

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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US exploring new bases in Saudi Arabia

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — The U.S. military is exploring the possibility of using a Red Sea port in Saudi Arabia and an additional two airfields in the kingdom amid heightened tensions with Iran, the military said Tuesday.

While describing the work as “contingency” planning, the U.S. military said it already has tested unloading and shipping cargo overland from Saudi Arabia’s port at Yanbu, a crucial terminal for oil pipelines in the kingdom.

Using Yanbu, as well as air bases at Tabuk and Taif along the Red Sea, would give the American military more options along a crucial waterway that has come under increased attack from suspected mine and drone boat attacks by Yemen’s Iranian-backed Houthi rebels.

However, the announcement comes as Saudi-American relations remain strained by the 2018 killing of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi and the kingdom’s ongoing war in Yemen in the first days of President Joe Biden’s administration. Deploying — even temporarily — American troops to

bases in the kingdom, which is home to the Muslim holy city of Mecca, could reignite anger among extremists.

U.S. Navy Capt. Bill Urban, a spokesman for U.S. Central Command, said the evaluation of the sites had been going on for over a year, sparked by the September 2019 drone-and-missile attack on the heart of the Saudi oil industry.

Saudi Arabia and the U.S. have blamed that attack, which temporarily halved Saudi oil production and saw a spike in oil prices, on Iran. Tehran has denied being involved and the Houthis claimed the assault, though the drones involved appear to be Iranian-made.

“These are prudent military planning measures that allow for temporary or conditional access of facilities in the event of a contingency, and are not provocative in any way, nor are they an expansion of the U.S. footprint in the region, in general, or in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in particular,” Urban wrote.

U.S. Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie, the head of CENTCOM, visited Yanbu on Monday. Defense One and The Wall Street Journal, which traveled with McKenzie to Yanbu,

first reported on the American planning. Saudi officials did not respond to a request for comment Tuesday.

The Gulf Arab states are home to a vast array of American military bases, the legacy of the 1991 Gulf War that saw U.S.-allied forces expel Iraq from Kuwait, and the later 2001 invasion of Afghanistan and 2003 invasion of Iraq. America pulled its forces out of Saudi Arabia after the 9/11 attacks. Osama bin Laden had cited their deployment in his attacks targeting the U.S.

Already, CENTCOM has a forward headquarters in Qatar. The U.S. Navy’s 5th Fleet operates from the island kingdom of Bahrain off Saudi Arabia’s coast. Kuwait hosts the U.S. Army Central’s forward headquarters, while the United Arab Emirates hosts American aviators and sailors.

Those locations also don’t include the American troop presence in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. Former President Donald Trump also deployed the first troops into Saudi Arabia since 9/11 over concerns about Iran. Some 2,500 American troops now man fighter jets and Patriot missile batteries at Prince Sultan Air Base southeast of Riyadh.

Biden boosts his goal for virus vaccinations

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden appeared to boost his goal for coronavirus vaccinations in his first 100 days in office, suggesting the nation could soon be injecting 1.5 million shots on an average per day.

Biden signaled on Monday his increasing bullishness on the pace of vaccinations after signing an executive order to boost government purchases from U.S. manufacturers. It was among a flurry of moves by Biden during his first full week to show he’s taking swift action to heal an ailing economy as talks with Congress over a \$1.9 trillion relief package showed few signs of progress.

Biden reiterated that he believes the country is in a precarious spot and that relief is urgently needed, even as he dismissed the possibility of embracing a scaled-down bill to secure passage faster. Among

the features of the stimulus plan are a national vaccination program, aid to reopen schools, direct payments of \$1,400 to individuals and financial relief for state and local governments.

Biden’s new vaccination target comes after he and his aides faced criticism for the 100 million goal in his first 100 days in office. The U.S. has exceeded a pace of 1 million doses per day over the last week.

As of Sunday, the federal government had distributed 41.4 million vaccine doses to states and other jurisdictions. Of that, 21.8 million doses had been administered, or about 53%. About 3.2 million people had received their full two-dose vaccination, a little less than 1% of the population. That’s according to statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Already, more than 420,000 people have died from the coronavirus in the United States.

Biden’s team held a call Sunday to outline the stimulus plan with at least a dozen senators, while the president also privately talked with lawmakers.

One key Republican, Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, said after Sunday’s call that “it seems premature to be considering a package of this size and scope.” Collins described the additional funding for vaccinations as useful while cautioning that any economic aid should be more targeted.

Monday’s order was aimed at increasing factory jobs, which have slumped by 540,000 since the pandemic began last year.

Biden’s order would modify the rules for the Buy American program, making it harder for contractors to qualify for a waiver and sell foreign-made goods to federal agencies. It also changes rules so that more of a manufactured good’s components must originate from U.S. factories.

Navy Band's sea-shanty: 'Never Ever'?

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Navy Band jumped into the sea-shanty craze Monday by releasing a whaling version of a Taylor Swift pop song — an interpretation quickly met by mixed reviews online.

In a roughly two-minute video posted to the band's social media accounts, five uniformed sailors sing "We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together," accompanied by only a single drum and violin. It was approaching 30,000 views on Twitter on Monday evening.

The song was a hit for Swift

in 2012, and in it she recollects with regret her lapses in judgment in returning to a relationship she knows has no chance of working.

In earnest, five-part harmony, the Navy Band members croon lyrics such as, "I'm really gonna miss you picking fights and me falling for it, screaming that I'm right."

The sea shanty is a song style first popular among sailors during the pre-steam era of whaling. In recent weeks, sea shanties have become all the rage on the video-sharing network TikTok.

The judgment of some Twit-

ter users on the merits of the Navy Band's foray into Swif-tian sea shanties was harsh.

"There will be plenty of time for work songs in Leavenworth when you're all brought to justice for making this," said one commenter.

Another said simply, "superbly awful."

Others loved it.

"I loathe sea shanties but I'm glad the United States Navy is dragging this genre into the 21st Century!" wrote a commenter with the Twitter handle @billgau. "This is the kind of dirge I can get behind!"

Another of the song's de-

fenders wrote, "Don't listen to the haters. This was superb."

Taking note of the "strong opinions" generated by the song, Rear Adm. Charlie Brown, the Navy's chief of information, on Monday weighed in with his own assessment of the band's effort.

"While this shanty parody may not be your jam, I'm thankful for the talent, creativity & sense of humor of our @usnavyband," he wrote.

He posted a link to the band's recordings of more traditional shanties for "those who take their sea shanties more seriously."

DOD taps Charles Flynn to lead US Army Pacific

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — Lt. Gen. Charles Flynn has been nominated to lead U.S. Army Pacific, a post now held by Gen. Paul LaCamera, who took command in November 2019.

Flynn, who will be promoted to a four-star general if confirmed by the Senate, is stationed in Washington, D.C., and serves as deputy chief of staff in the Army's G-3/5/7 section. It plans and coordinates mobilization of the Reserve component in the continental United States.

He is the younger brother of Michael Flynn, who briefly served as national security adviser in 2017.

The elder Flynn pleaded guilty to a felony count of "willfully and knowingly" making false statements to the FBI during its investigation looking into ties between Russia and Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign. Trump pardoned him in November.

Charles Flynn has faced scrutiny in recent days over the slug-

gish deployment of National Guard troops to the U.S. Capitol as insurrectionists broke into the building on Jan. 6. Officials with D.C.'s city government and the Capitol Police have alleged that the Pentagon was slow in responding to a request for assistance from the National Guard in quelling the riot.

The Army has acknowledged that Charles Flynn was in the room for a key call from the local officials making that request, but the service did so only after it had "falsely denied for days" he did not attend, according to The Washington Post.

Flynn is a graduate of the U.S. Naval War College, where he earned a master's degree in national security and strategic studies, according to his official bio. He has command experience from a platoon to a division and served in both Iraq and Afghanistan. In recent years, he commanded the 25th Infantry Division in Hawaii, after which he became deputy command general of U.S. Army Pacific Command.

China hopes for thawed relations with US under Biden administration

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

China hopes for a more relaxed relationship with the United States under President Joe Biden, but his press secretary Monday said the administration is mindful of Beijing's "economic abuses."

Biden's leadership should "bring China-U.S. relations back onto the track of sound and stable development," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said at a press conference Thursday.

The new president should "view China and China-U.S. relations in an objective and rational manner," she said, according to a transcript of her remarks.

"We have been stressing that China would like to strengthen dialogue and cooperation and properly manage differences following the spirit of non-conflict, non-confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation," Hua said.

"China hopes the United States will meet us halfway."

At a press conference Monday, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said the Biden administration is "starting from an approach of patience" with Beijing.

"China is engaged in conduct that hurts American workers, blunts our technological edge and threatens our alliances and our influence in international organizations," Psaki said. "... Beijing is now challenging our security, prosperity and values in significant ways that require a new U.S. approach."

Tensions with China soared under President Donald Trump.

His administration in 2018 started a trade war by imposing tariffs on \$360 billion worth of Chinese imports, which brought retaliatory measures from Beijing.

In July, the State Department formally rejected China's territorial claims in the South China Sea and its militarization of islands there.

The U.S. also boosted relations with Taiwan, a hot-button issue for Beijing.

'Historic' snow blankets parts of Midwest

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — A major winter storm dropped more than a foot of snow on parts of Nebraska and Iowa, disrupting traffic and shuttering some schools while blanketing other parts of the middle of the country with snow that continued to fall Tuesday.

There were early closures of several coronavirus testing sites on Monday in Nebraska and Iowa, and both states saw 12 or 13 inches of snow in places by Tuesday morning. At least 4 inches of snow was expected into Tuesday across most of an area stretching from central Kansas northeast to Chicago and southern Michigan.

National Weather Service meteorologist Taylor Nicolaisen, who is based near Omaha, said up to 15 inches was likely between

York, Neb., and Des Moines, Iowa, and that it has been at least 15 years since that area received more than a foot of snow in a single storm.

"This is historic snow," Nicolaisen said of the snow in that area.

In northern Illinois, snowfall began around sunset Monday, and by early Tuesday, more than 3 inches was reported in places. Meteorologist Bett Borchardt forecast snowfall up to 8 inches or more before it ends Tuesday evening.

The last comparable snowfall hit the area in November 2018, when 8.4 inches fell.

Chicago on Monday warned residents that hazardous conditions were likely during Tuesday morning commutes and some power outages are possible. City officials

have dispatched about 280 salt spreaders to clear main streets and have created warming centers in libraries and park facilities. And a winter weather advisory was issued for northwest Indiana.

Many schools and businesses closed Monday as the storm moved across the Midwest and officials urged drivers to stay off the roads. In western Iowa, Missouri Valley Superintendent Brent Hoelsing reworked the lyrics of the 1970s hit "I Will Survive" to tell students in his district, "So Stay Inside."

Roughly 250 semi trucks waited out the storm at the Petro truck stop alongside Interstate 80 in York, Neb. Manager Rachael Adamson said she could see knee-high drifts and that sidewalks needed to be shoveled every half hour.

1 dead, many injured after tornado strikes Ala. town

Associated Press

FULTONDALE, Ala. — A teenager huddling in his basement was killed and several of his family members were critically injured when a tornado blew a tree onto their home and it collapsed on top of them, police said Tuesday. At least 28 other people were injured as the twister carved a 10-mile path of destruction north of Birmingham.

The tornado caused damage from Fultondale to Center Point, striking an area of Alabama that was severely harmed by a much larger tornado nearly a decade ago.

This time, piles of furniture, appliances and tree limbs were strewn about and

vehicles ended up in strange positions. One car landed upside down against some tree branches on a large pile of debris.

Police Chief D.P. Smith said the teen was pronounced dead at the scene Tuesday morning, and several of his family members were critically injured in the wreckage, while one escaped harm.

"They were doing what they were supposed to be doing," the chief said.

Fultondale Fire Chief Justin McKenzie said 17 people have since been hospitalized and 11 others were treated on scene, WVTM-TV reported.

Injuries range from minor to severe, but search and rescue efforts are still

ongoing, said James Coker, the director of the Jefferson County Emergency Management Agency.

Fultondale also caught the tail end of an EF-4 tornado that ripped across Alabama from Tuscaloosa to northern Jefferson County on April 27, 2011, killing 65 people and injuring 1,500 along a damage path more than 80 miles long, according to the National Weather Service.

This tornado's path of damage stretched for 10 miles, from Fultondale to Center Point, Ala., FEMA said. Survey crews from the National Weather Service had yet to confirm details such as the twister's estimated strength, but FEMA described it as a "large tornado."

Rioters flaunt their own involvement in Capitol siege

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — These suspects weren't exactly in hiding.

"THIS IS ME," one man posted on Instagram with a hand emoji pointing to himself in a picture of the violent mob descending on the U.S. Capitol. "Sooo we've stormed Capitol Hill lol," one woman texted someone while inside the building. "I just wanted to incriminate myself a little lol," another wrote on Facebook about a selfie he took inside during the Jan. 6 riot.

In dozens of cases, supporters of President Donald Trump downright flaunted their activity on social media on the day of

the deadly insurrection. Some, apparently realizing they were in trouble with the law, deleted their accounts only to discover their friends and family members had already taken screenshots of their selfies, videos and comments and sent them to the FBI.

Their total lack of concern over getting caught and their friends' willingness to turn them in has helped authorities charge about 150 people as of Monday with federal crimes. But even with the help from the rioters themselves, investigators must still work rigorously to link the images to the vandalism and suspects to the acts on Jan. 6 in order to prove their case in court. And be-

cause so few were arrested at the scene, the FBI and the U.S. Marshals Service have been forced to send agents to track suspects down.

"Just because you've left the D.C. region, you can still expect a knock on the door if we find out that you were part of criminal activity inside the Capitol," Steven D'Antuono, the assistant director in charge of the FBI's Washington office, said earlier this month. "Bottom line — the FBI is not sparing any resources in this investigation."

In the last few weeks, the FBI has received more than 200,000 photos and video tips related to the riot.

NC field hospital helps fight virus surge

Associated Press

LENOIR — Dozens of health care workers have been treating coronavirus patients inside 11 massive white medical tents set up in the parking lot of Caldwell Memorial Hospital.

The tents became necessary in late December when the virus began surging through this rural community in the Carolina foothills, overwhelming the hospital's capacity. The tents were set up earlier this month.

The tents and care givers have been provided by Samaritan's Purse, an international Christian relief charity led by evangelist the Rev. Franklin Graham that is based in Boone, N.C.

The 30-bed field hospital comprises four medical wards and a pharmacy for patients who have been discharged from the hospital's intensive care unit and do not need ventilators. Four other hospitals besides Caldwell are sending patients there so they can use hospital beds for more serious cases.

Texas

AUSTIN — The number of hospitalized COVID-19 patients in Texas continues to fall from record highs as the state nears the end of what has been its deadliest month of the pandemic.

State health officials Monday reported fewer than 13,000 people were being treated for the virus in Texas hospitals, marking the seventh consecutive day of declining patient loads.

Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins said that the area was "starting to see some metrics go in the right direction" as the average number of daily new cases fell by 800.

Missouri

O'FALLON — Missouri ranks dead last among states for the percentage of residents who have received their first dose of the coronavirus vaccine, and two neighboring states don't

fare much better.

Information released by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Monday showed that 242,937 Missourians have received the first shot, or 3,958 people per 100,000 residents. Idaho, Nevada and Alabama had the next worst per capita rates, followed by Missouri's neighbors on both sides — Kansas with 4,374 vaccinations per 100,000 residents, and Illinois with 4,392 vaccinations per 100,000 residents.

Health director Dr. Randall Williams said last week that he had already been contacted by the Biden administration, which sought further details regarding Missouri's plan.

Florida

TALLAHASSEE — Florida businesses would be protected from coronavirus lawsuits if they made a good effort to follow state-issued guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19 under a proposal approved Monday at its first Senate committee stop.

While Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis has lifted restrictions on businesses, such as limiting capacity at restaurants, the bill would retroactively cover businesses, individuals and other organizations when businesses were ordered closed or to limit customers.

The Senate Judiciary Committee approved the bill on a 7-4 vote, with Republicans supporting it and Democrats opposed.

In order for a lawsuit to move forward, a plaintiff would have to present a signed affidavit from a Florida physician saying that there is a reasonable degree of certainty that the defendant's actions caused the illness or death.

Maine

ORONO — Maine's public university system has expanded its coronavirus wastewater monitoring program through the end of the spring semester.

The University of Maine System said it's adding new sample collection sites and increasing sampling and testing frequency. The university system uses the program to track the presence of the virus on its campuses and in surrounding areas.

The system said samples will be collected twice weekly at campuses around the state. The program will also be used to analyze samples from two municipal wastewater facilities and the University of New England in Biddeford.

North Dakota

BISMARCK — North Dakota health officials on Monday reported zero deaths due to the coronavirus for a second straight day, along with back-to-back daily COVID-19 counts in double digits.

The number of fatalities stayed at 60 for January and 1,411 since the start of the pandemic. The death toll per capita ranked among the highest in the country after 500 deaths in November, but data compiled Sunday by The COVID Tracking Project lists the state at the eighth-highest compared to population.

Health officials confirmed 58 new cases in the last day after 2,144 tests were processed for a positivity rate of 3.14%. There were 99 positive tests in Sunday's update. There have been 96,874 cases in the state since the start of the pandemic.

North Dakota ranks 50th in the country for new cases per capita in the last two weeks and the rolling average of new cases in that time has declined by 43.1%, Johns Hopkins University researchers said. One in every 798 people in North Dakota tested positive in the past week.

Kentucky

FRANKFORT — Kentucky reported its lowest number of new coronavirus cases in four weeks, an encouraging sign in a report Monday that pointed to

another drop in the positivity rate for COVID-19 tests.

Gov. Andy Beshear reported 1,268 new virus cases statewide, but he cautioned that Monday case numbers are typically lower than other days because many labs are closed on weekends.

The number of new COVID-19 cases statewide fell for the second straight week, halting a bump in infections following Christmas, Beshear said.

But that post-holiday rise in cases continued to be reflected in the state's death rate. Beshear reported 39 more virus-related deaths across Kentucky on Monday. That raised the state's death toll to at least 3,460 since the pandemic began.

New Hampshire

CONCORD — Nonresidents are no longer eligible to get coronavirus vaccinations in New Hampshire, state officials confirmed Monday.

Earlier rules would have allowed anyone who owned property in New Hampshire, including second homeowners and out-of-state landlords, to get vaccinated in the state, regardless of where they actually live. But after some backlash, the state updated its guidance to say that only New Hampshire residents are eligible. Such residency must be proven with documentation such as a driver's license or a recent payroll check showing a legal New Hampshire address.

Vaccinations began Saturday for the more than 300,000 people in Phase 1B, which includes those aged 65 and older, those living and working in residential facilities for people with developmental disabilities, people with multiple qualifying medical conditions and corrections workers. While the next phase is supposed to start in March, if the state doesn't begin getting more doses, it would take well into May to finish the current phase.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

City of Presidents works on adding statue of Trump

SD RAPID CITY — The City of Presidents organization has begun work on adding former President Donald Trump’s statue in downtown Rapid City.

Dallerie Davis, co-founder and artist liaison for the organization, said the project is in the concept stage and that they plan to incorporate a couple of Trump’s distinctive trademarks.

“Right now, we know we’ve got to deal with the very unusual hair style, and we know we’ll have to involve tweeting,” Davis said. “I try to remind people this is history, it’s not politics. We have nothing to do with politics. We have everything to do with history.”

A location has not yet been selected for the nation’s 45th president. Davis said the City of Presidents has more than 80 street corners available.

Police dispatcher who used racial slur is no longer on the job

MO CLAYTON — A St. Louis County police dispatcher is no longer with the department, less than two weeks after using a racial slur over a police radio, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported.

The dispatcher, whose name has not been released, was recorded saying an expletive and then using the racial slur, according to the recording that was released by the police department when a woman sued for the audio.

After the slur, another voice on the police radio can be heard telling the dispatcher that his audio was left open. Commanders launched an internal investigation and the dispatcher was on unpaid leave before his departure.

Council approves home deliveries for alcohol

NV LAS VEGAS — Las Vegas city residents will be able to dial for drink deliveries at home under a new law approved by the City Council.

The measure lets restaurants and convenience stores deliver alcohol through third-party services. It was cast as a boost for businesses struggling with coronavirus pandemic restrictions.

Councilman Stavros Anthony, the sponsor, said it connects “someone at home who wants a 12-pack of beer” with stores and third-party deliverers.

Licensees will be required to ensure drivers are at least 21 years old, undergo background checks and training on the illegality of selling to minors, and to keep transaction records.

Ex-soccer club treasurer accused of \$200K theft

OH MIAMISBURG — A former youth soccer club treasurer accused of stealing nearly \$200,000 from the organization is now facing charges, authorities said.

Richard Campbell, 59, of Miamisburg, faces three counts of aggravated theft in an indictment recently handed up by a Montgomery County grand jury.

Miamisburg Soccer Association board members contacted authorities after noticing discrepancies between bank statement balances and the balances reported to them by Campbell. When the board members confronted Campbell, prosecutors said he admitted misappropriating some of the funds.

Couple charged with day care bomb threats

MO ST. PETERS — A St. Louis area day care worker and her boyfriend are charged with making two bomb threats that forced youngsters to be evacuated in the cold.

Janet Porzelt, 40, and Evan Hauserman, 39, were charged with two counts each of making a terrorist threat and making a false bomb report.

Hauserman made the threats to Primrose School in St. Peters twice because Porzelt, an employee at the school, did not want to go to work but still wanted to be paid for a full day, charging documents said.

Hauserman used an anonymous texting application with a fake phone number to call in the threats, prosecutors said.

After the first call, the preschool evacuated everyone in 36-degree weather. After the second threat, the preschool evacuated more than 90 people, including infants who had to be rolled in the parking lot in cribs, The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported.

Juvenile suspects caught after crashing car into train

NC CHARLOTTE — Two juvenile robbery suspects were captured after crashing a car into an Amtrak train while trying to flee police, authorities said.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg police said officers received a call about a robbery on Mont Carmel Lane.

Officers found the suspect vehicle and tried to pull it over, but the driver did not stop. A vehicle pursuit ended when the car hit the train.

Amtrak officials said no one on the train was injured.

2 hikers rescued after one kept running barefoot in snow

NH FRANCONIA — Two trail runners were airlifted from a New Hampshire mountain after one man lost his shoes and continued running barefoot through several feet of snow, officials said.

State Fish and Game Department conservation officers were called to Mount Lafayette after Michael Burlison, 35, of Gorham, Maine, and Nicholas Drouin, 34, of North Hampton, contacted 911 for help, The New Hampshire Union-Leader reported.

The hikers told conservation officers that they were trying to complete a popular trail loop in four hours, but lost the path as they descended from the mountain amid 40 mph winds, snow and freezing temperatures.

While trekking through deep snow, one of the men lost his trail running shoes and decided to continue barefoot before being forced to stop “due to frozen extremities,” officials said in a statement.

— From wire reports



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Winthrop overlooked despite being 15-0

Associated Press

Winthrop guard Chandler Vaudrin can't understand how the undefeated and unranked Eagles don't seem to be on anyone's national radar.

"Dang, they should be noticing," said Vaudrin, the Eagles' do-it-all point guard. "We're 15-0."

But the 6-foot-7 guard knows the remedy, however — just keep winning.

The Eagles have won more games than No. 1 Gonzaga and No. 2 Baylor, both 14-0. They've won a best-in-the-nation 20 straight games in Division I men's basketball dating back to their Big South Conference Tournament title and NCAA Tournament berth last season. Yet, Winthrop remains on the outside of the rankings and much of college basketball's consciousness in this pandemic-affected season.

The virus limited Winthrop's nonconference schedule and any attention grabbing Power Five matchups quickly disappeared.

"We can only play who we can play," Winthrop coach Pat

Kelsey said. "We tried to schedule every Power Five under the sun. It's hard to do and the ones we did get canceled."

The Eagles completed a back-to-back sweep of Big South rival Presbyterian this week and don't play again until they host UNC Asheville on Jan. 28-29.

Despite their lack of signature wins, Kelsey believes the Eagles belong in the NCAA Tournament discussion because of their chemistry, depth and resolve.

"We pass the eye test," he said with conviction. "We're a tough, tenacious, connected team that's a veteran team and has elite players, too."

Winthrop's lineup includes former Tennessee player D.J. Burns Jr., who returned home to Rock Hill, S.C., after a year with the Vols. Senior guard Adonis Arms played at Mesa Community College and Northwest Nazarene before joining the Eagles and becoming their second-leading scorer this season.

Things always start with Vaudrin, college basketball's

active leader with six career triple-doubles, including two this year.

Vaudrin transferred from Division II Walsh College when many in his circle told him he was wasting his time trying to play in the sport's top level. Instead, the senior from Uniontown, Ohio, leads the Eagles in scoring, rebounding, assists and steals.

"I always bet on myself," he said.

Winthrop's success this season was forged a year ago after it cut down the nets as the Big South Tournament champion with a ticket to the NAAs in hand.

Then came the pandemic shutdown and the Eagles were left disappointed and with so many questions going forward.

Vaudrin came to Winthrop because of its past success at reaching the NAAs — the Eagles have made 10 NCAA appearances since 1999 — and was naturally upset circumstances cost him an opportunity on basketball's grandest stage.

Soon after, Vaudrin knew his only response was using last

year as motivation. His teammates were on the same page and pledged to be ready no matter what the season would look like.

"We felt like there was a chance (the virus) might've overshadowed one of the best teams we've ever had in Rock Hill," athletic director Ken Halpin said. It hasn't "because of the resolve of the team."

Kelsey has helped shaped that, too.

The 45-year-old from Cincinnati has had several noteworthy moments in his basketball career. He was a captain for Xavier. Kelsey was a member of Skip Prosser's staff and was in the building years later as a Wake Forest assistant watching paramedics trying to revive Prosser the day he died of a heart attack in 2007.

The grief lingered so much that Kelsey said it made him step away as Xavier's associate head coach in 2011, undergoing therapy before rediscovering his passion for coaching.

It's passion Kelsey's players and Winthrop leaders say he still carries with him today.

No. 8 Virginia has easy time disposing of Syracuse

Associated Press

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — Sam Hauser had the hot hand early, and Jay Huff and Trey Murphy III joined in later.

No. 8 Virginia showed off its long-range shooting in an impressive show against Syracuse's vaunted zone defense.

Hauser hit seven of Virginia's 14 three-pointers, and the No. 8 Cavaliers cruised to an 81-58 victory against the Orange on Monday night. Murphy made four threes, and even the 7-foot-1 Huff added one.

"We're a different team. We can spread the floor offensively with the Sams, Treys and Jays," Cavaliers coach Tony Bennett said.

"We can't live by it, but it's an important piece of our offensive production."

Hauser hit five threes before halftime as Virginia (11-2, 7-0 Atlantic Coast Conference) carried a 41-26 lead into the locker room. He finished with 21 points.

With Huff adding a career-high 21 points to go along with 12 rebounds and Murphy collecting 16 points, the Cavaliers finished 14-for-31 from deep. It was the seventh consecutive victory for the 2019 national champions.

Hauser's performance came after back spasms put his availability in question.

"It was weird, just in warmups it started spasming," Hauser said. "I don't know why.

I just said I was going to go out there and see how it felt. It felt good enough to play so I figured I'd just play and obviously, I shot the ball pretty well so it wasn't the worst thing."

Quincy Guerrier led the Orange (9-5, 3-4) with 15 points, and Alan Griffin had 13. Syracuse was 5-for-24 from three-point territory and just 22 of 59 overall (37.3%).

No. 11 West Virginia 88, No. 10 Texas Tech 87: Miles McBride made a go-ahead jumper with 6 seconds left, helping the host Mountaineers rally past the Red Raiders.

McBride finished with a season-high 24 points. Jalen Bridges and reserve Sean

McNeil each scored 13 points for West Virginia (11-4, 4-3 Big 12), which trailed by 12 with about seven minutes left.

Texas Tech (11-5, 4-4) wasted a stellar performance by Mac McClung, who scored a season-high 30 points. Terrence Shannon Jr. added 15 points and eight boards.

McBride's three-pointer with 1:36 left tied it at 84, but McClung responded with his own three with 1:10 remaining.

Taz Sherman made a layup with 50 seconds to go and the Mountaineers got the ball back for one last chance. McBride drove the lane and made an off-balance shot over two defenders.

Cactus League wants opening delayed

Associated Press

The Cactus League and Arizona community leaders have asked Major League Baseball to delay the start of spring training due to coronavirus concerns just over three weeks before pitchers and catchers are supposed to report.

The Cactus League made the request in a letter to Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred obtained by The Associated Press on Monday. The letter was co-signed by the mayors of Mesa, Scottsdale, Surprise, Glendale, Goodyear and Peoria, as well as representatives from Phoenix and the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community.

MLB said in a statement that it “will continue to consult with public health authorities, medical experts, and the players’ association whether any schedule modifications to the announced start of spring training and the championship season should be made in light of the current COVID-19 environment to ensure the safety of the

players, coaches, umpires, MLB employees and other game day personnel.”

Arizona is averaging just under 7,000 new coronavirus cases per day, but the Cactus League cited data in its letter from the University of Washington’s Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation projecting a sharp decline in infections by mid-March, down to as few as 3,072 daily. Spring camps are set to open the week of Feb. 15, with the regular season set to start on April 1.

Despite the roiling case numbers, the NHL’s Arizona Coyotes are hosting 3,450 fans for home games in Glendale, while the NBA’s Phoenix Suns are playing without fans. High school sports are also still operating. The Cactus League hosts 15 MLB clubs.

In a sign that other teams are moving forward with pre-season plans, the spring training home in Jupiter, Fla., shared by the St. Louis Cardinals and Miami Marlins announced Monday it will begin selling

tickets for spring games beginning Feb. 1. Roger Dean Chevrolet Stadium said 2021 tickets will be sold in seating pods of two, four or six spaced six feet apart throughout the stadium.

Any changes to the major league schedule are subject to agreement with the players’ association per terms of their collective bargaining agreement. A person familiar with talks between the sides said MLB asked the union in November about moving back opening day a month to create a safer playing environment, possibly spurred by the availability of vaccines.

The union asked if the post-season could be moved back to make up the 30 or so missed games, or if the league would pay players for the missed games if they weren’t made up. The league declined, saying it wouldn’t push the postseason deep into November over broadcast concerns and wouldn’t pay players for missed games.

Talks stalled there, and no

formal proposals about altering opening day have been exchanged.

The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity Monday because the discussions were considered private.

“The letter correctly notes that MLB does not have the ability to unilaterally make this decision,” the players’ association said in a statement. “While we, of course, share the goals of a safe spring training and regular season, MLB has repeatedly assured us that it has instructed its teams to be prepared for an on time start to spring training and the regular season and we continue to devote all our efforts to making sure that that takes place as safely as possible.”

While the league was able to impose a shortened 60-game regular season in 2020 per the terms of an agreement with the union signed in March, it doesn’t have the authority to unilaterally adjust the 2021 season under the current collective bargaining agreement.

Canucks win in regulation for first time since opener

Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Brandon Sutter recorded a hat trick and the Vancouver Canucks routed the Ottawa Senators 7-1 on Monday night.

It was a much-needed victory for Vancouver, which had not won in regulation since its season opener on Jan. 13.

In an arena devoid of fans, Sutter had only his teammates to celebrate his three-goal night with, but the lack of noise didn’t dull the moment.

“It feels pretty good. You never know when you’re going to get one, if you’re going to get one,” he said. “It only took me 13 years.”

The 31-year-old Sutter has

played in 735 NHL games and is known more for killing penalties than scoring highlight-reel goals. Over 12 NHL seasons, he’s amassed 278 points (144 goals, 134 assists).

“Any time someone scores a hat trick, it’s always a good feeling as a coach for the player,” Canucks coach Travis Green said. “But obviously in this scenario, a guy that doesn’t get a lot of recognition for offense, you feel good for Sutt’s.”

Tanner Pearson had a goal and an assist, and Tyler Motte, Quinn Hughes and Olli Juolevi also scored for Vancouver. Bo Horvat notched two assists.

“I just like that we stuck with our game. We didn’t waver. Sometimes if you get up 3-1, 4-1,

sometimes you can kind of take your foot off the gas,” Green said. “We just needed to get a win, whether it was 2-1, 1-0, 3-2. And more importantly, just play a real solid game for 60 minutes and I thought we accomplished that.”

The Senators’ only goal came midway through the second period when Austin Watson scored off assists from Thomas Chabot and Mike Reilly.

Thatcher Demko had 34 saves and collected his first win of the season for the Canucks.

“I thought our team defense was great tonight,” he said. “When you’re forechecking well and you’re reloading hard and guys are getting back through the middle, those are

the things that kind of add up and deter the other team from creating those scoring chances.”

Ottawa goalie Matt Murray stopped 28 of 35 shots.

Senators coach D.J. Smith was less than impressed with his group’s performance.

Ottawa failed to capitalize on any of its five power plays, and recorded nine giveaways.

“Every bad mistake ended up in your net and it’s by some guys who have been in the league and should be better and it’s by some young guys as well,” he said. “So you’ve got to learn from and realize how good the National Hockey League is and how hard you have to work every shift if you want to win.”

DODEA Korea cancels basketball season

Stars and Stripes

The on-again, off-again DODEA Korea high school basketball season is now off again — this time apparently for keeps.

That announcement was made in a letter dated Tuesday from DODEA Korea district superintendent Jeff Arrington. Osan, Humphreys and Daegu high schools notified their student-athletes and coaches over the past two days, school athletics officials and coaches said.

“While we know this will be upsetting news to our student-athletes, due to current conditions, we will be unable to move forward with winter sports,” Arrington’s letter stated.

Basketball was not on the initial list of sports to be offered by DODEA Pacific this school year.

However, on Nov. 13, the DODEA Korea district announced it would offer basketball for boys and girls from mid-January to mid-

February, culminating with district finals scheduled for Feb. 19-20.

But U.S. Forces Korea announced Dec. 19 it was implementing Health Protection Condition C, or Charlie.

Under DODEA Pacific guidelines, schools reverted to remote learning, with no co-curricular activities. HPCON-C has remained in effect since.

“I’m kind of disappointed, but not surprised,” Osan athletics director Jerome Learman said. “I was hoping they would keep holding. I feel badly for the kids, particularly the seniors who didn’t get to have (their final) season. But it’s out of our hands.”

DODEA Pacific schools have not played basketball since the first day of the 2020 Far East tournaments.

Humphreys’ boys players and coaches in particular were upset; the Blackhawks won the Far East Division I tournament in 2019

and now will go without a season this school year.

“I’m very disappointed,” Blackhawks senior center Collin Metcalf said. “We’re all frustrated that there is no basketball season.”

It’s not known when or if USFK might revert back to HPCON-B.

“Hopefully, we can have a full spring season,” Daegu athletics director and boys basketball coach Blake Sims said.

In other developments, track and field received a faint glimmer of hope when DODEA Pacific athletics coordinator Tom McKinney said Monday that consideration is being given to staging a virtual Far East meet.

Practices for spring sports were originally scheduled to start Jan. 19 on Okinawa. But those were put on hold and remain that way, DODEA Okinawa superintendent Jacqueline Ferguson said.

Big three help Nets break away late, overcome Heat

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Kevin Durant wasn’t making shots. James Harden was barely taking them.

That sent the Brooklyn Nets into a defensive struggle, and the NBA’s highest-scoring team handled it well until their superstars showed up.

Harden and Durant each scored 20 points despite three relatively quiet quarters, and the Nets broke away with a big run in the fourth to beat the Miami Heat 98-85 on Monday night.

Kyrie Irving added 16 points for the Nets, who completed a sweep of the Heat in two games that couldn’t have been more different. Brooklyn won 128-124 on Saturday, then took the rematch despite barely topping its lowest-scoring game of the season.

“I think our defense held tight the whole game,” Durant said. “Once we were able to start making some shots there in the fourth, we were able to pull away. But our defense won us this game for sure.”

Pistons 119, 76ers 104: Delon Wright scored a career-high 28 points and Wayne Ellington had another impressive shooting night for host Detroit, leading it past Eastern Conference-leading Philadelphia.

Jerami Grant scored 25 points for the Pistons (4-13), who still have the NBA’s worst

record but took advantage of Joel Embiid’s absence. The 76ers star was out with back tightness.

Lakers 115, Cavaliers 108: LeBron James scored 23 of his 46 points in the fourth quarter to keep Los Angeles unbeaten on the road.

Anthony Davis added 17 points as the defending NBA champions improved to 10-0 away from home. The win for the Lakers came on the eve of the one-year anniversary of Los Angeles legend Kobe Bryant’s tragic death in a helicopter crash.

Pacers 129, Raptors 114: Malcolm Brogdon scored a career-high 36 points and Myles Turner scored 11 of his 21 in the final 8½ minutes to help host Indiana pull away from Toronto.

Brogdon also had nine assists and seven rebounds. Jeremy Lamb matched his season high with 22 points as the Pacers earned a split in the two-game set against the Raptors. Indiana won this one despite losing All-Star forward Damontis Sabonis to a bruised left knee in the first half.

Magic 117, Hornets 108: Nikola Vucevic scored 28 points and rookie point guard Cole Anthony added a career-high 21 points as host Orlando topped Charlotte.

The Magic snapped a two-game losing streak and bounced back from squandering a double-digit lead in the fourth quarter a

night earlier in a loss to the Hornets.

Nuggets 117, Mavericks 113: Michael Porter Jr. tied his season high with 30 points and Denver overcame Jamal Murray’s ejection for a shot to the groin of Dallas guard Tim Hardaway Jr. to win on the road.

Porter was 6-for-10 from three-point range, including a go-ahead shot to start a decisive 7-0 run late in the fourth quarter after the Mavericks had rallied immediately following the incident involving Murray and Hardaway.

Celtics 119, Bulls 103: Jaylen Brown scored 26 points, Jayson Tatum added 24 after missing five games because of COVID-19 protocols and Boston won at Chicago.

Tatum made three three-pointers and had five assists over 31 minutes in his first appearance since Jan. 8.

Thunder 125, Trail Blazers 122: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 24 points, Mike Muscala added 23, and Oklahoma City snapped a three-game losing streak with a win at Portland.

Warriors 130, Timberwolves 108: Stephen Curry scored 36 points with seven three-pointers, Andrew Wiggins took it to his old Timberwolves team with 23 points, and host Golden State beat Minnesota.

Curry shot 11-for-21 overall and 7 of 12 from deep.