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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Afghanistan reports drop in violence

BY J.P. LAWRENCE
AND PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — There was a “significant” drop in violence in Afghanistan on Saturday, the first day of a weeklong period of reduced violence, the Afghan Defense Ministry said. Several attacks were reported throughout the day but didn’t appear to break the truce.

The seven-day period of reduced violence, which falls short of a complete cease-fire and could eventually lead to a withdrawal of U.S. forces and end America’s longest war, began just after midnight Saturday.

The U.S.-led coalition is focused only on defensive operations, Gen. Scott Miller, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan told reporters in Kabul.

“We remain committed to defend our forces,” Miller said.

Afghan troops also halted operations against insurgents and were told they could only fight in self-defense, Surobi district governor Gawhar Khan Baburi told Stars and Stripes at his office in the district capi-

tal east of Kabul.

“They don’t have any plans to fight the enemy,” Baburi said. “It’s totally peaceful.”

But in Paktia and Uruzgan provinces, Taliban fighters attacked checkpoints, wounding at least two Afghan police officers, the governors of both provinces said.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the group would refrain from attacking provincial capitals and Afghan and U.S. military bases — as per terms of the reduction in violence agreement — but insinuated attacking checkpoints was not off-limits.

“This is not a general ceasefire,” Mujahid said in a statement.

While neither side publicly specified what the period of reduced violence would entail or how it would be monitored before it came into effect, Pentagon officials told reporters earlier in the week that Miller would be responsible for a “continual evaluative process” to determine compliance.

If the truce is successful, it will be followed by the signing of a broader peace deal between the U.S. and the Taliban

on Feb. 29, officials from both sides have said.

The deal would lead to a phased withdrawal of U.S. forces. It would also pave the way for talks among the insurgents, the Afghan government and other Afghan stakeholders, that could lead to a more permanent cease-fire.

Just hours after the week of reduced violence began, the United Nations released data that showed more than 100,000 Afghan civilians had been killed or injured in the war over the past decade. Over 10,000 casualties were recorded last year, the U.N. said.

The prospect of less bloodshed has already brought hope to some local residents affected by the war.

Niamatullah Hamdard, the principal of a Kabul school attacked by the Taliban last July, said even the men who hurt 50 of his students are capable of peace.

“All these fighters who used to carry out these cruel attacks, they were not born that way,” Hamdard said.

“It was their leaders who made them like that.”

Army and Navy search for savings in budget

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The secretaries of the Army and Navy said Friday that they need to make difficult choices to find budget savings or fall short of the competitive force that the military needs for the future.

The services are dealing with growing demands to modernize their equipment, capabilities, and forces at the same time they are seeing budgets stagnate. The Army and Navy are reviewing programs in their budgets to find savings to reinvest in other ways.

“What I’ve told the department is we need to look internally first at ourselves to see where we can find savings within the way we traditionally do things to help fund that, before we can ask for anything more from the taxpayers,” acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly said during a

discussion at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a D.C.-based think tank. Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy and Air Force Secretary Barbara Barrett also spoke about their services.

The Pentagon’s proposed budget for fiscal year 2021 is about \$705.4 billion as the military falls in line with supporting the National Defense Strategy that seeks to prepare the United States for competition with China and Russia. The Pentagon’s budget would allocate \$178 billion for the Army, \$207.1 billion for the Navy and Marine Corps, \$191.8 billion for the Air Force and \$15.4 billion for the Space Force.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper and Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, will defend their budget proposal Wednesday before the House Armed Services Committee. Modly will defend the Navy’s proposed budget before

the committee on Thursday.

The Army has about 40% of its budget slated for modernizing its force, McCarthy said, challenges service leadership to find a balance between investing in new capabilities and divesting from legacy programs.

“The underlying theme here is you got to have the will to look at Congress in the face and tell a member where they make a product in their district, that we don’t need it anymore,” he said. “But here’s the opportunity that’s going to exist for that manufacturer.”

The Navy’s 2021 budget proposal buys fewer ships and puts them behind in attaining the required 355 ships by 2030. Modly said he believes they can still get to that number or higher in 10 years by finding \$40 billion in savings by 2026 as part of their “Stem to Stern” review, which was announced Tuesday.

'Grim milestone' reached in Afghan deaths

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — Over 100,000 civilians have been killed or injured by the war in Afghanistan in the past decade, the United Nations said in a report released Saturday.

The announcement came just hours after the U.S. and Afghan militaries began a weeklong period of reduced violence with the Taliban, which could lead to a peace agreement being signed between the U.S. and the insurgents next weekend and an eventual withdrawal of American forces from the country.

Despite the "grim milestone," the overall number of civilian war casualties documented last year dropped to a six-year low, the U.N. said, adding that the decrease was largely due to fewer attacks by the local Islamic State affiliate.

The number of noncombatants killed or injured by the U.S. and the Taliban both increased last year compared to the year before, as the sides engaged in peace talks, the U.N.'s data showed.

The U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan documented over 3,400 civilians killed and nearly 7,000 injured by the war in 2019, a 5% decrease from the year before.

"Almost no civilian in Afghanistan has escaped being personally affected in some way by the ongoing violence," UNAMA head Tadamichi Yamamoto said in a statement. "It is absolutely imperative for all parties to seize the moment to stop the fighting, as peace is long overdue."

UNAMA attributed most of the civilian casualties caused in 2019 to anti-government forces. Of the nearly 1,700 deaths and nearly 4,800 injuries attributed to these groups, 76% were blamed on the Taliban, which is about a quarter jump from the previous year.

Attacks attributed to Islamic State, the second major anti-government organization in Afghanistan in recent years, dropped by 44% last year compared to the year before, resulting in about 300 civilians killed and over 900 injured, UNAMA said.

Pro-government forces — which include the U.S. military — caused over a quarter of all civilian casualties last year: 1,473

killed and 1,460 injured. The combined total is the highest number attributed to pro-government forces since UNAMA began systematic documentation a decade ago.

UNAMA said International military forces — a term largely synonymous with the U.S. military, which is the only foreign military officially conducting combat operations in Afghanistan — caused nearly 660 civilian deaths and 320 injuries last year, an overall increase of about 20% from the previous year.

These were largely the results of airstrikes, which caused a record number of casualties in 2019, surpassing the previous highest tally recorded the year before, UNAMA said.

The U.S. military routinely disputes UNAMA's quarterly findings, saying the methodology used attributes more casualties to the U.S. than it actually caused. The Afghan government and Kabul also usually dispute the findings.

Midshipman found dead was starter on football team

Staff and wire reports

Naval Academy officials identified Navy football offensive lineman David Forney as the midshipman found dead Thursday night in Bancroft Hall. He was 22 years old.

Forney was the anchor of an offensive line that set a school record and led the nation in rushing, averaging 360.5 yards per game. He was named

First-Team American Athletic Conference and First-Team All-East in the 2019 season.

"Words cannot express our pain and sorrow," said Navy head football coach Ken Niumatalolo in a statement released by Navy Sports. "The Navy Football Brotherhood is not a team, we are a family. We are devastated to have lost one of our brothers. We all loved —

and will always love — David. We pray for strength during this most difficult time."

A political science major, Forney was set to graduate from the Academy in May and had been assigned to commission as a cryptologic warfare officer, according to a statement from the Naval Academy.

Forney's death comes one week after Midshipman Duke

Carrillo was laid to rest at the U.S. Naval Academy. His is the second death at the Naval Academy this year, and the 11th midshipman death since 2012.

Forney, a native of Walkersville, Md., and a 2015 graduate of Georgetown Prep, is survived by his parents, younger brothers, and sister. Service arrangements are pending, ac-

Mother sues VA for negligence in son's suicide

BY NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The mother of a Navy veteran who killed himself in the parking lot of a Department of Veterans Affairs hospital last year filed a wrongful death lawsuit this week, accusing the VA of negli-

gence in her son's death.

Machelle Wilson, of Forysth, Ga., is seeking \$8.25 million from the VA. Her claim states that a VA doctor abruptly discontinued her son's opioid prescription, which he used to manage chronic hip and back pain. The lack of medication caused him to suffer pain and

withdrawal symptoms and pushed him into crisis, the claim says.

Gary Pressley, 28, a former aviation ordnanceman in the Navy, shot himself in the chest April 5 in the parking lot of the Carl Vinson VA Medical Center in Dublin, Ga. He had just left the hospital's pharmacy, where

he tried in vain to have his pain medication refilled.

"Nobody listened to him," Wilson said. "The signs were all there." In response to questions about Wilson's lawsuit, VA Press Secretary Christina Mandreucci said Friday that the VA does not comment on pending litigation.

Officials say Russians trying to aid Bernie Sanders' candidacy

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders said Friday he was briefed by U.S. officials “about a month ago” that Russia has been trying to help his campaign as part of Moscow’s efforts to interfere in the 2020 presidential election.

“It was not clear what role they were going to play,” Sanders said during a campaign stop in California. “We were told that Russia, maybe other countries, are going to get involved in this campaign.”

The Vermont senator continued: “Here’s the message to Russia: Stay out of American elections.”

Sanders’ response was a sharp contrast from that of President Donald Trump, who has pushed back at the assessment of U.S. intelligence agencies that Russia has interfered in elections on his behalf. Minutes before Sanders condemned Russian interference, Trump dismissed reports that Russian President Vladimir Putin was trying to help him as well as “a rumor” started by

Democrats.

Federal investigators in 2018 charged 13 Russians in a covert social media campaign that prosecutors said was aimed at dividing public opinion on hot-button social issues as well as propping up Sanders and Republican candidate Trump in the 2016 election while also denigrating Hillary Clinton, the eventual Democratic nominee.

Organizers of that Russian effort circulated an outline of themes for future social media content, with instructions to “use any opportunity to criticize Hillary and the rest (except Sanders and Trump — we support them),” according to the indictment.

Sanders told reporters he had seen some of Russia’s “tweets and stuff,” which he said were aimed at sowing divisions.

“They try to divide us up,” Sanders said of the Russians. “That is the ugliest thing they’re doing. They’re trying to cause chaos, they’re trying to cause hatred in America. It’s an ugly business and all of us have got to say, sorry, you’re not going to do this in this election.”

Bloomberg: 3 women to be freed from NDAs

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Mike Bloomberg said Friday he’d free three women from confidentiality agreements that bar them from speaking publicly about sexual harassment or discrimination suits filed against him over the last three decades.

The billionaire former mayor of New York also said his company, Bloomberg LP, will no longer use such agreements “to resolve claims of sexual harassment or misconduct going forward.”

His remarks come after days of intense scrutiny over the treatment of women at the company he’s led for three decades, and amid pressure from Democratic presidential rival Elizabeth Warren to allow the women to share their claims publicly. Warren hammered Bloomberg over the issue in the recent debate, his first time facing his rivals. The announcement Friday highlights his efforts to remove a vulnerability ahead of the next debate, on Tuesday in South Carolina, and refocus his campaign ahead of March 3, known as Super Tuesday, when he will be on the ballot for the first time.

Bloomberg didn’t automatically revoke the agreements, but told the women to contact the company if they would like to be released.

The three agreements he’s willing to open up relate specifically to comments he’s alleged to have made.

His company reportedly faced nearly 40 lawsuits involving 65 plaintiffs between 1996 and 2016, though it’s unclear how many relate to sexual harassment or discrimination.

Bloomberg said in a statement he’d done “a lot of reflecting on this issue over the past few days.”

President chides Dems in Nevada rally

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — President Donald Trump rallied supporters in the battleground state of Nevada on the eve of the state’s caucuses and predicted chaos once again for Democrats for their management of the voting process,

Looking to exploit Democratic divisions as he focuses on his reelection fight, Trump pointed to Iowa, where a tally of the caucus votes ended in chaos earlier this month.

“I hear their computers are all messed up just like in Iowa,” Trump said of Nevada’s Democrats. “They can’t count votes.”

Nevada scrapped its Republican caucuses last year, as is common when an incumbent is in the White House. It allows Trump to consolidate his support as the Democratic field remains bitterly divided. The state GOP will formally bind its delegates to Trump on Saturday.

Trump was closing out a four-day, four-state political tour through the West that saw him hold three campaign rallies and a pair of high-dollar fundraisers and promote policies that benefited many of his supporters.

Speaking to thousands of fans Friday at the Las Vegas Convention Center, Trump also rejected a fresh intelligence community assessment that Russia was seeking to interfere in the 2020 race just as it did in 2016 on Trump’s behalf.

“Here we go again,” Trump said, as the crowd booed. “Aren’t people bored?”

The president speculated that Russian President Vladimir Putin would prefer Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders as president. “Wouldn’t he rather have say, Bernie, who honeymooned in Moscow?” Trump said.

Sanders on Friday condemned Russian efforts to interfere in the 2020 election after The Washington Post reported

U.S. officials have told him that Russia was trying to help his campaign. The statement did not confirm the report.

Feeling his reelection odds rising after his acquittal in the Senate impeachment trial and his campaign’s record fundraising, Trump seized on the deep divisions and personal tiffs on display in this week’s Democratic debate.

Trump was still regaling his audiences with his critical assessments of the Democratic debate field, including former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg, whom he’s branded “mini Mike.”

“We are going to win Nevada in a big, beautiful landslide,” Trump predicted.

Trump called up to the stage members of the 1980 U.S. Olympic men’s hockey team that defeated the Soviet Union’s team in Lake Placid 40 years ago.

Most were wearing Trump’s signature red campaign hats.

Virus spreads in S. Korea city as crowds screened

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea on Saturday reported an eight-fold jump in viral infections in four days to 433, most of them linked to a church and a hospital in and around the country's fourth-largest city, where health workers scrambled to screen thousands of worshippers.

The country also reported its third death of a coronavirus patient, a man in his 40s who was found dead at home and posthumously tested positive.

There's concern that South Korea's death toll could grow. Virus patients with signs of pneumonia or other serious conditions at the Cheongdo hospital were transferred to other facilities, 17 of them in critical condition, Vice Health Minister Kim Gang-lip told reporters.

In some positive news, China said Saturday that the daily count of new virus cases there fell significantly to 397, though another 109 people died of COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus.

Of the 229 new cases in South Korea, 200 are from Daegu and

nearby areas.

Nationwide, the numbers told of a ballooning problem. There were 20 new cases reported Wednesday, 53 on Thursday and 100 on Friday.

Around 230 of those have been directly linked to a single house of worship, a Daegu branch of the Shincheonji Church of Jesus, where a woman in her 60s attended two services before testing positive for the virus.

All 74 sites operated by the Shincheonji Church have been closed and worshippers have been told to instead watch services online.

The first three cases in the country's 600,000-member military also sprung up on separate bases Friday, bringing added concern. A U.S. Army garrison in Daegu restricted access and imposed self-quarantine for American troops.

"There remain zero confirmed cases of USFK personnel with COVID-19 despite the rise in confirmed South Korean cases," U.S. Forces Korea said in a statement.

Italian towns lock down after two virus deaths

Associated Press

CODOGNO, Italy — A dozen northern Italian towns were on effective lockdown Saturday after the new virus linked to China claimed two lives in Italy and sickened an increasing number of people who had no direct links to the origin of the virus.

The secondary contagions prompted local authorities in towns in Lombardy and Veneto to order schools, businesses and restaurants closed, and to cancel sporting events and Masses. The mayor of Milan, the business capital of Italy, shuttered public offices.

Hundreds of people who came into contact with the more than 40 people confirmed infected in Italy were in isolation pending test results, and civil protection crews set up a tent camp outside a closed hospital in Veneto to screen medical staff for the virus.

In hard-hit Codogno, where the first patient of the northern cluster was in critical condition, main street was practically a ghost town Saturday, with supermarkets, restaurants and businesses closed. The few people out on the streets were wearing coveted face masks, which were nearly impossible to find in sold-out pharmacies.

The regional president of Lombardy, Attilio Fontana, said there were 32 confirmed cases in the region, where 10 towns are under orders to shutter non-essential activities and services.

Seven cases were reported in the Veneto region, including that of a 78-year-old man who died late Friday, said the Veneto regional president, Luca Zaia. Two of those infected were related to the man who died.

Zaia said Saturday that the contagion showed that the virus is transmitted like any other flu and that trying to pinpoint a single source of infection or one with direct links to China is no longer effective.

"You can get it from anyone," he told reporters. "We can expect to have cases of patients who had no contact" with suspected carriers. While the virus isn't particularly lethal, it can be for the elderly or people with existing conditions, he said.

An initial ordinance penned by the health minister imposed an effective lockdown on 10 Lombardy towns around Lodi, southeast of Milan, after Lombardy reported a quadrupling of cases Friday. But individual cities outside that core cordon area, such as Cremona, issued their own restrictions canceling school after confirming their own cases.

The numbers of infected were in constant flux, but by Saturday had topped 40 nationwide.

Separately Saturday, 19 Italians who spent more than two weeks quarantined on a virus-stricken cruise liner in Japan landed at Rome's military Pratica di Mare airport.

Weinstein jury split on most serious counts

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The jury in Harvey Weinstein's rape trial indicated Friday that it is deadlocked on the most serious charges against the once-powerful Hollywood mogul, but the judge told the panel it must keep working.

In a note to the judge late in the fourth day of deliberations, jurors asked if it was permissible for them to be hung on

one or both counts of predatory sexual assault while reaching a unanimous verdict on the other charges.

Weinstein's lawyers said they would accept a partial verdict, but prosecutors said no and Judge James Burke refused to allow it. He sent jurors back to deliberate for a few more minutes before letting them go home for the weekend.

"It is not uncommon for a jury to have difficulty initially

in reaching a unanimous verdict, and it is not uncommon for a jury to believe that they will never be able to reach a unanimous verdict," Burke said, reading instructions to the jurors. "But after further deliberations, most jurors are able to reach a unanimous verdict."

Law professor Cheryl Bader said the jurors' note suggests the jury is split on a key aspect of both predatory sexual assault counts — "Sopranos" actress

Annabella Sciorra's allegations that Weinstein attacked her in the mid-1990s — and that it is in unanimous agreement on the allegations by two other women — an aspiring actress who says he raped her in March 2013 and a former film and TV production assistant, Mimi Haley, who says he forcibly performed oral sex on her in March 2006.

Weinstein has maintained any sexual encounters were consensual.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Child given doll with noose at Mardi Gras

MS BILOXI — A 12-year-old-girl received a black doll with beads forming a noose around its neck at a Mississippi Gulf Coast Mardi Gras parade, and officials said that police were investigating the incident as a hate crime.

Nicole Fairconecture of Pass Christian said she and her family were attending the Krewe of Nereids parade when a man on one of the floats called her daughter to get a Mardi Gras throw.

"She grabbed the item and was coming back and he called her back," Fairconecture told The Sun Herald newspaper. "When she turned around, he said, 'That's you.'"

The doll was black and "was dressed like a slave," Fairconecture said.

Walmart workers find dead body in bathroom

GA FORSYTH — A dead body was found inside the bathroom of a Walmart store in Georgia, and police were trying to determine what happened.

Walmart employees made the grisly discovery in the morning, according to news outlets, which said investigators believe the body could have been in the store's bathroom all night.

Maj. Alexander Daniels with the Forsyth Police Department said the person isn't a Walmart employee, and officials don't know if a crime was involved.

Alienstock fest looks to make another landing

NV LAS VEGAS — The Alienstock festival could attract thousands of extraterrestrial fans to Nevada

for a second consecutive year if county commissioners grant permission.

The owners of restaurant and motel Little A'Le'Inn in Rachel announced plans to host Alienstock 2020 for three days beginning Sept. 10, The Las Vegas Review-Journal reported.

Last year's event was conceived after a viral Facebook meme urged people to storm the gate of the secretive Air Force base commonly known as Area 51, which has been rumored for years to house extraterrestrial technology.

The prospective gatecrashers were urged to head to the site to "see them aliens."

Yale students start drone delivery service

CT NEW HAVEN — A group of students at Yale University has set up a drone delivery service on campus.

Kiki Air promises to deliver candy, snacks and other small items to students who place orders through an app.

The service is being tested using a small group of student customers before being launched campus-wide.

Developers told the Yale Daily News that users order items from a menu on their phones and receive them at one of several drop locations around campus in a padded envelope attached to a drone.

Kiki Air's founder, Yale senior Jason Lu, said his company grew from a class project and has won a \$150,000 grant from Y Combinator, a California-based investor in startups.

Man faces prison for stolen TVs scam

MD GREENBELT — Federal prosecutors in Maryland recommended a

prison sentence of more than five years for a man who pleaded guilty to conspiring to obtain hundreds of stolen televisions worth more than \$1 million.

Saul Eady, who pleaded guilty to conspiring to commit mail and wire fraud, was one of eight defendants charged in a September 2018 indictment. He is set to be the first defendant sentenced in the case.

Prosecutors said Eady was a member of the West Coast operation of an international fraud scheme that posed as U.S. Navy contracting agents to convince three U.S. companies to ship them electronics equipment without payments upfront.

Student robotics team recovers stolen trailer

MN ST. PAUL — A trailer that contained equipment for a Twin Cities high school robotics team was recovered after it was stolen.

The trailer belongs to the St. Paul Highland Park team. Dubbed the Automotons, they spent the first six weeks of the new year building a robot from scratch. The robot was not in the trailer when it was stolen.

Senior Greta Shore said she was "completely baffled" when she heard about it. As the team's business captain, she started an online campaign to buy replacement batteries, tools and parts.

The campaign raised \$2,500 in "a matter of hours," said Marta Shore, Greta's mother and business mentor for the team.

Cannabis oil laboratory explodes in apartment

CA ORCUTT — One person suffered serious injuries after a lab extracting cannabis oil that was inside an apartment blew up, authorities said.

A person who lived in the

apartment was taken for medical treatment, the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department said in a news release.

Sheriff's deputies found "articles that are associated with a butane honey oil lab and detectives from the Cannabis Compliance Team (CCT) responded to assist with the investigation," according to the department.

As a result of the investigation, Albert Alvarado, 37, of Santa Maria was arrested on multiple charges.

Man shot at troopers and K-9 with pellet gun

DE WILMINGTON — A man accused of shooting a pellet gun at Delaware State Police troopers and a police dog was arrested on weapons and assault charges.

Jason W. Tatom, 31, of Wilmington shot at troopers who approached him after they responded to a report that he had taunted somebody with a weapon at a bar in Wilmington, police said.

Tatom hit two troopers and tried to disarm them, then shot and hit the police dog with a pellet gun after a chase, police said.

Drunk driver charged for crashing into home

MA FALMOUTH — A man accused of driving drunk barreled his pickup into a house in Falmouth, police said.

The 36-year-old man was speeding and under the influence of alcohol when he crashed into the front right corner of the home, Falmouth officials said.

Neither the driver nor a person who was in the house at the time were injured. No one else was in the truck.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

Spring training vital to several veterans

Associated Press

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — Giancarlo Stanton's intimidating presence was missing from the middle of the Yankees' lineup for a big chunk of 2019 because of an injury-filled season.

As he tries to bounce back, the New York slugger will have his spring at-bats analyzed more than most.

Spring training game action began in Arizona on Friday with a meeting between the Texas Rangers and Kansas City Royals while the other 28 teams played their first exhibition games in the Grapefruit and Cactus Leagues on Saturday.

The games — especially early in the spring — are often filled with young prospects and others who are longshots to make opening day rosters. Most veterans will be eased into games and their stats won't be particularly important as they tinker with batting stances, pitch repertoires and gradually build toward the first regular-season games on March 26.

For others, the exhibition games are a little more important. Stanton is one of those exceptions.

The 6-foot-6, 245-pounder played in just 18 games last season, batting .288 with three homers in 59 at-bats. He hit 38 homers in his first year with the Yankees in 2018 and a career-high 59 in 2017 with the Miami Marlins. In spring training, it will be interesting to see how much time he spends in the outfield and how much time he's the designated hitter.

"No limitations," Stanton said on Wednesday in Florida. "Just be smart with the workload getting back into it."

A few other veterans who will be watched closely over the next month:

Blake Treinen RHP, Dodgers

Treinen, 31, was an All-Star and one of the game's dominant relievers in 2018 with the Oakland A's, when he had a 9-2 record and 0.78 ERA in 80¹/₃ innings. He regressed quite a bit last season with a 4.91 ERA and a lower strikeout rate.

The Dodgers are betting he can regain some of that '18 magic after signing him to a \$10 million, one-year deal during the offseason.

Steven Souza Jr. OF, Cubs

Souza was one of the game's promising young power hitters in 2017 after he hit 30 homers with the Tampa Bay Rays. But after two straight injury-plagued seasons with the Diamondbacks, he was non-tendered during the offseason and signed to a one-year deal by the Chicago Cubs.

He missed the entire 2019 season after tearing multiple ligaments in his left knee during spring training. If he's healthy, the 30-year-old could provide the Cubs with a capable right-handed bat.

Mike Foltynewicz RHP, Braves

The 28-year-old was an All-Star in 2018 but struggled through 2019, even getting sent down to the minors midway through the season. He returned in August and pitched a little better, but his season ended on an extremely sour note after he gave up seven runs in just a third of an inning in an NLDS Game 5 loss to the Cardinals that eliminated the

Braves from the playoffs.

Chris Sale LHP, Red Sox

The seven-time All-Star has been one of the game's best pitchers for the better part of a decade, but 2019 was a rough year and he finished with a 6-11 record and career-high 4.40 ERA. He was shut down in mid-August with a sore elbow.

The Red Sox hope he can bounce back and once again be their ace, but the spring hasn't started well after Sale reported to camp a few days late because of pneumonia-induced weakness.

Carlos Martinez RHP, Cardinals

Martinez was an All-Star starting pitcher in 2015 and 2017 but weakness in his throwing shoulder led to a transition to the bullpen last season. The right-hander was good as the closer, saving 24 games, but the Cardinals would like him back in the rotation if his shoulder can handle the workload.

Reddick says Astros players receiving death threats

Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — On the day Houston outfielder Josh Reddick said he and other players have received death threats in the wake of the team's sign-stealing scandal, union head Tony Clark said safety had become an issue for some of his members.

"There are undoubtedly concerns out there based on some of the commentary that ... there's a heightened sense of concern to make sure that themselves and their families are protected," Clark said Friday after speaking with the Astros. "There's no doubt making sure that our players and their families are able to go to and from the ballpark and perform safely ... is a

huge piece of the puzzle."

Clark spoke before Reddick told reporters that he received death threats on social media and that people have commented on pictures of his infant twins, saying they hope they get cancer. He said teammates have also received threatening messages and he thinks it will be "pretty scary" for his wife and children to join him on the road this season since club hotels become known.

Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred concluded last month that the Astros violated rules by using a television camera to steal catchers' signs during their run to the 2017 World Series title and again in the 2018 season. While manager AJ Hinch and general

manager Jeff Luhnow were suspended for one season and then fired by the team, players were not disciplined.

Some players on other teams have said and implied that they would intentionally throw at the Astros this season. Atlanta's Nick Markakis said Tuesday that "every single guy over there needs a beating."

Clark said the union has had conversations with MLB about ensuring the safety of the players and their families and that comments are "hard to ignore." Still, he said the union's job was to defend its members.

"I will never apologize for protecting player rights," he said.

Clark, who visits each team

during spring training, said sign stealing was just a part of changes brought about by technology in recent years.

"It's manifesting itself in how player service time is being manipulated, it's manifesting itself in a way that we're seeing abuses of the injured list, it's manifesting itself in ways that's directly affecting the type of game that's being played on the field," he said. "So I know a lot of the headline has said sign-stealing, but the truth is this conversation about technology is much larger than that."

Clark thinks allowing technology to impact every facet of the game has become "very problematic."

NHL roundup

Blues chase Bishop, cruise past Stars

Associated Press

DALLAS — David Perron scored his team-leading 24th goal and the St. Louis Blues chased Dallas goalie Ben Bishop early while extending their Western Conference lead with a dominant 5-1 victory over the Stars on Friday night.

Jake Allen stopped 18 shots in the Blues' third straight win since a 0-3-2 stretch that included an overtime loss at home to the Stars. Colton Parayko had a goal and two assists.

St. Louis is four points ahead of Dallas with 20 games to go in a tight race among the top three teams in the West.

Colorado moved into second in the Central Division, a point ahead of the Stars, with a 1-0 win at Anaheim. Dallas has 21 games remaining, and the Avalanche have 22.

Bishop, a 2019 Vezina Trophy finalist, was pulled after

Jaden Schwartz beat him from the right circle for a 4-0 lead just 4:45 into the second period. Bishop made nine stops on 13 shots.

Bruins 4, Flames 3: Patrice Bergeron scored two more goals, and visiting Boston earned its fifth consecutive win.

Bergeron has scored 21 times in 32 games since returning from a lower-body injury on Dec. 9, an injury that sidelined him for seven games.

Brad Marchand and Charlie Coyle also scored for Boston (39-11-12), which opened a five-point lead on Tampa Bay atop the NHL's overall standings.

The Bruins, who have won 11 of 12 overall, also made a trade, acquiring forward Ondrej Kase from Anaheim.

Mikael Backlund had two goals and Johnny Gaudreau also scored for Calgary (31-

25-6), which is fighting for a wild card in the Western Conference.

Avalanche 1, Ducks 0: Pavel Francouz made 26 saves in his first NHL shutout, leading Colorado to its fifth straight road win.

Colorado's victory — its 10th in its last 14 games — and Dallas' loss to St. Louis moved the Avalanche into second place in the Central Division. They have 77 points and trail the Blues by three points.

Rangers 5, Hurricanes 2: Mika Zibanejad had a goal and two assists, powering visiting New York to the victory.

Artemi Panarin and Ryan Strome each had a goal and an assist for New York, which won for the eighth time in 11 games. Jesper Fast and Brady Skjei also scored, and Igor Shesterkin made 27 saves.

Wild 5, Oilers 3: Jared Spur-

geon scored three goals, sending Minnesota to the road win.

Kevin Fiala and Carson Soucy also scored for the Wild, who have won two straight.

Ryan Nugent-Hopkins had two goals and an assist for the Oilers, who have lost two in a row. Leon Draisaitl also scored.

Islanders 4, Red Wings 1: Jordan Eberle scored three times, and host New York stopped a four-game skid.

It was Eberle's third career hat trick.

Anthony Mantha scored for Detroit, which became the first team this season to be eliminated from playoff contention.

Blackhawks 2, Predators 1 (OT): Alex DeBrincat scored in the third period and overtime to rally host Chicago to the victory.

Corey Crawford had 42 saves for the Blackhawks, who had dropped seven of eight.

Bruins trade draft pick, Backes to Ducks for Kase

Associated Press

David Backes no longer has to worry whether he'll get another shot at playing in the NHL.

The 35-year-old forward was freed from what Backes referred to as "purgatory" on Friday, when the Boston Bruins traded him to the Anaheim Ducks. In freeing up most of Backes' significant salary-cap hit, Boston also gave up a first-round draft pick and defensive prospect Axel Andersson to acquire forward Ondrej Kase.

The deal was completed three days before the NHL's trade deadline and marked the end of a monthlong stretch of uncertainty for Backes, which began with him declining to report to AHL Providence after being waived by the Bruins.

"It's been a roller coaster of, 'Am I just going to be dying a slow death here or is this something where I'm going to get

another opportunity,'" Backes said during a conference call. "I was praying, actually praying, to get an opportunity where I could reassert myself and show that I still belong in the NHL."

Backes hasn't played since logging 8½ minutes of ice time in Boston's 5-4 win over Winnipeg on Jan. 9. He's been off the ice for three weeks as part of an agreement he and Bruins reached to allow Backes to not have to report to the minors.

He expects it will take a week to get back into playing shape, and added: "I'm hoping to expedite that with that new energy I've got, the fire that I feel that's lit throughout my whole being."

A combination of injuries and being a healthy scratch led to Backes playing in just 16 games this season, scoring one goal and adding two assists.

That's a considerable drop for a player who's topped 20 goals in six of his previous 13 seasons, the first 10 with St. Louis.

Backes is in the fourth year of a five-year, \$30 million deal he signed with Boston in free agency. Boston also agreed to pick up 25% of the contract as part of the trade.

In Kase, the league-leading Bruins added a forward who filled various top- and secondary line roles during his first four seasons in Anaheim.

"Ondrej is a young, solid player, been a significant producer while 5-on-5, has shown versatility to be able to adapt his game and complement different lines," Bruins general manager Don Sweeney said.

Kase has missed the past five games with flu-like symptoms and won't join the Bruins until they return home after completing a four-game road swing

at Calgary on Friday, and Vancouver on Saturday.

Jets acquire Eakin

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — Cody Eakin is going home to Winnipeg.

The Jets acquired the Winnipeg-born center from the Vegas Golden Knights on Friday for a conditional fourth-round pick in 2021.

If Winnipeg qualifies for the playoffs this year or re-sign Eakin to a new contract by July 5, the Jets will instead transfer their 2021 third-round pick to the Golden Knights. Eakin is eligible to become an unrestricted free agent this summer.

The 28-year-old Eakin had four goals and six assists in 41 games with Vegas this season. He has 102 goals and 130 assists in 578 career NHL games with Washington, Dallas and Vegas.

Player reps don't vote on NFL labor deal

Associated Press

NEW YORK — NFL owners' eagerness to approve negotiated terms of a new labor agreement apparently is not matched by the players.

They want more talks.

Union player representatives decided Friday to not vote on the new labor deal approved by team owners Thursday. The NFL Players Association will meet with league negotiators at the scouting combine in Indianapolis on Tuesday.

Earlier Friday, the union's executive committee voted 6-5 to recommend rejecting the terms of the new collective bargaining agreement. But the player reps and the full union membership could vote next week.

Objections to an expanded regular season are considered the main stumbling block to

player approval.

"Today the NFLPA Board of Players Representatives did not take a vote on the principal terms of a proposed new collective bargaining agreement," the union said in a statement. "Our player leadership looks forward to meeting with NFL management again next week before the board takes a vote shortly after."

If the NFLPA does not approve the terms, the current CBA that expires in March 2021 would remain in effect and further talks would be required.

The owners' proposal features a 17-game season, shorter preseason, larger rosters and limits on the number of international games.

The union's executive committee includes NFLPA President Eric Winston, former

Giants linebacker Mark Herzlich and former Bills linebacker Lorenzo Alexander, all retired; Giants long snapper Zak DeOssie; 49ers cornerback Richard Sherman; Patriots tight end Benjamin Watson; Colts kicker Adam Vinatieri; Chargers tackle Russell Okung; Saints punter Thomas Morstead; Buccaneers linebacker Sam Acho; and Giants safety Mike Thomas.

Several people familiar with the terms say they feature increases in minimum salaries, changes in practice squad makeup and eligibility, and reduced offseason and preseason requirements as pivotal parts of the deal.

Those people spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because specific details of the provisions in the agreement that would run

through 2030 are not being made public.

An expansion of the playoffs to seven teams in each conference, with only the top seed in the AFC and NFC getting a wild-card bye, can be instituted by the league without any negotiations — as long as the postseason remains in a four-week format. Several owners are strongly in favor of doing so regardless of the CBA status.

One of the wild-card weekend games might wind up as a Monday night contest.

The 17-game schedule actually is a compromise offer for some owners who wanted 18 games. Adding the one regular-season game would seem to indicate each of those games would be at a neutral site.

But the league has promised the union to cap the number of international games.

NBA roundup

James scores 32 points as Lakers win fourth straight

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — LeBron James scored 32 points, Anthony Davis recovered from an early injury scare to get 28 points and 13 rebounds, and the Los Angeles Lakers returned from the All-Star break with a 117-105 victory over the Memphis Grizzlies on Friday night.

Avery Bradley added 14 points for the Western Conference-leading Lakers, who finished strong after blowing most of their 25-point lead accumulated in a superb first half. Davis had 14 points and seven rebounds in the fourth quarter as Los Angeles improved to 42-12 with its fourth straight win since Feb. 6.

Josh Jackson scored a season-high 20 points for the Grizzlies, who have lost back-to-back games in California after heading into the All-Star break with eight wins in 10. Ja Morant added 17 points as Memphis dropped to 0-2 on its four-game West Coast trip,

which matches its longest road stretch of the season.

Mavericks 122, Magic 106: Luka Dončić had 33 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists, leading visiting Dallas to the victory.

Maxi Kleber added a career-high 26 points to help the Mavericks improve to 19-8 on the road.

Pelicans 128, Trail Blazers 115: Zion Williamson had 25 points for his seventh straight game with at least 20 points, and visiting New Orleans beat short-handed Portland.

The Blazers were without Damian Lillard, who is expected to miss three or more games because of a groin injury.

Raptors 118, Suns 101: Pascal Siakam had 37 points and 12 rebounds and Toronto beat visiting Phoenix for its 16th victory in 17 games.

After Toronto's franchise-record 15-game winning streak ended with a loss at Brooklyn in the final game before the

All-Star break, the Raptors bounced back by starting the second half with their eighth consecutive home victory.

Celtics 127, Timberwolves 117: Gordon Hayward scored 29 points, Daniel Theis had career highs with 25 points and 16 rebounds and Boston held off host Minnesota.

Jalen Brown scored 25 points and Jayson Tatum had 28 points and 11 rebounds as fellow All-Star Kemba Walker sat out with a minor knee injury. Marcus Smart had 10 points and a season-high 10 assists as the primary point guard in Walker's place, helping the Celtics win for the ninth time in last 10 games.

Spurs 113, Jazz 104: Dejounte Murray had 23 points and seven rebounds in visiting San Antonio's victory over Utah.

DeMar DeRozan added 18 points and seven assists for the Spurs.

Cavaliers 113, Wizards

108: Collin Sexton scored 14 of his 25 points in the fourth quarter and Cleveland rallied to win in its first game under interim coach J.B. Bickerstaff, beating host Washington.

The Cavaliers won back-to-back games for the first time since Jan. 9-11. After those wins, they lost 13 of 15 heading into the All-Star break, resulting in first-year head coach John Beilein's resignation.

Thunder 112, Nuggets 101: Chris Paul scored 29 points, Steven Adams had 19 points and 17 rebounds and Oklahoma City beat visiting Denver.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander added 11 points, nine rebounds and nine assists for the Thunder. They have won 11 of their past 14 games.

Pacers 106, Knicks 98: T.J. Warren had 27 points and eight rebounds, leading Indiana past host New York.

Domantas Sabonis added 24 points and 13 rebounds for the Pacers.