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WH defends handling of bounty intel

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration is stepping up the defense of its response to intelligence assessments that suggested Russia had offered bounties for killing U.S. troops in Afghanistan, with the president's national security adviser saying on Wednesday he had prepared a list of retaliatory options if the intelligence had been corroborated.

President Donald Trump continued to play down the assessments and insist he wasn't briefed on the matter because the intelligence didn't rise to his level. However, National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien said both the CIA and Pentagon did pursue the lead and briefed international allies.

"We had options ready to go," O'Brien said on "Fox & Friends." "It may be impossible to get to the bottom of it."

At a State Department news conference, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the situation was handled "incredibly well" to ensure the safety of U.S. troops.

"We took this seriously, we handled it appropriately," Pompeo said, without giving additional details. He said the administration receives intelligence about threats to Americans "every single day" and that each is addressed.

Pompeo added that Russian activity in Afghanistan is nothing new and that Russia is just one of many nations acting there.

He said that Congress has had similar information in the past, and that he often receives threat assessments that don't rise to the level of a presidential briefing.

The comments from administration officials come as Trump is coming under increasing pressure from lawmakers of both parties to provide more answers about the intelligence and the U.S. response or lack of one. Democrats who were briefed at the White House on Tuesday suggested Trump was bowing to Russian President Vladimir Putin at the risk of U.S. soldiers' lives.

Trump remained defensive about the intelligence, dismissing stories about it as "Fake News" made up to "damage me and the Republican Party."

The president has repeatedly said he wasn't briefed on the assessments that Russia offered bounties because there wasn't corroborating evidence. Those assessments were first reported by The New York Times, then confirmed to The Associated Press by American intelligence officials and others with knowledge of the matter.

O'Brien said the intelligence wasn't brought to Trump's attention initially because it was unverified and there was no consensus among the intelligence community. But it's rare for intelligence to be confirmed without a shadow of doubt before it is presented to senior government decision-makers.

The national security adviser echoed the recent White House talking point faulting not Russia but government leakers and the media for making the matter public.

Senate Republicans appeared split on the matter, with several defending the president and saying that the Russian meddling wasn't new. Others expressed strong concern.

"If reports are true that Russia has been paying a bounty to the Taliban to kill American soldiers, this is a serious escalation," Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley said on the Senate floor. "It demands a strong response, and I don't mean a diplomatic response."

Earlier in the week, Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., said Congress needed to find out who knew what when, and if Trump didn't know, "how the hell not?"

House Democrats who were briefed at the White House on Tuesday questioned why Trump wouldn't have been briefed sooner and pushed White House officials to have the president make a strong statement. They said the administration should brief all members of Congress.

House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, one of the Democrats who attended the briefing, said it was "inexplicable" why Trump won't say publicly that he is working to get to the bottom of the issue and why he won't call out Putin. He said Trump's defense that he hadn't been briefed was inexcusable.

Trump vows veto if defense bill seeks new base names

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump is vowing to veto a massive defense bill to keep military bases such as Fort Bragg, N.C., named after Confederate officers, swimming against sentiment in his own party and imperiling a 3% pay raise for the troops.

Trump took to Twitter late Tuesday to threaten a veto of a \$741 billion annual Pentagon authorization bill because it would require a host of military bases named after Confederate figures to be renamed within three years.

Trump rival Sen. Elizabeth Warren,

D-Mass., won a bipartisan vote in a GOP-controlled panel to force the bases to be renamed and it's clear that opponents of the idea don't have the votes to remove it during floor debate.

"I will Veto the Defense Authorization Bill if the Elizabeth "Pocahontas" Warren (of all people!) Amendment, which will lead to the renaming (plus other bad things!) of Fort Bragg, Fort Robert E. Lee, and many other Military Bases from which we won Two World Wars, is in the Bill!" Trump wrote on Twitter.

Trump's threat comes as he is increasingly appealing to his core supporters as his troubled reelection campaign has fall-

en behind former Vice President Joe Biden in opinion polls.

The response by top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer? Make my day.

"I dare President Trump to veto the bill over Confederate base naming. It's in the bill. It has bipartisan support. It will stay in the bill," Schumer said.

The annual measure has passed every year for almost six decades and typically enjoys veto-proof support, though various controversies often mean that it does not pass until late in the year. Trump's salvo probably ensures that the issue won't come to a head until after the November election.

No easy answers on troop reduction

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTT GART, Germany — President Donald Trump has approved a plan to re-deploy 9,500 troops from Germany, but the move will likely bring added security risks and costs for U.S. taxpayers, former military officials and security, analysts say.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper briefed Trump on options this week, and what was

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approved “not only meets the president’s directive, it will also enhance Russian deterrence, strengthen NATO, reassure allies, improve U.S. strategic flexibility and U.S. European Command’s operational flexibility,” Pentagon spokesman Jonathan Hoffman said Tuesday.

The Pentagon didn’t explain how the cuts would achieve those benefits. The positive spin conflicts with reality given the size of the reduction, said retired Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, the former commander of U.S. Army Europe.

“Just from the math, it is difficult for me to envision how this proposal will do any of what the (Pentagon) statement claims,” Hodges said Wednesday.

The Pentagon hasn’t provided details on what units will be cut or when the plan will be executed, adding that it would update personnel as planning progresses.

‘Salami slice’ the force

The worst move would be to take a “salami slice” approach, cutting unit troop strength 30% across the board, said John R. Deni, a U.S. Army War College professor with expertise on European security.

National security adviser Robert O’Brien, who has pushed for the cuts, recently called “massive bases in places like Germany” an “obsolete” relic of the Cold War.

During the Cold War, the military had some 250,000 troops in Germany and nearly half a million across Europe. Today, there are about 34,500 troops in Germany, though that number can fluctuate by a few thousand due to movements.

Proponents have said that bases in the country now serve as streamlined forward operating sites for the 21st century. An across-the-board cut would cripple the force, Hodges said.

“We are so small already, a 30% cut renders them incapable of carrying out their missions,” Hodges said. “A 30% cut is in effect a 100% cut.”

Cutting combat units

The most straightforward path to 9,500 troops would be to remove firepower, but analysts have said that could embolden Russia and limit crisis response capability.

The 2nd Cavalry Regiment in Vilseck is the only brigade-sized ground unit left in Germany and one of only two permanently stationed in Europe after decades of cutbacks. The other is the 173rd Airborne in Italy, which has a detached regiment in Grafenwoehr, Germany.

Sending the regiment back to the U.S. would get the Pentagon to nearly half of Trump’s total, but also remove a force that spends much of its time rotating to Poland, just 50 miles from the Russian military exclave of Kaliningrad.

Another option could be to send it to Poland permanently. Current plans call for only a 1,000-U.S. troop boost there, however, and Poland’s support infrastructure would need large, costly upgrades to match Germany’s.

Hundreds of Navy SEALs and Green Berets that operate out of Stuttgart could be repositioned in Poland — there is already a plan to boost the U.S. special operations mission there — and the cut figure could be met.

The Pentagon could make up for the loss in Germany by ramping up unit rotations from the U.S. to Europe or putting some in Poland, Deni said.

Keeping a steady rotational force to complete missions of formerly forward-based units would incur significant costs, however, said Deni, whose research into large rotations to Europe has found that they add expenses and may take a toll on troop morale.

Targeting logistics seen as risky

In Europe, ground units are called upon for high-profile training drills that garner international attention. When the military wanted to send a message to Russia after its 2014 intervention in Ukraine, EUCOM ordered paratroopers into the Baltics and U.S. Army Europe sent the 2nd Cavalry Regiment on a road march up and down NATO’s eastern flank.

But the military’s core is the Air Force and Army logistical team in the Kaiserslautern Military Community, which Hodges calls the “industrial heart” of EUCOM. Ramstein Air Base is the “largest unsinkable aircraft carrier” the U.S. has, he said.

There are approximately 15,000 troops in the region, but eliminating a large num-

ber of them could cripple the military, he said.

“The vast majority of what we have in Germany, when you subtract 2nd Cav and the F-16 squadron, is enablers. It’s mission command and defense and all the different types of logistical stuff that allows you to minimize the amount of force you need to be stationed somewhere,” Hodges said. “This is the stuff you need in place to set the theater.”

Cutting command and control

The Pentagon could look to the higher commands in Germany — U.S. European Command and Africa Command — as a way toward 9,500, but the numbers would be small.

AFRICOM has about 1,400 personnel at its headquarters, and roughly half are troops. EUCOM is even smaller, with 600 service members and 300 civilians.

They could be moved to the U.S., an idea Congress has flirted with in the past but ultimately rejected because of high relocation costs.

Proponents have pointed to U.S. Central Command, which is in Tampa, Fla. CENTCOM, however, also has large forward-based headquarters in places like Qatar.

Some headquarters are already thinly stretched, most notably USAREUR, which has been overwhelmed by the pace of operations in Poland and the Baltics, Deni said.

What’s next

Even though Trump has approved the drawdown in Germany, it still faces obstacles. There is widespread bipartisan resistance in Congress, and lawmakers that include Trump ally Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., have introduced legislation with the aim of blocking the cuts.

Trump has justified the cutbacks by saying that Germany doesn’t invest enough in its own defense and is taking advantage of U.S. security.

While criticisms of allies falling short of their defense spending obligations are fair, Hodges said the U.S. will be at a disadvantage if it sends forces back home.

The military in Germany “is a forward base for us to carry out our national defense strategy,” Hodges said. “If not one European country spent a single euro, pound, krone or zloty on defense, that would not change the fact that it is to America’s advantage to have a stable, secure, prosperous Europe. It’s our biggest trading partner.”

Fort Hood soldier kills self after body likely to be long-missing troop is found

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — The remains of missing Fort Hood soldier Pfc. Vanessa Guillen have likely been located and another soldier suspected of being involved in her disappearance killed himself Wednesday morning as police approached him, Army Criminal Investigation Command announced.

On Tuesday, Army investigators said they believe the human remains found near the Leon River in Bell County are likely related to the search for Guillen, who has been missing for two months. However, a positive identification is still pending.

“We believe that her remains were found. We believe that the suspect killed himself in the morning. And that, unfortunately doesn’t provide us any information about how this happened [or] why a beautiful young soldier is not with us today,” Natalie Khawam, attorney for the Guillen family, said Wednesday during a news conference in Washington, D.C.

Guillen, a 20-year-old small-arms repairer with the 3rd Cavalry Regiment, has been missing since April 22. She was last seen at work in the armory room of the regiment’s engineer squadron. On that day, Guillen was not scheduled to work, but she was called in by someone, Khawam said.

“We have made significant progress in this tragic situation and are doing every-

thing possible to get to the truth and bring answers to the family of Pfc. Vanessa Guillen,” said Chris Grey, the spokesman for Army CID.

The suspect shot himself at 1:17 a.m. Wednesday as officers of the U.S. Marshals Service, Killeen Police Department and the Lone Star Fugitive Task Force attempted to make contact with him in the 4700 block of East Rancier Avenue in Killeen, the central Texas city just outside the gates of Fort Hood.

Identified as a “junior soldier,” the man had fled the Army base late Tuesday and Army investigators had issued an alert to locate him. When officers approached him, the soldier revealed the weapon and shot himself dead, according to a CID news release.

Another suspect, a civilian, was arrested by the Texas Rangers. The civilian suspect, who was not identified, is the estranged wife of a former Fort Hood soldier and was in custody in the Bell County Jail awaiting charges by civilian authorities, according to CID.

While CID declined to release the name of the dead suspect, Khawam identified the man as Aaron David Robinson.

Robinson was the soldier Guillen told her family was sexually harassing her, Khawam said. It is the name that they gave to authorities when they visited the base last week for a meeting with Fort Hood commanders.

Nakonieczny now leading 31st MEU

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Command of the nation’s only permanently forward deployed, seaborne quick reaction force is in the hands of a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan with a career in light armored reconnaissance, the Marine Corps announced Monday.

Marine Col. Michael Nakonieczny of Buena Park, Calif., took over the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit from outgoing commander Col. Robert Brodie on June 25. The change of command took place privately at Camp Hansen to accommodate coronavirus prevention measures, according to the Marine statement.

“To the Marines of the 31st MEU, I have watched you with great enthusiasm and I am so eager to join your team,” Nakonieczny said during the ceremony, according to the statement.

“Col. Brodie, I have watched you take it to the next level,” he said. “I vow to you that I will do my best to exploit the initiative that you have set for this MEU, and I will love these Marines like my family.”

The 31st MEU is composed of roughly 2,200 Marines and sailors operating off Navy ships from Amphibious Squadron 11, based in Sasebo, Japan. The unit is the premier crisis response element for the III Marine Expeditionary Force.

The unit is able to project power throughout the Indo-Pacific region, is “flexible and lethal,” and ready to perform a wide range of military operations at a moment’s notice, Brodie has said in past statements.

Brodie, a career F/A-18 Hornet pilot, leaves the 31st MEU after two years and four full-unit deployment cycles, which included bilateral training and exercises alongside Japanese, Thai, Filipino and Australian troops, the statement said. In late 2018, the unit took part in relief operations in Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in the wake of Typhoons Mangkhut and Yutu.

Nakonieczny comes to the 31st MEU from a position as director of concepts and plans for the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory at Quantico, Va.

Brodie will remain on Okinawa as the III MEF G-3, assistant chief of staff for operations, 31st MEU spokesman Capt. George McArthur wrote in an email Wednesday to Stars and Stripes.

‘Deltas’ replacing wings for Space Force

BY CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

The new Space Force has streamlined its structure by going without wings.

Instead, the intermediate echelons above squadrons in the country’s newest military branch will be known as “deltas,” and they will be led by whatever the service decides to call its equivalent of a colonel.

Deltas will fall under field commands like Space Operations Command, or SpOC — an abbreviation that may keep it from being confused for other services’ special operations commands, if not the Vulcan from “Star Trek.” The field commands report to the service headquarters.

The use of three echelons instead of the five levels used by its parent service, the Air Force, reflects a focus on being “lean, agile and mission-focused,” the service said in a statement Tuesday.

What’s the difference between the branches?

Air Force major commands fall under

the service headquarters, followed by numbered air forces, wings, groups, squadrons and flights. Space Force eliminates one command level headed by a general and one headed by a colonel-equivalent.

The service, which will draw thousands of airmen, is expected to grow to 15,000 personnel, though it has still not announced what it will call its members or what many of its rank titles will be.

Deltas were named after the triangular symbol frequently used in space logos, Air Force Magazine reported. They will be organized to support individual functions such as operations, base support or training.

Space Force squadrons will operate similarly to their Air Force counterparts, focusing on missions like satellite operations or intelligence, the magazine reported.

The structure brings together various former Air Force space-related units under the new branch, which was created in December in response to increased commercial and military use of space.

Mississippi retiring state flag

Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. — With a stroke of the governor's pen, Mississippi is retiring the last state flag in the United States with the Confederate battle emblem — a symbol that's widely condemned as racist.

Republican Gov. Tate Reeves signed the historic bill Tuesday at the Governor's Mansion, immediately removing official status for the 126-year-old banner that has been a source of division for generations.

"This is not a political moment to me but a solemn occasion to lead our Mississippi family to come together, to be reconciled and to move on," Reeves said on live TV just before the signing. "We are a resilient people defined by our hospitality. We are a people of great faith. Now, more than ever, we must lean on that faith, put our divisions behind us and unite for a greater good."

Mississippi has faced increasing pressure to change its flag since protests against racial injustice have focused attention on Confederate symbols in recent weeks.

A broad coalition of legislators on Sunday passed the landmark legislation to change the flag, capping a weekend of emotional debate and decades of effort by Black lawmakers and others who see the rebel emblem as a symbol of hatred.

Among the small group of dignitaries witnessing the bill signing were Reuben Anderson, who was the first African American justice on the Mississippi Supreme Court, serving from 1985 to 1991, Willie Simmons, a current state Transportation Commissioner who is the first African American elected to that job, and Reena Evers-Everette, daughter of civil rights icons Medgar and Myrlie Evers.

"That Confederate symbol is not who Mississippi is now. It's not what it was in 1894, either, inclusive of all Mississippians," Evers-Everette said after the ceremony. "But now we're going to a place of total inclusion and unity with our hearts along with our thoughts and in our actions."

Reeves used several pens to sign the bill. As he completed the process, a cheer could be heard from people outside the Governor's Mansion who were watching the livestream broadcast.

Former Marine wins Ky. primary

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Former Marine pilot Amy McGrath overcame a bumpier-than-expected Kentucky primary to win the Democratic U.S. Senate nomination Tuesday, fending off progressive Charles Booker to set up a bruising, big-spending showdown with Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

Voting ended June 23, but it took a week until McGrath could be declared the winner due to the race's tight margins and a deluge of mail-in ballots. The outcome seemed a certainty early in the campaign but became tenuous as Booker's profile surged as the Black state lawmaker highlighted protests against the deaths of African Americans in encounters with police.

It was a narrow victory for McGrath. She outlasted Booker by 15,149 votes out of more than 544,000 votes cast. Several other candidates attracted tens of thousands of votes. McConnell, a key ally to President Donald Trump, already breezed to victory in the GOP primary in his bid for a seventh term.

Declaring victory, McGrath reached out to Booker's supporters to try to unite the party for the challenge ahead against McConnell, who has dominated Kentucky's political landscape for decades.

Far-right candidate scores Colo. upset

Associated Press

DENVER — A pistol-packing restaurant owner who has expressed support for a far-right conspiracy theory has upset five-term U.S. Rep. Scott Tipton in Colorado's primary elections.

Tipton became the fourth House member to lose renomination bids this year. Republican Reps. Steve King, of Iowa, and Denver Riggleman, of Virginia, and Democrat Daniel Lipinski, of Illinois, have already been ousted.

He lost Tuesday to Lauren Boebert, the owner of a gun-friendly restaurant in a western Colorado town called Rifle. Earlier this year, Boebert said in an interview that she was "very familiar" with the QAnon conspiracy theory, but she stopped short of saying she was a follower.

"Everything that I've heard of Q, I hope that this is real because it only means that America

is getting stronger and better, and people are returning to conservative values," she told interviewer Ann Vandersteel.

QAnon followers believe that President Donald Trump is fighting enemies in the "deep state" and a child sex trafficking ring run by satanic pedophiles and cannibals. The QAnon name comes from online clues purportedly posted by a high-ranking government official known as "Q."

Boebert won the primary for Colorado's 3rd Congressional District after a campaign in which she accused Tipton of not being sufficiently pro-Trump even though the president had endorsed Tipton.

She will run in November's general election against Diane Mitsch Bush, a former state lawmaker who won the Democratic nomination Tuesday by defeating businessman James Iacino.

Hickenlooper wins Democratic Senate primary in Colo.

Associated Press

DENVER — Former Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper won the Democratic nomination Tuesday to face Republican Sen. Cory Gardner in November, overcoming a series of stumbles and beating back a challenge from his left.

Hickenlooper defeated former Colorado House Speaker Andrew Romanoff, a former moderate who turned himself into a

populist, running against the moderate favorite of the Democratic establishment and promising a Green New Deal and single-payer health care.

But he could not overcome both Hickenlooper's immense financial edge — the former governor out-raised Romanoff by about 7-to-1 — and his deep name ID and reservoir of goodwill among voters stemming from two terms in the governor's mansion.

That's why Senate Democrats recruited Hickenlooper, 68, to take on Gardner, widely seen as the most vulnerable Republican in the Senate. Democrats need to net three seats in November to win control of the chamber if they win the White House, and they see Colorado as their most promising opportunity. Senate Democrats convinced Hickenlooper to run as his ill-fated bid for the Democratic presidential nomination fizzled last summer.

States rush to get more hospital beds

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Florida and other states across the Sunbelt are thinning out the deck chairs, turning over the barstools and rushing to line up more hospital beds as they head into the height of the summer season amid a startling surge in confirmed cases of the coronavirus.

With newly reported infections running about 40,000 a day in the U.S., Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, warned on Tuesday that the number could rocket to 100,000 if Americans don't start following public health recommendations.

Over the past few days, states such as Florida, Arizona, Texas and California have reversed course, closing or otherwise clamping down on bars, shutting beaches, rolling back restaurant capacity, putting limits on crowds at pools or taking other steps to curb a scourge that may be thriving because of such factors as air conditioning and resistance to wearing masks.

"Any time you have these re-

openings, you're depending on people to do the right things, to follow the rules. I think that's where the weak spots come in," said Dr. Cindy Prins, a University of Florida epidemiologist. She warned that things are likely to get worse before they get better.

Hospitals in the new hot spots are already stretched nearly to the limit and are scrambling to add intensive care unit beds for an expected surge in COVID-19 cases in the coming weeks.

Newly confirmed cases in Florida have spiked over the past week, especially in younger people, who may be more likely to survive the virus but can spread it to vulnerable older residents.

The state reported more than 6,000 new confirmed cases Tuesday. More than 8,000 were recorded on each of three days late last week. Deaths have climbed past 3,500. Floridians ages 15 to 34 now make up 31% of all cases, up from 25% in early June. Last week, more than 8,000 new confirmed cases were reported in that age group, compared with about

2,000 among people 55 to 64 years old.

Hospital ICUs are starting to fill up in South Florida, with a steadily increasing number of patients requiring ventilators. Miami's Baptist Hospital had only six of its 82 ICU beds available, officials said.

In hard-hit Arizona, hospitals are looking for ways to cram more beds into their facilities and hiring out-of-state nurses. State officials have authorized "crisis standards of care" telling hospitals which patients should get a ventilator or other scarce resources if there is a shortage.

Dignity Health, which operates several hospitals in the Phoenix area, is converting more areas to treat COVID-19 patients and preparing to put multiple patients in private rooms, spokeswoman Carmelle Malkovich said. It's bringing nurses from underutilized hospitals in its system to Arizona, and hiring traveling nurses and respiratory therapists throughout July.

Republican Gov. Doug Ducey shut down bars, movie theaters

and gyms and banned groups larger than 10 at swimming pools.

Air conditioning could be a factor in hot-weather states where new cases have been spiking, because it recirculates air instead of bringing it in fresh from outside, said Dr. Kristin Englund, an infectious-disease physician at Cleveland Clinic.

"I definitely think the air conditioning and the oppressive heat in the South is going to play a role in this," she said.

Elsewhere, the European Union reopened Wednesday to visitors from 14 countries — but not the U.S., which has barred most Europeans. The EU also kept its ban in place for visitors from China and from countries such as Russia, Brazil and India where infections are running high.

Americans make up a big share of Europe's tourism industry, and summer is a key period. More than 15 million Americans travel to Europe each year, while some 10 million Europeans head across the Atlantic.

Yokosuka Naval Base loosens virus restrictions

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The base commander here further eased coronavirus travel restrictions on sailors, civilian employees and their families Wednesday, opening up more of Japan for trips as Independence Day weekend approaches.

Personnel from the base may explore Yokohama, previously off-limits, and the neighboring prefectures of Shizuoka and Yamanashi to the southwest and west, respectively, and stay in off-base hotels, according to the order signed by base commander Capt. Rich Jarrett.

The city of Kawasaki, north of Yokohama, and Tokyo, however, are still off-limits.

Also, crowded off-base ven-

ues such as bars and nightclubs, gyms, amusement parks and swimming pools are prohibited, along with tattoo parlors. Other venues, such as theaters, concert halls, karaoke clubs and similar places remain off-limits.

With the expanded liberty area comes permitted activities like shopping and dining in at restaurants. Jarrett's order requires base personnel to wear masks where social distancing is not possible and to adhere to other hygiene practices.

The news arrives in time for the four-day Independence Day holiday. The new boundaries allow access to regional outdoor and historic attractions such as Mount Fuji, Hakone and Hamamatsu Castle, where Tokugawa Ieyasu, founder of

the last shogunate in Japan, once lived.

Navy spouse Ahoefa Adjowa, who plans to buy Krispy Kreme donuts and Lush Cosmetics products in Yokohama over the weekend, said she appreciates the chance to explore Japan while stationed abroad.

"This is a once in a lifetime opportunity, so it's important to travel outside Yokosuka," she said on Wednesday. "Japan has so much to offer; let's all go out and embrace the diversity."

Yokosuka on Wednesday also opened the Purdy Gym to civilian employees, family members and other users, according to the official base Facebook page. Active duty may continue to use the Fleet Recreation Center's gym.

Jarrett's order is a conserva-

tive move compared to a decision Friday by U.S. Army Japan to allow its personnel to travel throughout most of Honshu, the main island of Japan.

The Army, however, put Tokyo, Yokohama and the northern island prefecture of Hokkaido off-limits. The commander at Yokota Air Base issued a similar order on Tuesday. Compared to the United States, Japan has fared well during the global pandemic.

While nearly 2.6 million tested positive for coronavirus in the U.S. as of Tuesday, fewer than 18,600 people had tested positive in Japan since the outbreak's start, according to data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Japan's Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Citizens hold suspected shoplifter at gunpoint

WA SPOKANE — Two people who pointed handguns at a suspected shoplifter in Washington state and threatened to shoot her have received some cautionary advice from police: Be reasonable.

A video posted on Facebook shows a woman being held at gunpoint in her car in Spokane by people who believed she stole from a store.

The Spokesman-Review reported that Annamarie L. Kirkpatrick, 36, was cited for shoplifting, a gross misdemeanor.

Video taken by bystanders shows a man and a woman drew their handguns and pointed them at the woman as she sat in her car.

Neither the man nor the woman with a gun have been charged with a crime, according to police.

Woman gored multiple times by park bison

WY YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK — A 72-year-old California woman was gored multiple times by a wild bison at Yellowstone National Park after repeatedly approaching the animal to take its photograph, park administrators said.

The woman was flown to an Idaho hospital for treatment of her injuries following the June 25 incident. She was not identified and her current condition is unknown.

The woman was at her campsite at the park's Bridge Bay Campground when she approached within 10 feet of the animal multiple times, park officials said.

Run-ins between visitors and bison, also known as buffalo, occur periodically at Yellowstone. The animals are nor-

mally placid but can respond aggressively and charge when approached.

Visitors are required to stay at least 25 yards away from large animals, including bison, elk, bighorn sheep, deer, moose and coyotes, and at least 100 yards away from bears and wolves.

Firm to offer balloon rides to edge of space

AK ANCHORAGE — A company wants to use an advanced balloon to fly customers from Earth's surface in Alaska to the highest reaches of the planet's atmosphere.

Florida-based startup firm Space Perspective plans to use the Pacific Spaceport Complex in Kodiak to serve as one of the launch sites for the vehicle, called the Spaceship Neptune, The Anchorage Daily News reported.

The balloon rides will be manned by a flight crew taking eight passengers in a pressurized capsule suspended beneath a hydrogen balloon the size of a football stadium.

Each passenger could pay an estimated \$125,000 for a six-hour journey.

Mark Lester, CEO of Alaska Aerospace Corp., said the high-altitude rides will be available from Kodiak in a few years and will support Alaska tourism.

Police: Suspect stole car, dragged officer

NC FAYETTEVILLE — A male suspect faced numerous charges after Fayetteville police said he stole a police vehicle, dragging an officer behind it, struck an EMS worker and then fled the scene.

The incident started when police officers were dispatched with EMS units for a medical call, police said in a news release. They encountered the

suspect, who was "agitated" and uncooperative, police said.

The suspect got into the driver's seat of a police car and put the car into drive, dragging an officer. He then hit an EMS worker and a pursuit ensued, in which the suspect collided with several other vehicles, police said. The chase ended when the suspect crashed into a ditch in a town about 15 miles away.

Residents return after fire in asphalt tank

NJ GLOUCESTER CITY — Firefighters were trying to determine what caused an asphalt tank fire early Tuesday that shook a neighborhood of homes and businesses and forced the evacuation of at least 30 families.

Neighbors of Blueknight Energy Partners said they were awakened by a bang and their homes shook around 2:45 a.m. Emergency officials soon ordered their evacuation.

Firefighters used foam to control the flames and residents were allowed to return about four hours later.

No injuries were reported.

Border agents find large pot cache in truck

NY BUFFALO — Border agents found nearly 9,500 pounds of marijuana hidden in a commercial truck entering Buffalo from Canada in the biggest drug seizure on record at the northern border, authorities said.

The driver, Prabjot Nagra, faces federal charges after an X-ray of his trailer at the Peace Bridge on June 25 revealed irregularities that led Customs and Border Protection officers to examine its contents. They found wooden shipping containers holding 8,320 vacuum-sealed packages of marijuana valued at \$20 million.

It was the third big marijuana seizure at the Peace Bridge in June.

On June 5, more than \$2 million worth of marijuana was seized after it came across the Peace Bridge in a truck carrying coffee makers.

On June 13, more than 3,300 pounds of marijuana worth more than \$5 million was found hidden in a truckload of peat moss from Canada.

Stiffer sentences sought in rare book thefts

PA PITTSBURGH — Prosecutors asked a judge to stiffen the home confinement and probation sentences imposed on a former librarian and a bookseller who pleaded guilty in the theft of rare books from the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh in a years-long scheme.

Common Pleas Judge Alexander Bicket sentenced John Schulman, 56, to four years of home confinement and Gregory Priore, 64, to three years of home confinement. Both were ordered to spend a dozen years on probation after completing their sentences.

Priore, former manager of the rare books room at the library, pleaded guilty in January to theft and receiving stolen property. Schulman, the owner of Caliban Book Shop, pleaded guilty to theft by deception, receiving stolen property and forgery. The judge told the two men that if not for the pandemic, their sentences would have been stiffer.

Authorities said Priore stole prints, maps and rare books and handed them off to Schulman to resell them. Prosecutors said several hundred rare items worth more than \$8 million were taken in a scheme investigators believe dated back to the 1990s.

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Angels returning Ohtani to 2-way role

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Shohei Ohtani will resume his two-way career with the Los Angeles Angels when baseball returns.

Angels general manager Billy Eppler confirmed Tuesday that his Japanese star will pitch and hit in the majors this season.

Ohtani was only a designated hitter last season after undergoing Tommy John surgery. He wasn't expected to pitch in 2020

until at least May, and Eppler confirmed that the coronavirus pandemic hasn't altered the Angels' plans.

"We'll probably have a little bit more of a governor on him, at least at the outset," Eppler said. "He's had a number of live (throwing sessions against hitters), but we want to up that intensity a little bit more and put him into a game situation. Just watching how he responds on a day-to-day

basis will help guide us to how much we can push down on the gas pedal on him. We're expecting him to be on the mound and stay on the mound and roll through spring training."

Manager Joe Maddon said last week that he hoped Ohtani would start roughly once a week on the mound while serving as the Halos' designated hitter in 3-4 games between starts.

MLB won't announce IL players with virus

Associated Press

Trying to find out the status of a baseball player coming back from an ankle injury definitely will be easier than learning whether someone tested positive for the coronavirus.

Major League Baseball said Tuesday that a team will not specifically announce a COVID-19 injured list placement for a player who is removed from the club after testing positive, just an IL trip.

MLB's operations manual says a positive test, exhibiting symptoms that require isolation for additional assessment or exposure to someone who has had the virus are cause for placement on the new COVID-19 IL.

"It would be a speculating circumstance," Yankees general manager Brian Cashman told media during a conference call.

Baseball's collective bargaining agreement states that for any medical condition not related to employment, "a club may disclose only the fact that a medical condition is preventing the player from rendering services to the club and the anticipated length of the player's absence from the club."

Cashman noted the situation continues to evolve.

It's official: Coronavirus wipes out minors for 2020

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Baseball's minor leagues canceled their seasons Tuesday because of the coronavirus pandemic, and the head of their governing body said more than half of the 160 teams were in danger of failing without government assistance or private equity injections.

The National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, the minor league governing body founded in September 1901, made the long-expected announcement. The minors had never missed a season.

"We are a fans-in-the-stands business. We don't have national TV revenues," National Association president Pat O'Conner said during a digital news conference. "There was a conversation at one point: Well, can we play without fans? And that was one of the shortest conversations in the last six months. It just doesn't make any sense."

O'Conner estimated 85-90% of revenue was related to ticket money, concessions, parking and ballpark advertising. The minors drew 41.5 million fans last year for 176 teams in 15 leagues, averaging 4,044 fans per game.

MLB teams are planning for a 60-game regular season and most of their revenue will derive from broadcast money.

"I had a conversation with the commissioner, and we

(were) unable to find a path that allowed us to play games," O'Conner said. "It wasn't an acrimonious decision on our part."

O'Conner said many minor league teams had received money through the federal Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act.

"That was a Band-Aid on a hemorrhaging industry," he said. "Many of our clubs have gone through one, two, maybe three rounds of furloughs. In our office here, we've had varying levels of pay cuts between senior management, staff, and we've furloughed some individuals, as well, and are just about to enter in a second round of furloughs."

He hopes for passage of H.R. 7023, which would provide \$1 billion in 15-year federal loans from the Federal Reserve to businesses that had 2019 revenue of \$35 million or less and "have contractual obligations for making lease, rent, or bond payments for publicly owned sports facilities, museums, and community theaters."

In addition, the Professional Baseball Agreement between the majors and minors expires Sept. 30, and MLB has proposed reducing the minimum affiliates from 160 to 120.

"There's no question that what the pandemic has done is made us somewhat weaker

economically," O'Conner said. "I don't think it's challenged our resolve. I don't think it's impacted our desire to stick together and get a good deal."

There have not been substantive talks for about six weeks.

"There are very many teams that are not liquid, not solvent, not able to proceed under normal circumstances, and these are anything but normal circumstances given the PBA and the uncertainty of the future for some of these ballclubs," O'Conner said. "So I think the coronavirus has really cut into many clubs' ability to make it. And I think that we're looking at without some government intervention, without doing something to take on equity partners, you might be looking at half of the 160 who are going to have serious problems."

MLB already has told clubs to retain expanded 60-player pools, of which 30 players can be active during the first two weeks of the season starting in late July.

O'Conner said the financial impact of the pathogen might extend until 2023.

"As serious as the threat from Major League Baseball was," O'Conner said, "this threat from the coronavirus, it transcends any list that anybody wants to make with respect to the possibility of teams not being around in the future."

NWSL players say they have support

Associated Press

Chicago Red Stars teammates Julie Ertz and Casey Short say hard conversations over the past several weeks led to their vulnerability in the moment they shared an emotional embrace while they knelt during the national anthem as the NWSL opened its season.

Short sobbed as she was held by Ertz before Chicago's match against the Washington Spirit on Saturday night, the second game of the National Women's Soccer League tournament in Utah.

"Currently, every time the national anthem is played, our country continues to become more and more divided on what the visual symbol of unity looks like," Short and Ertz said in a joint statement they released Tuesday. "Through our continuous conversations we wanted to make sure that whatever we decided to do, it would not be an empty gesture. It would be a gesture that portrayed that we have heard those who needed to

be heard, validated and loved.

"That moment during the anthem was difficult, very difficult. We are still searching but we are humbled by the outpouring of support."

Short was not made available for comment after the match, so the context of the moment wasn't known. Teammate Rachel Hill, who stood during the anthem and put a hand on Short's shoulder, also was not made available for comment following the game.

"The two of us have always set out to be our honest and true selves, but have struggled to find the 'right' thing to do in order to show our truth. We understand people are entitled to their opinions. Often these opinions are presented through the individual's lens and do not accurately portray how the two of us truly feel," Short and Ertz said.

Hill posted a statement to Instagram on Tuesday night, saying the decision wasn't easy.

"Before the game, I was completely torn on what to do.

I spoke with friends, family and teammates — of all races, religions and backgrounds — with the hope of guidance," Hill wrote. "I chose to stand because of what the flag inherently means to my military family members and me, but I 100 percent support my peers. Symbolically, I tried to show this with the placement of my hand on Casey's shoulder and bowing my head. I struggled, but felt that these actions showed my truth, and in the end I wanted to remain true to myself."

Players for the Portland Thorns and the North Carolina Courage knelt during the national anthem Saturday as they opened the Challenge Cup tournament. A few players, including Hill, chose to stand as the anthem was played before the late game between the Red Stars and Spirit.

While it is customary that only starters are on the field during the anthem, the entire squads for the four teams that played Tuesday took the field before their games.

Houston Dash 3, Utah Royals 3: Rookie Tziarra King came off the bench and scored her first National Women's Soccer League goal Tuesday to pull the Utah Royals into a 3-3 draw with the Houston Dash in the Challenge Cup tournament.

Rachel Daly scored a pair of goals as the Dash built a 3-1 lead but the Royals came back with late goals from Vero Boquete and King in the match played without fans at Zions Bank Stadium.

Sky Blue 0, OL Reign 0: Sky Blue played to a scoreless draw with OL Reign in the tournament.

Sky Blue goalkeeper Kailen Sheridan leapt to stop Jasmyne Spencer's breakaway attempt in the 85th minute, preserving the draw in the tournament opener for both teams.

The Reign are playing the Challenge Cup without Megan Rapinoe, who opted out of the tournament. Sky Blue is without national team players Carly Lloyd and Mallory Pugh because of injuries.

FC Barcelona's Messi scores 700th career goal in draw

Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain — Lionel Messi scored his 700th career goal for club and country before Atletico Madrid came back to draw 2-2 in the Spanish league on Tuesday and deal Barcelona's title hopes a major blow.

Barcelona's third draw in four rounds left it in second place, one point behind leader Real Madrid. Madrid hosts Getafe on Thursday with a chance to open up a four-point lead with five more matches remaining.

Barcelona was two points ahead of Madrid when the league was halted in March because of the coronavirus outbreak.

While Madrid has won five of five since the resumption after a three-month stoppage, Barcelona has only won three of six. The pressure is increasing

on coach Quique Setien, who took over the team in midseason with the task of rekindling its attacking spirit.

"It is too bad because we keep dropping points and getting further and further away from the title," Setien said. "But we have to keep fighting."

Barcelona struck first in the 11th minute when Atletico striker Diego Costa inadvertently redirected a corner by Messi into his own net.

Costa's night got worse shortly after when his penalty was blocked by Marc-Andre ter Stegen. Atletico, however, got to retake the spot kick when a video review determined that the Barcelona goalkeeper had moved off his line too early.

Saul Niguez stepped up instead of Costa on the second attempt and converted to level the score in the 19th.

Messi restored the host's

lead in 56th by coolly scoring a penalty in the "Panenka" style, chipping it softly past goalie Jan Oblak. The goal was Messi's 630th club goal to go with his 70 for Argentina. It was also his league-leading 22nd goal of the season.

Atletico responded again through the speed of forward Yannick Carrasco, who was tripped by Nelson Semedo and sent Saul back to the spot. Ter Stegen got a hand on his penalty but not enough to keep it out.

Diego Simeone's Atletico remained undefeated in the six matches since the competition resumed. It stayed in third place, 12 points behind Madrid.

Simeone left forward Joao Felix on the bench until the second half in favor of the in-form midfielder Marcos Llorente, who is thriving in support of the attack.

Llorente led the attack early on, but Carrasco with his speed on the left flank proved to be the visitors' biggest weapon. Twice the Belgian forward burst into the box on a counter-attack and was taken down by late tackles from Arturo Vidal and Semedo.

"Carrasco came back from the stoppage in better shape, and is now back to playing at his best level," Simeone said about his forward, who is in his second stint with the club.

Setien opted for leaving Messi and Luis Suarez alone up front and adding an extra midfielder in youngster Riqui Puig, keeping forwards Antoine Griezmann and Ansu Fati on the bench. Puig had one of his best performances for Barcelona, showing his passing and ball control skills as he linked up well with Messi and his other teammates.