeditionary Force is expected to deactivate Thursday.

Earlier this year, the service began allowing service members in the four tank-related specialties to change jobs, change services or, for those with 15 years of service, retire early.

By the end of the fiscal year in September, some 130 Marines in those fields had applied to switch job fields, six had requested early retirement and 46 had asked to change services, Marine Corps data showed.

Nearly 650 Marines had yet to submit requests for any of those options. Marine Corps officials have not said how many troops would be eligible for the early release program.

Schools on US military bases in Germany will close classrooms

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — Schools at U.S. military bases in Germany will hold a final day of in-person classes before transitioning to remote learning, in line with new host nation restrictions aimed at bringing down stubbornly high numbers of coronavirus infections, officials said Monday.

Tuesday will be the last day before the winter break that students will report to school, Department of Defense Education Activity-Europe spokesman Stephen Smith said in a statement.

They should “take home their belongings and any materials/equipment they need to operate in remote learning” that day and will start school after winter break in remote status, the statement said.

Teaching staff will continue to come to schools to obtain materials, help students sort out technological issues and prepare for the switch to remote instruction after the end of the winter break, the statement said. Their last day to physically report to school will be Friday, it said.

Remote learning will continue in DODEA schools “until the German government provides additional guidance” on whether restrictions announced this weekend have suc-

ceeded in slowing the spread of the coronavirus and in bringing down the number of infections, the statement said.

Jan. 10 is the “tentative date to return to in-person instruction,” the statement said. The DODEA virtual school schedule will not change, officials said.

German schools were ordered to close nationwide beginning Wednesday or switch to online lessons until Jan. 10. Germany had kept schools open but made the change after restrictions imposed in November failed to significantly reduce the number of new infections.

More than half of DODEA-Europe’s 77 schools are in Germany.

U.S. military commanders had not yet announced Monday what other base facilities and services would be affected by Germany’s tougher lockdown rules, which are due to take effect Wednesday and run through at least Jan. 10.

German school instruction could also continue remotely after that date.

U.S. Army Garrison Bavaria said it was working with 7th Army Training Command “to determine the actions that we will implement in conjunction with the German lockdown,” the command posted on its Facebook page Monday.

Italy passes UK for highest virus death toll across Europe

Associated Press

ROME — Italy on Sunday eclipsed Britain to become the nation with the worst official coronavirus death toll in Europe.

Italy, where the continent’s pandemic began, registered 484 COVID-19 deaths in one day, one of its lowest one-day death counts in about a month.

Still, those latest deaths pushed Italy’s official toll up to 64,520, while Britain’s stood at 64,267, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

Both numbers understate the true toll of the pandemic. Counting criteria differ in the two countries, and many coronavirus deaths, especially early in the pandemic, are believed to have gone undetected, including those of elderly people in nursing homes who were not tested for COVID-19.

Among the reasons cited for Italy’s high death toll was it that was the first country in Europe to be slammed in the pandemic, leaving health workers to grapple with a largely unknown virus. Italy also has a lower ratio of medical staff to patients compared to other European nations.

On Sunday, Italy reported another 17,938 coronavirus infections to raise its official tally to 1.84 million.

Missile drill triggers false alarm at base

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — Americans living on and near Ramstein Air Base may have thought 2020 was about to pack yet another punch when sirens wailed and the “giant voice” shouted to take cover because of an incoming aerial attack.

Sirens sounded on the base’s loudspeaker system Saturday morning, followed by the warning: “Aerial attack, aerial attack, seek cover, seek cover.”

Missing were the words that typically accompany such messages — “Exercise, Exercise, Exercise” — sending some who heard the giant voice into a momentary panic.

A Russian nuclear submarine’s test-firing of four intercontinental ballistic missiles — launched from the western Pacific region — was likely the trigger for a brief real-world scare in the Kaiserslautern mil-

itary community on Saturday.

The Russian dummy warheads hit their targets in the Arkhangelsk region in northwestern Russia more than 3,400 miles away, the Russian Defense Ministry said in a statement, according to The Associated Press.

The warning “made my heart skip a beat for a second,” said a comment on Ramstein Air Base’s official Facebook page Saturday.

Another person responded: “me too I ran into the (base exchange) and started yelling at folks to take cover.”

The 86th Airlift Wing said on Facebook that its command post “was notified via an alert notification system of a real-world missile launch in the European theater.”

The all-clear was given after the missile launch was “assessed to be part of a training exercise and not a threat to the KMC area,” the Air Force said in the post, while thanking command post members “for their

quick response.”

Air Force officials Monday would not say exactly why the alarm was triggered.

U.S. Air Forces in Europe-Air Forces Africa said Monday that “the control center followed proper procedures ... to provide rapid and accurate notifications to all required personnel,” both when the initial alert was received and “within minutes” after the missile launch was determined to be part of a training exercise.

“We consistently and routinely monitor for any threats to our forces and our allies,” USAFE spokeswoman Erica Vega said in a statement.

At least one person took the false alarm in stride and thanked the command post on Facebook for “keeping Team Ramstein on their toes,” adding: “The commissary might need to restock TP after that warning.”

Early in-person voting in Ga. Senate runoffs begins

Associated Press

ATLANTA — What could be the main event in Georgia’s twin U.S. Senate runoffs — early in-person voting — got underway Monday, with lines tending to be shorter than during the first days of early voting for the general election.

More than half of the record 5 million votes in the Nov. 3 general election were cast during its two-week early voting period. Early in-person voting could be even more important in these Jan. 5 runoffs because of the short time frame for voters to request and send back ballots by mail, as the two races decide which party will control the U.S. Senate.

“It’s very important,” Democrat Raphael Warnock, who is challenging Republican Sen. Kelly Loeffler in one of the races, said Friday after a speech to labor union canvassers. “It’s how we won in the general and it’s how we’re going to win in the runoff.”

No one expects turnout to be as high in the Warnock-Loeffler contest or the race between Sen. David Perdue and Democrat Jon Ossoff. But Bernard Fraga, an Emory University professor who studies voting, said overall turnout could reach 4 million.

Few long lines were reported as the voting began Monday.

One question is how many mail-in ballots will be cast in the election. By Friday, 1.2 million mail-in ballots had been requested and 200,000 returned. In the general election, Democrat Joe Biden won 65% of the 1.3 million absentee ballots that were returned in Georgia, a record fueled by the coronavirus pandemic.

That means early in-person voting, which President Donald Trump narrowly won in November, could be even more important for Republicans. Both parties may also drive voters toward the early polls with Christmas and New Year’s holidays looming before Jan. 5.

‘External source’ blamed in tanker blast off Saudi Arabia

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — An oil tanker off Saudi Arabia’s port city of Jiddah suffered an explosion early Monday after being hit by “an external source,” a shipping company said, suggesting another vessel has come under attack off the kingdom amid its yearslong war in Yemen.

The apparent attack on the Singapore-flagged BW Rhine, which had been contracted by the trading arm of the kingdom’s massive Saudi Arabian Oil Co., marks the fourth assault targeting Saudi energy infrastructure in a month. It also apparently shut down Jiddah port, the most-important shipping point for the kingdom.

It also renews concerns about ship safety in the Red Sea, a crucial transit zone for global shipping and energy supplies that largely had avoided the chaos of regional tensions involving the U.S. and Iran last year.

The BW Rhine had berthed at Jiddah on Saturday, carrying over 60,000 metric tons of un-

leaded gasoline from an Aramco refinery at Yanbu for consumption in the kingdom, according to the data-analysis firm Refinitiv. It was there that the incident appears to have occurred.

The ship has “been hit from an external source whilst discharging,” said Haifna, a tanker company under the BW Group that owns and operates the ship.

The strike caused an explosion and fire onboard the ship, though all 22 sailors on board escaped without injury and firefighters later extinguished the blaze, Haifna said. Some oil may have polluted the water along the ship, though the company said it was still assessing the damage.

The United Kingdom Marine Trade Operations, an organization under Britain’s royal navy, urged ships in the area to exercise caution and said investigations were ongoing. It later said Jiddah port had been shut down for a “duration unknown,” without elaborating.

Feds: Business owners stole, sold teacher certification test

FL TALLAHASSEE — A Florida couple is being charged with stealing questions from a state test to certify teachers and principals and selling them to people seeking jobs in education, a U.S. attorney announced.

Kathleen and Jeremy Jasper, of Estero, were indicted on dozens of charges, including racketeering conspiracy, conspiracy to commit wire fraud, wire fraud, conspiracy to commit theft of trade secrets, and theft of trade secrets.

The couple runs a company, NavaED, that prepares educators for the certification tests. U.S. Attorney Lawrence Keefe said the couple and others repeatedly took the online test to memorize questions and answers and then sold them to customers.

Suspect in shooting arrested after 2-story window jump

CA ANAHEIM — A suspect in a Southern California shooting was arrested after suddenly jumping out of a second-floor window of an apartment, police said.

Anaheim police responded to a call about a shooting and found a young man with a gunshot wound to the face, Sgt. Shane Carlinger said in an email to The Associated Press.

The man was taken to a hospital in critical condition and officers determined the suspect was barricaded in the apartment.

SWAT and tactical negotiators responded but talks went on for several hours before “chemical agents were introduced into the apartment to encourage the suspect’s surrender.” The suspect jumped out the window and landed on a parked car.

Plane makes emergency landing on turnpike with no damage

OH SWANTON — A state highway patrol officer checking traffic speeds on the Ohio Turnpike picked up an unusual vehicle — a single-engine plane making an emergency landing, authorities said.

The Ohio State Highway Patrol said the

1964-model Cessna 150 had an engine malfunction and was unable to make it to nearby Eugene F. Krantz Toledo Express Airport, touching down on the turnpike in Swanton Township, the Toledo Blade reported.

Patrol Sgt. Christopher Fitzgerald from the Swanton post said at the scene that no one was injured and neither the plane nor the turnpike was damaged.

Coast Guard tows stranded fishing vessel for 5 days

MA BOSTON — A fishing vessel that became stranded off the coast of Massachusetts was towed to safety after a five-day operation, the U.S. Coast Guard announced.

The fishing vessel Fearless was 160 nautical miles east of Nantucket when it became disabled and called for help. Winds were more than 20 mph at the time with 8-foot waves, the Coast Guard said.

The Coast Guard cutter Tahoma took the fishing vessel into tow and hauled it five days before turning it over to a towing company near Buzzard’s Bay. No injuries were reported.

Small city looking for 4th police chief in 5 years

GA CENTERVILLE — One small city in central Georgia is having a hard time keeping a police chief.

The Houston County Sheriff’s Office has been helping run the police department in Centerville, a city of fewer than 8,000 people, while the mayor and city council work to hire their fourth police chief in five years.

Chief Chuck Hadden retired in November and the two chiefs who had the job before him left the department in 2015 and 2016, WMAZ-TV reported.

Sheriff’s Capt. Ricky Harlowe has been overseeing the police department under an agreement with city officials that’s expected to be extended next week. Harlowe said the hiring of two new officers and promotions of two others have improved morale.

Owner of bar faces arson counts

MN ST. CLOUD — The owner of a historic St. Cloud bar was in-

dicted on federal arson and wire fraud charges for allegedly setting fire to the business and submitting a fraudulent insurance claim, prosecutors announced.

Andrew Welsh, 41, of St. Joseph, was arrested by agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. He is accused of burning down the Press Bar and Parlor, a century-old establishment in downtown St. Cloud. Damage was estimated at \$1 million.

According to the federal indictment, Welsh, who had a \$1.35 million insurance policy on the Press Bar and Parlor, used an ignitable liquid to set fire to the bar’s basement on Feb. 17. The fire spread and destroyed the building.

City installs devices to count bikes in bike lanes

PA PHILADELPHIA — Officials announced the city has installed electronic devices to count the number of bicycles using a bike lane.

“Unlike the other permanent counters on our region’s trails, these in-street counters are the first of their kind in a bike lane on a city street,” said Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission executive director Barry Seymour. “This is a great new source of data because we’re able to monitor the levels of biking on each street, 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.”

Synagogue vandalized on first day of Hanukkah

IA DAVENPORT — Police in eastern Iowa were investigating the vandalism of a synagogue in Davenport that occurred on the first day of Hanukkah.

Someone used red spray paint to scrawl a New Testament biblical citation at an entrance of Temple Emanuel, television station KWQC reported.

The citation “John 8:44” was painted on a wall near the temple doors. The verse recounts Jesus telling his critics that they are the spawn of the devil.

Rabbi Bertenthal said the vandalism and its message are particularly hurtful coming at the opening of the eight-day Jewish Festival of Lights.

—From The Associated Press

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Cleveland Indians will change name

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — The Cleveland Indians are changing their name after 105 years.

Citing three people familiar with the decision, The New York Times reported Sunday night that the team is moving away from a name considered racist for decades. The Indians have been internally discussing a potential name change for months.

A team spokesman told The Associated Press the franchise has no immediate comment on the report.

The Times said the team could make a formal announcement later this week. It's not known when the name change will take effect or if the team has settled on a new moniker.

Cleveland's move away from Indians follows a similar decision earlier this year by the NFL's Washington Football Team, which was previously known as the Redskins.

For years, Native American groups and

others have protested against Cleveland's use of Indians as its name as well as other imagery used by the American League charter franchise founded in 1901. Last year, the team removed the contentious Chief Wahoo logo from its caps and jerseys, but the smiling, cartoonish mascot has remained popular and merchandise is still sold bearing its image.

The Indians have dealt with a backlash from fans upset over Chief Wahoo's removal and the club is certain to hear more with the decision to change its name.

"Oh no! What is going on?" President Donald Trump tweeted. "This is not good news, even for 'Indians'. Cancel culture at work!"

In July, just hours after Washington's plans became known after being pressured by several sponsors, including FedEx, which holds naming rights to the football's team's stadium, Cleveland owner Paul Dolan released a statement saying the team

would review "the best path forward with our team name."

In the months since, the team has consulted players, front office members, coaching staff, community leaders, share holders and Native American groups.

A few days after Dolan's statement, Indians manager Terry Francona said it was time to "move forward" with the name change.

"I've been thinking about it and been thinking about it before we put out that statement," said Francona, who has been with the club since 2013. "I know in the past, when I've been asked about, whether it's our name or the Chief Wahoo, I think I would usually answer and say I know that we're never trying to be disrespectful."

"And I still feel that way. But I don't think that's a good enough answer today. I think it's time to move forward. It's a very difficult subject. It's also delicate."

Coaches Malzahn, Smith get the boot

Associated Press

Auburn and Illinois, each in the midst of a disappointing season, fired their football coaches Sunday.

Auburn athletic director Allen Greene announced the firing of Gus Malzahn a day after the Tigers finished the regular season with a 24-10 victory over Mississippi State. Auburn is 6-4 in a pandemic-shortened season of all Southeastern Conference opponents, losing by double digits to highly ranked teams Alabama, Georgia and Texas A&M.

The Tigers also were upset by a struggling South Carolina, which wound up firing coach Will Muschamp during the season.

"After evaluating the state of the Auburn football program, we've decided that it was time to make a change in leadership," Greene said in a statement. "We appreciate everything that Gus did for the program over the last eight seasons. We will begin a search immediately for a coach

that can help the Auburn program consistently compete at the highest level."

Defensive coordinator Kevin Steele will be interim coach. Auburn will owe Malzahn a \$21.45 million buyout for the remaining four years of a seven-year, \$49 million deal. The school must pay half of that within 30 days.

Malzahn went 68-35 in eight seasons and was 39-27 against SEC opponents. He led the Tigers to an SEC title in 2013, his first season, losing to Florida State in the national championship game.

The Illini fired coach Lovie Smith with a game left in its ninth consecutive losing season.

Smith became Illinois' first Black head football coach when he was hired by athletic director Josh Whitman in March 2016. The longtime NFL coach went 17-39 in five seasons at the school.

Smith's original deal was for six years and \$21 million, but he received a two-year extension

through 2023 after the Illini went 4-8 in his third season.

"When we brought Lovie on board, we had a lot of needs; we needed a steady hand, an experienced voice, someone who would bring credibility to the program," Whitman said during a Zoom press conference.

"At the end of the day, we weren't able to win enough games or quite get over the hump despite the best efforts."

The Illini made one postseason appearance under Smith, losing 35-20 to California in the Redbox Bowl in 2019. They were 6-4 last season after a thrilling comeback victory at Michigan State, but then dropped their last three games.

The slide continued into this year, with Illinois losing its first three by a combined 117-45 score. The Illini are 2-5 after they were pushed around in a 28-10 loss at Northwestern on Saturday, allowing 411 yards rushing in their sixth straight loss in the series against the in-state Wildcats.

The Illini close out the season at Penn State on Saturday. Offensive coordinator Rod Smith was elevated to acting head coach.

"This Illinois football program is primed for success," Whitman said.

"I want to win. I want somebody who is going to come in here and win football games, do it with integrity and for a long time."

While the 62-year-old Smith flopped with the Illini, he could attract some interest from NFL teams looking for help on the defensive side of the ball.

Smith spent nine seasons as the head coach of the Chicago Bears, leading them to three NFC North titles, a Super Bowl appearance and an 81-63 record. He also went 8-24 in two seasons with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers before he was hired by Illinois.

He coached linebackers for the Bucs from 1996-2000 and served as the Rams' defensive coordinator from 2001-03.

College basketball roundup

No. 3 Iowa rolls past Northern Illinois

Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa — Luka Garza scored 23 points and Joe Wieskamp added 20 to help No. 3 Iowa beat Northern Illinois 106-53 on Sunday.

Garza, who came into the game leading the nation in scoring, added eight rebounds while playing just 20 minutes as coach Fran McCaffery used his reserves for much of the second half.

The lone unanimous selection to The Associated Press preseason All-American team, Garza was 8 of 10 from the field and is shooting 69.1% for the season. Wieskamp played 19 minutes.

Iowa (6-0), which came in ranked second in the country in scoring at 99.4 points per game, had its third game of 100 or more points. The Hawkeyes have scored 50 or more points in five consecutive halves. Iowa had a 25-2 first-half run that included a stretch of 15 consecutive points.

Adong Makuoi had 14 points for Northern Illinois (0-5).

No. 4 Michigan State 109, Oakland 91: Gabe Brown scored a career-high 20 points and the host Spartans used a 13-0 run early in the second half to pull away.

Rashad Williams scored 23 of his 36 points in the first half for the Golden Grizzlies,

his second straight huge game against a big-name opponent. Oakland (0-7) trailed by one shortly after halftime before Michigan State (6-0) quickly pushed the lead into double digits.

Aaron Henry scored 15 points and Joshua Langford contributed 13 for the Spartans.

Williams made 10 three-pointers in a 32-point effort at Oklahoma State on Dec. 5. He made six threes in the first half Sunday, and the Golden Grizzlies trailed by just four at halftime despite struggling to keep Michigan State off the boards.

No. 11 West Virginia 87, No. 19 Richmond 71: Miles McBride scored 20 points and the host Mountaineers used a hot-shooting first half to beat the Spiders.

Taz Sherman added 15 points and Sean McNeil and Oscar Tshiebwe each had 12 for West Virginia (5-1).

Tyler Burton had 14 points and 10 rebounds for Richmond (4-1).

No. 22 Ohio State 67, Cleveland State 61: Duane Washington Jr. scored 17 points and the host Buckeyes held off the Vikings.

Coming off a victory at Notre Dame on Tuesday, Ohio State (5-0) struggled to put away Cleveland State (0-3). C.J. Walker added 16 points and freshman Zed Key had 12 points and 10 rebounds.

D'Moi Hodge had 14 points for the Vikings.

No. 23 Arizona State 71, Grand Canyon 70: Remy Martin hit a 3-pointer with 9 seconds left and scored 31 points, lifting the visiting Sun Devils.

The Antelopes (4-1) rallied from an eight-point deficit to take a 70-68 lead in the final minute on consecutive three-pointers by Jovan Blacksher Jr. and Alessandro Lever. Arizona State (4-2) called a timeout after Lever's three and worked the ball around to Martin in the corner. He made the shot and Blacksher's final attempt rimmed out.

Blacksher had 21 points and Lever 18 for Grand Canyon.

Drake 81, Air Force 53: D.J. Wilkins scored a career-high 23 points on 7-of-11 shooting from three-point range and the host Bulldogs rolled past the Falcons.

Joseph Yesufu had 11 points for Drake (6-0), which won its 22nd straight non-conference home game. Roman Penn added 11 points and eight assists. Garrett Sturtz had 10 points.

Abe Kinrade had 15 points for Air Force (2-2). A.J. Walker added 14 points and Chris Joyce had 13.

The Falcons play Nevada on the road on Friday.

NCAA eyes Texas as site for women's tourney

Associated Press

The NCAA plans to stage the entire women's basketball tournament in one geographic area and San Antonio is the likely host site.

The move, announced Monday, was made to help mitigate the risks of COVID-19 and matches that of the men's tournament, which the NCAA said last month will be played in a single area — most likely Indianapolis.

The women's Final Four in 2021 was already set for San Antonio and the NCAA has begun preliminary talks with the Texas city to hold the entire 64-team tournament in the area.

"Conducting the championship in one geographic region allows for more planning and execution of safeguards that provide potential benefits for promoting the health and safety of student athletes, the NCAA membership and all individuals involved in

the championship," said Nina King, the NCAA women's basketball committee chair and senior athletic director at Duke. "By making this difficult decision now, it allows for an earlier opportunity to work proactively with local public health officials within the host communities and ensures that the identified guidelines and protocols are considered for a more controlled environment."

The first two rounds of the women's tournament have been played on campus sites the past few seasons with the top four seeds in each region hosting.

The regionals were slated to be played this season in Albany, N.Y.; Austin, Texas; Cincinnati; and Spokane, Wash.

The NCAA expects the tournament to be played in late March and early April as usual, though there is a chance the timeframe could be shorter, depending on what happens with the pandemic.

"San Antonio was the perfect region for us to explore because it already has an established and fully operational local organizing committee in place for the 2021 Women's Final Four," said Lynn Holzman, vice president of women's basketball at the NCAA.

Two schools, Incarnate Word and UTSA, will serve as hosts for the Final Four, the NCAA said.

"We were already preparing to host a tremendous Women's Final Four; the opportunity to develop a plan for hosting all 64 teams is both exciting and a great opportunity for our local economy," San Antonio Mayor Ron Nirenberg said.

"It is also a tremendous responsibility, and I know our local organizing committee and our hospitality industry will make the safety and wellbeing of the athletes, coaches and fans its highest priority."

Hurts helps Eagles slip past Saints

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Jalen Hurts provided the Philadelphia Eagles a spark with his legs and his teammates came up with their best all-around effort of the season.

They needed everyone to deliver to beat the New Orleans Saints.

Hurts ran for 106 yards and threw for 167 and one touchdown, Miles Sanders had 115 yards rushing and a pair of scores and Philadelphia defeated the Saints 24-21 Sunday, snapping New Orleans' nine-game winning streak.

Eagles coach Doug Pederson wouldn't commit to starting Hurts or going back to Carson Wentz next week.

"I thought overall there were good things," Pederson said. "This wasn't about one guy. It was about how resilient this team is. He was part of the win. There were a lot of good performances."

The Eagles (4-8-1) snapped a four-game losing streak and stayed within reach of Washington (6-7) in the woeful NFC East. They ran for a season-high 246 yards.

The Saints (10-3) were 8-0 over the past two seasons without Drew Brees before running into the inspired Eagles. The loss dropped New Orleans to the No. 2 seed in the NFC behind Green Bay, but they already have secured a playoff berth.

"When a team rushes for 250 yards, not a lot of good things can happen," Saints coach Sean Payton said. "But I'll say this. (Hurts)

was impressive just watching him. I thought he played with poise, made some throws. He was smart. He did a good job."

Hurts was 17 of 30 in his first career start. He fumbled late in the fourth quarter. The 2019 Heisman Trophy runner-up began the season as the third-string quarterback. He was elevated to backup in Week 2 and took a few snaps each week until Wentz was benched during a 30-16 loss at Green Bay last Sunday.

"It's a great team win," Hurts said. "Everybody played together as one. We had each other's back."

Taysom Hill was 28 of 38 for 291 yards, two TDs, one interception and was sacked five times by Philly.

Sanders broke loose for an 82-yard TD run in the second quarter, giving the Eagles a 17-0 lead. He stiff-armed former teammate Malcolm Jenkins on his way to the fourth-longest run in franchise history. Sanders has three runs of 70-plus yards since October. He had a 74-yard TD run against Pittsburgh and a 74-yard run against Baltimore.

"We played a whole four quarters," Sanders said. "We looked like a complete team."

The Saints had 98 total yards in the first half before they got going on their first possession of the second half. Alvin Kamara ran in from the 5 to cap a 65-yard drive and cut Philadelphia's lead to 17-7.

The Eagles lost cornerback Darius Slay

and safety Rodney McLeod on the same play before Kamara scored. Both were blitzing on the play.

The Saints took advantage on the next drive when Hill fired a 37-yard TD pass to Emmanuel Sanders, who beat Kevon Seymour, playing his first game for the Eagles.

New Orleans had a chance to take a lead, but Philadelphia's defense came through. On fourth-and-2 from the Eagles 42, Josh Sweat strip-sacked Hill and Javon Hargrave recovered. Philadelphia again kept it on the ground and Sanders ran in from the 1 to make it 24-14.

The Eagles were trying to run out the clock when Hurts fumbled near midfield. Hill connected with Jared Cook on a 20-yard TD pass to get the Saints within 24-21 with 1:29 left.

But Philadelphia recovered the onside kick.

Hurts tossed a 15-yard TD pass to Alshon Jeffery on fourth-and-2 to give the Eagles a 7-0 lead early in the second quarter. Jeffery had two catches in four games this season before hauling in Hurts' back-shoulder throw to give Philadelphia a rare lead.

After Duke Riley intercepted Hill's pass that bounced off Kamara's hands, Jake Elliott kicked a 44-yard field goal for a 10-0 lead. It was only the fourth pick this season for Philadelphia.

Will Lutz missed a 45-yard field goal wide right in the first quarter.

Allen, defense lead Bills past sloppy Steelers

Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — Don't think safety Jordan Poyer and other members of Buffalo's secondary didn't notice Pittsburgh Steelers receiver JuJu Smith-Schuster dancing on the Bills logo at midfield during pregame warmups on Sunday night.

Come the fourth quarter, after Levi Wallace intercepted Ben Roethlisberger to essentially seal Buffalo's 26-15 victory, it was the Bills' turn to break out into a dance along their sideline.

"It was tight energy. The song playing. We felt the momentum of the game swing," Poyer said, before noting a TikTok video of Smith-Schuster posted on social media.

"I ain't going to lie, seeing them dancing on our logo pregame, that turns you up a little," he added. "You come and play with a little extra fire. We were hyped up on the

sideline. We had a big win and we were having fun."

Josh Allen threw two touchdown passes, safety Taron Johnson returned an interception 51 yards for a score, and the team (10-3) inched closer to claiming its first AFC East title since 1995 and third playoff berth in four seasons. Buffalo can clinch both as early as Monday night if Baltimore loses to Cleveland.

Smith-Schuster and the Steelers weren't asked about the dance — something the receiver does before most every game — afterward.

Then again, they have other concerns after dropping consecutive games in six days following a 23-17 loss to Washington, and falling a game behind the AFC-leading Kansas City Chiefs (12-1).

AFC North-leading Pittsburgh (11-2) was

still able to clinch its first playoff berth in three years before kickoff by virtue of the Miami Dolphins' 33-27 loss to Kansas City earlier in the day.

"We've lost two. We're facing some adversity. But we're not hitting the panic button," Roethlisberger said.

"Offensively we're not very good. We're not playing good football and it starts with me," he added. "I think this is a team that has got a lot of resilience."

The Bills have won six of seven and have won at least 10 of their first 13 games of a season for the first time since 1991. That's a considerable switch from a team that had endured a 17-year playoff drought — which stood as longest active streak in North America's four major professional sports — before coach Sean McDermott took over in 2017.