

STARS AND STRIPES[®]

Friday, July 3, 2020

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Health officials say holiday will test US

Associated Press

The U.S. headed into the Fourth of July weekend with many parades and fireworks displays canceled, beaches and bars closed, and health authorities warning that this will be a crucial test of Americans' self-control that could determine the trajectory of the surging coronavirus outbreak.

With confirmed cases climbing in 40 states, governors have ordered the wearing of masks in public, and families were urged to celebrate their independence at home. Even then, they were told to keep their backyard cookouts small.

Health experts agree this will be a pivotal moment in determining whether the nation slides into a deeper mess. The fear is that a weekend of crowded pool parties, picnics and parades will fuel the surge.

"We're not going to be arresting people for having gatherings, but we're certainly going to discourage it," said Dr. Jeff Duchin, public health director for Seattle and King County.

Those who decide they must gather with a small group of family members need to be careful, he said: "Don't share utensils, don't share objects, don't pass them back and forth, because you're passing that virus around as well."

The warnings were sounded after a Memorial Day weekend that saw many people emerge from stay-at-home orders to go to the beach, restaurants and family gatherings. Since then, confirmed infections per day in the U.S. have rocketed to an all-time high, more than doubling.

The U.S. set another record on Friday with 52,300 newly reported cases, according to

the tally kept by Johns Hopkins University. Arizona, California, Florida and Texas have been hit especially hard.

Despite it all, there will still be fireworks and community events scattered across the nation, with many taking social distancing into account.

In Ohio, Upper Arlington's July Fourth parade will take a much longer route through its neighborhoods so residents can watch without crowding the streets.

"We're calling it the front porch parade," said organizer Sam Porter. "We can't just not do something."

Fireworks will be launched from four spots across Albuquerque, N.M., so that people can ooh and aah from home instead of gathering in a single place.

However, beaches that had

been open for the traditional start of summer over Memorial Day weekend will be off-limits in many places this time, including South Florida, Southern California and the Texas Gulf Coast.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advised Americans who do go to the beach to wear face coverings, though not in the water.

Delaware's governor ordered bars in some beach towns to close ahead of the holiday, saying people were getting complacent about masks and social distancing. The Jersey shore town of Wildwood canceled its fireworks, and the Lake Erie resort village of Put-in-Bay in Ohio did the same after health officials linked a small number of coronavirus cases to bars on the island.

US pullout from Afghanistan tentatively delayed

Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — Top U.S. commanders believe they have tentative White House approval to leave just over 4,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan beyond November, delaying a full American pullout until after the presidential election.

The plan, worked out at a meeting between Pentagon and White House officials late last month, would represent an about-face for President Donald Trump. He has pushed for a complete withdrawal of the 8,600 troops now in Afghanistan by the election, seeing a pullout as a much-needed foreign policy achievement as his reelection prospects have deteriorated.

Trump had only recently told

advisers that a full and rapid pullout could blunt the controversy over intelligence reports that Russia has paid militants to kill American service members, one official said. The president, who has made clear that he cares little about conditions inside Afghanistan, could still order a full withdrawal by November if he decides it would help him in the election, officials said.

But Pentagon officials warned that a complete withdrawal over the next five months could plunge Afghanistan into crisis, dooming the peace talks U.S. officials have been seeking to jump-start between the Afghan government and Taliban militants and worsening already surging

violence.

"The timetable is being driven by the election clock, not the Afghan clock," said one official, who agreed to discuss the administration's thinking in return for anonymity.

Other administration officials also believe that a sooner-than-planned exit would only worsen the perception that the U.S. and Trump were being driven out of the country after nearly two decades of war.

Marine Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, the top commander in the Middle East, said last month that he could not recommend a full withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan until the Taliban demonstrates it no longer supports al-Qaida forces there.

It wouldn't be the first time that the Pentagon had successfully lobbied a president to halt a planned withdrawal from Afghanistan months before an election. President Barack Obama also halted plans for a complete pullout in 2015, leaving the question of whether the U.S. should leave for his successor. If Trump loses the election, the decision on a final withdrawal would fall to Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic nominee, who has long favored reducing the U.S. presence in the country.

Trump's insistence on pulling out all U.S. troops has drawn opposition not only from the Pentagon but also from lawmakers of both parties.

Admiral says Navy needs to act more quickly on diversity

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A Navy task force established to address biases, such as racism and sexism, is working to create “enduring and meaningful change” within the ranks, Navy leaders said Thursday.

“It’s not like we have not been committed to inclusion and diversity in the Navy for many years, and it’s not like we haven’t taken many actions there. But I think it’s safe to say that as we look at current events it’s really put a light on the fact that we need to do more. We need to do it more quickly,” Vice Adm. John Nowell, chief of naval personnel, told reporters Thursday.

The military is creating diversity and inclusion initiatives in response to the national dialogue that has erupted over systemic racism in the United States after the deaths of several African Americans this year involving law enforcement.

On June 18, Defense Secretary Mark Esper announced three initiatives to address diversity in the military, including the creation of a Defense Advisory Committee on Diversity and Inclusion in the Armed Services, which was inspired by the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services.

“As a Navy — uniform and civilian, active and Reserve — we cannot tolerate discrimination or racism of any kind. We must work to identify and eliminate individual and systemic racism within our force,” Adm. Mike Gilday, the chief of naval operations, said in a prepared statement.

Task Force One Navy was established Monday to recommend reforms in nine key areas in the service, including recruiting, promotions, health care, and military justice. The task force members are officers and enlisted personnel and civilians, and they will reach out to academics and industry members, according to Nowell.

House committee approves \$740.5 billion defense bill

BY STEVE BEYNON
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A House committee Wednesday approved a \$740.5 billion defense spending bill that includes a pay raise for troops, limits on the president’s ability to withdraw troops from Germany and renaming bases that honor Confederate generals.

The House Armed Services Committee passed its 2021 National Defense Authorization Act, which sets yearly policy and funding priorities for the Pentagon, by a 56-0 vote after 14 hours of debate on Capitol Hill.

The bill includes a 3% pay raise for service members that keeps up with inflation and mirrors the Senate version. The military gets a pay raise each year and has ranged from 2.2% in 2007 to 3.1% this year.

The committee voted 49-7 to adopt an amendment to the NDAA from Reps. Ruben Gallego, D-Ariz., and Don Bacon, R-Neb., to rebuke Trump’s plan to remove thousands of troops out of Germany, which can be used as a quick-reaction force against Russia and be deployed rapidly to the Middle East and Africa.

The amendment prevents the administration from reducing troops until 180 days after the

Defense Department presents a plan on Capitol Hill certifying the drawdown would not harm the United States or its allies.

The House committee’s defense spending bill also includes \$1 billion to combat future pandemics, including \$750 million for military preparedness, and millions for rapid production of medical gear.

Voting came to a close shortly before midnight, making it one of the fastest markup sessions in years. The final amendment approved was offered by Smith and names the defense bill after Rep. Mac Thornberry of Texas, the top Republican on the committee, who is retiring after serving in Congress since 1995.

The panel passed an amendment as part of the NDAA that would kick off the process of renaming bases honoring Confederates from the Civil War. The Senate Armed Services Committee’s version of the NDAA contains a similar provision.

But President Donald Trump has said an NDAA arriving on his desk with measures to rename those military bases is unacceptable, possibly putting congressional Republicans on a collision course with the White House.

Senator to block promotions until Vindman assurance

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — A Democratic senator is blocking promotions for 1,123 senior members of the military until she gets assurances from Defense Secretary Mark Esper that he will not retaliate against an Army officer for his role in the past year’s impeachment inquiry of President Donald Trump.

Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., said Thursday that she wants confirmation in writing from Esper that he did not or

will not block the promotion of Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman. Until she gets that assurance, she will maintain a hold on Senate confirmation of the hundreds of promotions.

Duckworth is a Purple Heart recipient and a former Army helicopter pilot who lost both of legs in the Iraq War.

Vindman, who received a Purple Heart for his actions in Iraq and later served as a White House aide on European affairs, is among hundreds of officers selected to be promoted to colonel this year.

In February, the White House ousted Vindman from his post on the National Security Council. He had testified to Congress in November that he was disturbed by Trump’s call for Ukraine to investigate the president’s political rivals.

“Our military is supposed to be the ultimate meritocracy,” Duckworth said in a statement. “It is simply unprecedented and wrong for any Commander in Chief to meddle in routine military matters at all, whether or not he has a personal vendetta against a Soldier who

did his patriotic duty and told the truth — a Soldier who has been recommended for promotion by his superiors because of his performance ... This goes far beyond any single military officer; it is about protecting a merit-based system from political corruption and unlawful retaliation.”

Duckworth’s office described her move as “unprecedented in modern times” and said it was a response to “numerous efforts by Donald Trump to politicize the nation’s Armed Forces.”

Milley: Bayonets issued to troops for DC protest

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has confirmed a report by The Associated Press that some of the service members who were mobilized to Washington, D.C., last month in response to civil unrest over the killing of George Floyd were issued bayonets. Defense documents obtained by the AP show some were not trained in riot response.

Members of the Army's 82nd Airborne Division from Fort Bragg, N.C., and the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, which is based in D.C. and typically guards the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, were mobilized last month to respond to massive protests over the treatment of Black Americans and systemic issues of police brutality. But the troops were never actually sent to the protests after they arrived.

The soldiers were issued bayonets for their June 2 deployment — but told they were to remain in their scabbards and not attached to their service rifles, Joint Chiefs Chairman Army Gen. Mark A. Milley wrote to two U.S. representatives in a letter that was obtained by the AP. The soldiers were also told no weapons were to enter the capital without clear orders and only after nonlethal options were first reviewed, he said.

Milley said the order to mobilize the troops came from Army Maj. Gen. Omar Jones, who serves as commander of the military district of Washington. Milley's letter, dated June 26, was sent to Democratic Reps. Raja Krishnamoorthi, of Illinois, and Ted Lieu, of California, who demanded an explanation after the AP first reported on the issuance of bayonets on June 2.

Roughly 700 members of the 82nd Airborne Division were sent on that day to two military bases near the District Capitol Area. The AP previously reported soldiers were armed with live rounds, bayonets and riot gear. Bloomberg reported on June 11 that the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, nicknamed "The Old Guard," was also issued bayonets.

Upon arrival, neither the 82nd nor The Old Guard were ever called off base and into the city to respond to protests. Division paratroopers were sent back to Fort Bragg on June 4.

But the reports led to sharp condemnation and outrage on social media platforms.

An unclassified military document obtained by the AP also shows that some of the soldiers were not prepared to deal with the protesters. Instead, commanders planned to give them the proper training within 96 hours of their arrival in Washington.

Prosecutors: Soldier killed with hammer on Fort Hood

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Federal and military investigators said Thursday a soldier missing since April was killed by a fellow soldier stationed at the same Texas base. The revelation followed demands for the Army to release details about its investigation of the disappearance.

A criminal complaint released by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Texas charges a civilian with helping hide the body of 20-year-old Pfc. Vanessa Guillen. The document, prepared in conjunction with the Army Criminal Investigative Command and the FBI, says the civilian helped the other soldier get rid of evidence after he bludgeoned Guillen with a hammer at Fort Hood in central Texas and later dismembered and dumped the body.

Human remains were found Tuesday near the Leon River in Bell County, about 20 miles east of Fort Hood, in the search for Guillen. Her family said through attorney Natalie Khawam that they believe evidence shows the remains are Guillen, but authorities said they are still awaiting positive identification.

"The whole thing is devastating, gruesome, barbaric," Khawam said.

The Army said Wednesday that the soldier suspected in Guillen's disappearance had killed himself.

In a press conference Thursday, the Army identified the soldier suspected in Guillen's disappearance as Aaron David Robinson. Army investigators declined to comment further on the details of Guillen's case, saying they did not want to compromise the ongoing investigation.

The criminal complaint released later Thursday said the civilian arrested in connection to the Guillen case is Cecily Aguilar, 22, of Killeen, Texas, near Fort Hood. Aguilar faces one count of conspiracy to tamper with evidence.

Robinson enlisted Aguilar to help him dispose of Guillen's body, according to the complaint. Aguilar later recognized Guillen, the complaint says, and helped Robinson mutilate and hide her body.

Aguilar was arrested Wednesday and was being held Thursday in the Bell County Jail in Belton, Texas, according to booking records. It was unclear whether she had an attorney to speak on her behalf.

Top Dems rebuke Trump reaction to intel

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The two top Democrats in Congress said Thursday that any threats to U.S. troops must be pursued "relentlessly," rebuking President Donald Trump after receiving a highly classified briefing about intelligence that Russia offered bounties for killing U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said Trump, who has downplayed the threat, was "soft" on Russian President Vladimir Putin and distracted by less important issues. Trump has called reports of the intelligence assessments a "hoax" and has so far declined to address whether the U.S. has or will respond to Russia.

"Our armed forces would be better served if President Trump spent more time reading his daily briefing and less time planning military parades and defending relics of the Confederacy," Pelosi and Schumer said in a joint statement.

Trump and the White House have repeatedly insisted that the president wasn't originally briefed because the information was unverified, even though it's rare for in-

telligence to be confirmed without a shadow of doubt before it is presented to senior decision-makers. Officials have told The Associated Press and other news organizations that the information was included in one of the president's written daily briefings last year and again this year.

The criticism comes as Trump is working to change the narrative but has faced increasing pressure from lawmakers in Congress — including some Republicans — who have demanded more answers about the intelligence assessment. The president has repeatedly tweeted about protesters tearing down monuments to the Confederacy and on Thursday held a news conference to tout newly released numbers showing added jobs in the economy. He did not mention Russia.

Top intelligence officials, including CIA Director Gina Haspel and Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe, conducted the closed-door briefing for a group of lawmakers dubbed the "gang of eight" — Pelosi, Schumer, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy and the top Republicans and Democrats on the two intelligence committees.

Trump starts July 4th party at Mount Rushmore

Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — President Donald Trump was to begin his Independence Day weekend on Friday with a patriotic display of fireworks at Mount Rushmore, an event that was expected to draw thousands where masks and social distancing weren't to be required as coronavirus cases spiked across the country.

Trump was expected to speak at the event, which had issued 7,500 tickets to watch fireworks that he had said would a "display like few people have seen."

Republican Gov. Kristi Noem, a Trump ally, had said social distancing wasn't to be required during the event and masks were to be optional. Event organizers were planning to provide masks to anyone who wanted them and to screen attendees for

symptoms of COVID-19.

The Republican mayor of the largest city near the monument, Rapid City, had said he would be watching for a spike in cases after the event, the Rapid City Journal had reported.

"We're going to have thousands of people, shoulder to shoulder at these events — someone in line to see a president and being able to see fireworks at Mount Rushmore — they are probably not likely to disqualify themselves because they developed a cough the day of or the day before," Rapid City Mayor Steve Allender had said.

Leaders of several Native American tribes in the region also had raised concerns that the event could lead to coronavirus outbreaks among their members, who they say are particularly vulnerable

to COVID-19 because of an underfunded health care system and chronic health conditions.

"The president is putting our tribal members at risk to stage a photo op at one of our most sacred sites," Harold Frazier, chairman of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, had said.

Some Native American groups were planning to use Trump's visit to protest the Mount Rushmore memorial itself, pointing out that the Black Hills were taken from the Lakota people against treaty agreements.

Protests were expected in Keystone, the small town near the monument. Chase Iron Eyes, a spokesman for the Oglala Sioux president, had said protesters were likely to make their voice heard at the memorial itself.

Trump more optimistic than Biden on surge in jobs

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The U.S. economy just posted its best single-month job gain in history. U.S. unemployment is at one of its worst points since the Great Depression.

Both are true.

As Republicans and Democrats fought to spin Thursday's jobs numbers to their advantage, both sides face tremendous political risks in navigating a delicate and defining issue heading into the presidential campaign's final months.

Democrats, led by presumptive nominee Joe Biden, seized on the growing threat presented by the coronavirus after the better-than-expected numbers were released, a stance the Republicans called rooting against America's recovery. President Donald Trump claimed a major economic victory and played down the health threat,

even as an explosion of new infections threatened to stall, or even reverse, the economic gains.

Deep uncertainty lies ahead, experts warn, despite two months of record job growth.

And with only two more monthly jobs reports expected before the Nov. 3 election, the dueling visions of America's economy establish a new frame for the high-stakes debate ahead.

"Today's announcement proves that our economy is roaring back," Trump exulted to reporters at the White House after the June numbers were released. He later added, "The crisis is being handled."

Two hours later, Biden offered a darker assessment.

"There's no victory to be celebrated," the former vice president said in a video recorded at his home in Delaware. "We're

still down nearly 15 million jobs, and the pandemic is getting worse, not better."

"Today's report is positive news, and I'm thankful for it — for real," Biden continued. "But make no mistake, we're still in a deep, deep job hole because Donald Trump has so badly bungled the response to coronavirus."

Thursday's data showed a surge of 4.8 million new jobs last month, a snapshot of the economy as of three weeks ago. The U.S. unemployment rate improved from 13.3% in May to 11.1% in June as many Americans thrown out of work by COVID-19 were called back.

But the jobs numbers were announced just as the nation's confirmed coronavirus infections soared to an all-time daily high of 50,700, more than doubling over the past month, according to the count kept by Johns Hopkins University.

Supreme Court rules against Alabama curbside voting

Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — The U.S. Supreme Court in a 5-4 decision Thursday blocked a lower court ruling allowing curbside voting in Alabama and waiving some absentee ballot requirements during the pandemic.

Conservative justices granted Alabama's request to stay a federal judge's order that would allow local officials to offer curbside voting in the July runoff and loosen absentee ballot requirements in three of

the state's large counties. The order will remain stayed while the court decides whether to hear Alabama's appeal.

Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall said he was pleased the court acted quickly so that Alabama voting rules remain in place for the July 14 runoff.

"Alabama is again able to enforce laws that help ensure the fairness and integrity of our elections," the Republican said.

The court rulings stem from a lawsuit filed by the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the Southern Poverty

Law Center and the Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program. A group of voters had sought more voting options because of health concerns.

U.S. District Judge Abdul K. Kallon last month issued a preliminary injunction after finding that Alabama's election rules will cause sick or elderly voters to "likely face a painful and difficult choice between exercising their fundamental right to vote and safeguarding their health, which could prevent them from casting a vote in upcoming elections."

Ala. students had COVID-catching contests

Associated Press

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — Several college students in an Alabama city organized “COVID-19” parties as a contest to see who would get the virus first, an official said.

Students hosted the parties to intentionally infect each other with the new coronavirus, news outlets quoted Tuscaloosa City Councilor Sonya McKinstry as saying. McKinstry said party organizers purposely invited guests who tested positive for COVID-19. She said the students put money in a pot and whoever got COVID first would get the cash.

“It makes no sense,” McKinstry said. “They’re intentionally doing it.”

Tuscaloosa Fire Chief Randy Smith told the City Council on Tuesday that fire officials confirmed some students had attended parties despite knowing they were infected. The department thought the parties were rumors, but Smith said after some research, officials discovered they were real.

McKinstry and Smith did not say which schools the students attend. Tuscaloosa is home to the University of Alabama and several other colleges.

Florida

MIAMI — Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Gimenez said he’s instituting an overnight curfew and closing some businesses as the county’s number of COVID-19 cases and hospitalization rates continue to rise.

Gimenez said Thursday night that the 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew, which begins Friday, will be in place indefinitely. The order closes casinos, strip clubs, movie theaters and other entertainment venues a month after they were allowed to reopen.

“This curfew is meant to stop people from venturing out and hanging out with friends in groups, which has shown to be spreading the virus rapidly,” Gimenez said in a statement.

On Thursday, Florida reported a new daily record of 10,109

COVID positive cases. The state’s health department on Thursday also tallied 325 new coronavirus hospitalizations in Florida.

Georgia

ATLANTA — Georgia added close to 3,500 confirmed coronavirus cases to its total count on Thursday, the largest single-day increase the state has experienced, as infection rates rise across the country.

The state has seen a sharp increase in confirmed cases as well as people hospitalized in recent weeks, after a short period of decline that followed a since-lifted stay-at-home order from Republican Gov. Brian Kemp.

“We are in exponential growth with rapidly rising infections,” Dr. Carlos del Rio, an infectious disease expert at Emory University, tweeted Thursday. “I am very concerned of our trajectory as we head into the 4th of July weekend,” del Rio said as he urged people to wear a mask and practice social distancing.

New Jersey

TRENTON — New Jersey’s playgrounds, water and amusement parks, libraries and museums reopened Thursday after a monthslong pause because of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Atlantic City’s casinos also reopened, though without smoking, drinking and indoor dining.

New Jersey continues to reopen businesses from the near-total closure from the outbreak in March, currently in Stage 2 of three.

Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy on Thursday reported there were about 500 more positive cases, putting the total at 172,000. He reported the death toll climbed by 27 overnight to 13,251.

New York

NEW YORK — A Manhattan federal lockup failed to implement common-sense measures to protect prisoners after a

COVID-19 outbreak infected dozens of inmates at the facility, a judge said Thursday.

U.S. District Judge Edgardo Ramos said four inmates who sued over conditions at the Metropolitan Correctional Center on behalf of themselves and others were unlikely to prove deliberate indifference to their plight. Still, the Manhattan jurist allowed their lawsuit to proceed in their quest to improve conditions at the jail and win release for vulnerable inmates.

Arlo Devlin-Brown, a lawyer for inmates, said in an email that it was notable that the judge cited the fact that the facility’s warden has promised to address shortcomings as he observed that “the MCC may fall short in its efforts to improve its pandemic response.”

Tennessee

KNOXVILLE — Knox County on Friday joined Nashville and Memphis in requiring people to wear face masks in many public settings to slow the spread of the new coronavirus.

The order from the Knox County Board of Health specifically mandates that in most indoor public places, every person aged 12 or older must wear a face covering when they are within 6 feet of another person who does not live in the same household, the Knoxville News Sentinel reported. The order will remain in place until the board of health votes to rescind or change it.

Vermont

MONTPELIER — Vermont Gov. Phil Scott said Thursday he’s allowing a bill to allow mail-in voting during the November presidential to become law without his signature.

In a letter to members of the Vermont Legislature, Scott said there appeared to be a technical problem with the law that creates an ambiguity in how the secretary of state deals with ballot returns.

“This is particularly concerning in light of the concerns expressed by many regarding

the return process for ballots mailed to all Vermonters,” the Republican governor wrote.

Washington

OLYMPIA — Washington Gov. Jay Inslee announced Thursday that because of an increase in the rate of COVID-19 infection, starting next week, bar seating will no longer be permitted for counties currently in Phase 3 of the state’s four-stage reopening plan and businesses statewide will not be able to serve customers who don’t wear facial coverings.

Inslee also announced he is ordering a two-week statewide pause for counties looking to advance from their current stage of reopening.

Initially, only businesses in Yakima County faced liability if they did not prohibit allowing a customer to enter a business, or conducted business with a customer if they were not wearing a facial covering in any public space, indoors or outdoors.

Now that requirement applies to businesses statewide, though a spokesman for Inslee said the focus will be on education and seeking voluntary compliance first.

West Virginia

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice on Thursday said residents should prepare for a mandatory face mask order as the state’s new coronavirus cases rise to their highest level since the pandemic began.

The Republican governor said he will decide early next week whether he will order that masks be worn inside buildings and when social distancing isn’t possible. Justice has previously resisted such a mandate but said he wanted to give people notice that a mask mandate could be coming.

“If that is such a horrible, horrible inconvenience in your life, please just think of what it will do to save us and keep us to be able to do all of the things that we’re doing today in West Virginia,” he said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police: Opossum shot because it was injured

WV MORGANTOWN — A West Virginia police officer will not be disciplined after a video emerged of him shooting a opossum on a residential street because the animal was injured, a spokesman said Thursday.

A resident reported that the opossum had been hit by a car Wednesday evening and an officer arrived to find it severely hurt, said Morgantown Police Department spokesman Andrew Stacy.

A video of the incident posted on social media shows the officer using a long piece of wood to move the animal onto a grassy area before shooting it from a distance with a handgun, which drew criticism from Twitter users. Stacy said the officer was putting the opossum out of its misery.

“You see the video without any context behind it and say, ‘What is going on?’ but the reality is that he was trying to help the animal and not have it suffer anymore,” he said.

Waves expose portion of lighthouse complex

NC CHARLOTTE — A portion of a 150-year-old brick fence that once surrounded the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse has been exposed by ocean waves that carved a cliff into the sand, the National Park Service said.

The once-elaborate fence was finished in 1871 when the lighthouse was a year old and it was left behind when the lighthouse was moved inland in 1990 to protect it from sea level rise, The Charlotte Observer reported Wednesday.

Park spokesman Michael Barber said the fence founda-

tion was buried at the time of the lighthouse move, and part of it was removed to make room for a path to relocate the lighthouse.

Police investigating hate graffiti on dam

VT WATERBURY — State troopers are investigating after graffiti from what is being described as a white supremacist hate group was painted on a portion of the Waterbury dam, the Vermont State Police said.

Police say the graffiti, identified as coming from a known hate group, was reported to police Wednesday after it was discovered by a state worker.

The graffiti was applied quickly with the help of a stencil.

There are no known witnesses or suspects. State police reported the incident to the attorney general’s office under the Bias Incident Reporting System. State workers painted over the graffiti.

2 children unharmed when man steals car

PA PHILADELPHIA — Two young children were unharmed when the car they were in was stolen early Thursday from a Philadelphia takeout restaurant while their mother was inside the business, authorities said.

The mother was picking up food and had left the vehicle running as the children — a toddler and infant — slept in the backseat. A 25-year-old man entered the vehicle around 1:30 a.m. and drove away.

The mother gave police a description of the vehicle and it was spotted minutes later by an officer. The man driving the car was soon captured following a brief struggle, police said.

The two children apparently slept through the whole incident and were not injured.

The theft suspect’s name was not released.

Teen charged for online school threat

NM ROSWELL — The FBI says a teenager who made online threats that led to the lockdown of Roswell High School is facing a federal charge.

FBI officials said in a news release Wednesday that the 18-year-old has been charged with interstate communications containing a threat to injure the person of another.

According to authorities, the teen went on the social media app Snapchat on Nov. 12. He allegedly posted a message with an image of a semi-automatic weapon and a threat specifically targeted at Roswell High School. The message led to the high school being shut down.

The teen remains in custody.

Fireworks seller told to stop ads in state

MA BOSTON — The Massachusetts attorney general is demanding that a fireworks retailer with stores in New Hampshire stop targeting its advertising to residents of Massachusetts, where fireworks are illegal.

Attorney General Maura Healey in a cease-and-desist letter sent Wednesday to Phantom Fireworks alleges the company is violating state consumer protection law by mailing advertisements and discount coupons to Massachusetts addresses and highlighting the proximity of its New Hampshire stores.

Complaints about illegal fireworks being used in Massachusetts have soared during the

coronavirus pandemic.

Ohio-based Phantom Fireworks has three stores in New Hampshire, all close to the Massachusetts border.

Chief Executive Bruce Zoldan told The Boston Globe the company would review Healey’s letter and adjust its marketing strategy if necessary.

Volunteers to paint mural of slain woman

MD ANNAPOLIS — A mural of a Black woman who was killed by police in Louisville, Ky., will be painted in a historically Black neighborhood in Annapolis.

The Capital Gazette reported that artists and volunteers will paint a 7,000-square-foot mural of Breonna Taylor on Saturday.

Taylor was shot and killed by police in her Louisville apartment in March. She was sleeping when officers executed a no-knock warrant. Her death sparked protests and calls for the officers involved to be arrested and charged.

Muralist Jeff Huntington said the mural will be painted on a basketball court.

Kayakers rescue 2 from crashed seaplane

WA SEATTLE — Two people were rescued by nearby kayakers in Lake Washington after a seaplane crashed Wednesday, authorities said.

The Seattle Fire Department responded to the crash about 200 feet from shore near Lakeside Avenue South, KOMO-TV reported.

All of the people inside the plane were safely rescued. Police reported minor injuries.

From wire reports

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Historic weekend ahead in Indianapolis

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — The once-frosty schism between the two biggest racing series in the United States has finally thawed and the result is a blockbuster event at Indianapolis Motor Speedway — even without fans.

NASCAR's elite Cup Series will share a venue with IndyCar on the same weekend for the first time, a doubleheader conveniently forced by the frantic rescheduling required by the coronavirus pandemic. Even so, it is an important step in putting forth a united front for the sake of motorsports.

"We're all racers. We want racing to be successful," said Kevin Harvick, the current NASCAR points leader and a winner at the Brickyard last year. "I know it's kind of had that stigma for a number of years there's the IndyCar guys and there's the NASCAR guys ... racers are racers. Everybody wants to see a good race and be part of a cool event."

The fracture between the two leagues dates to at least 1954 when NASCAR founder Bill France Sr. was allegedly told by IMS security he'd been ordered to leave the speedway. France was already working on his own big race track, Daytona International Speedway, and he vowed it would give Indianapolis a run for its money.

The battle was on and neither side had any desire to build a working relationship. IndyCar, called CART in its heyday, dwarfed the Southern-based stock car series. But the open-wheel racing split in the mid 1990s in which Tony George created his own series gave NASCAR an opening to capitalize, as CART and the Indy Racing League fractured their base. NASCAR ex-

ploded in popularity and blew past its bitter rival as the place to race.

As years passed and NASCAR became an annual staple at Indianapolis, the relationship between the two series has improved. Jay Frye, who spent decades working in NASCAR, is now president of IndyCar. Steve Phelps, just the fifth president in NASCAR history, has never held a longstanding vendetta against the series.

Most important, though, is that motorsports titan Roger Penske now owns IndyCar and the speedway and has the juice to broker such a weekend. When the coronavirus pandemic blew holes in both series' schedules, Penske plopped the IndyCar road course race originally scheduled for May on the shared weekend with NASCAR.

IndyCar will open the spectacle on Saturday with its second event of the season, then NASCAR's second-tier Xfinity Series will make its debut later that day on the same road course. The Cup Series races Sunday on the 2.5-mile oval. COVID-19 restrictions mean IndyCar and NASCAR teams and drivers will not mingle, use different entry points at the speedway and work from different garages.

The inability to open the gates to spectators is the one downside to what is an otherwise monumental moment for both series.

"To me, that's the unfortunate part, we don't get to have fans in here," Penske said. "But I went to Jim France and Steve Phelps and said, 'Look, the Brickyard has not been able to be what you have hoped, and now that we run the series and the speedway, we can make the decisions and we can get this done and it will be good for everyone.'"

This new pairing could ultimately smooth

the road ahead for an entire industry battling for attendance, television ratings and sponsorship. NBC Sports is IndyCar's broadcast partner and begins its portion of the NASCAR season this weekend. Sam Flood, executive producer and president of production, has tried to move away from head-to-head scheduling.

"We think it's a really important crossover to have people watch racing ... to get people to sample different series, and you shouldn't just be a NASCAR fan, you should be a racing fan," Flood said. "I think this is a great celebration of motorsports. The interest in motorsports is high. We just need people to watch each other's forms of racing and grow the overall pool of racing fans."

There are no drivers scheduled to compete in both series, but NBC Sports analyst Townsend Bell will call the IndyCar race and then fly to Daytona to race in the IMSA sports car event. Seven-time NASCAR champion Jimmie Johnson plans to drive five-time IndyCar champion Scott Dixon's car in a test on the road course next week.

Both IndyCar and the Cup Series will work from the garages once used by Formula One, and the NASCAR group can't even enter the facility until IndyCar has cleared out. It means drivers can't socialize the way initially imagined on a weekend such as this, and they'll have to watch the other series on television.

"I don't think I'll be able to watch the race. I wish I could have. It's the situation we're in," said Simon Pagenaud, winner of both the road course race and the Indianapolis 500 last year. "At the end of the day, it's a historical moment, I think not just for American racing but for worldwide racing."

Briefly

Texas A&M, Fisher get punishment from NCAA

COLLEGE STATION, Texas — Texas A&M's football program was placed on probation and coach Jimbo Fisher given a six-month show cause order by the NCAA Thursday after the Aggies were found to have violated recruiting and other rules beginning in January 2018.

Fisher, who had just been hired by Texas A&M, and an assistant coach had impermissible contact with a recruit, the NCAA said without identifying the coaches by name.

Redskins: 'Thorough review' of team name

WASHINGTON — The Washington Redskins are undergoing a "thorough review" of their nickname.

The team said Friday it has been talking to the NFL for weeks about the subject. In a statement, the team said recent events around the U.S. and feedback from the community prompted the formal review.

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said, "In the last few weeks, we have had ongoing discussions with Dan, and we

are supportive of this important step."

FedEx, the title sponsor of the Redskins' stadium in Landover, Md., said Thursday, "We have communicated to the team in Washington our request that they change the team name." On Thursday night, Nike appeared to remove all Redskins gear from its online store.

Coach Ron Rivera, who said in a recent radio interview now is not the time to discuss the name, called it "an issue of personal importance." Rivera said he'd work closely with Snyder during the process.

Jays given exemption to train at Rogers Centre

TORONTO — All 30 MLB teams will train at their regular-season ballparks for the pandemic-shortened season after the Toronto Blue Jays received a Canada federal government exemption on Thursday to work out at Rogers Centre.

Toronto will move camp from its spring training complex in Dunedin, Fla. This exemption does not cover the regular season and player travel between the U.S. and Canada.

— Associated Press

Baseball Zooms into summer training

Associated Press

Texas Rangers manager Chris Woodward was going to address his entire team before the start of MLB's unprecedented summer training camp, just like he did when spring training opened about 4½ months ago. It was on a Zoom call instead of in person this time.

When the New York Mets resume practice, 60-year-old hitting coach Chili Davis will be working with hitters remotely and not initially at Citi Field with players and other staff members. The Seattle Mariners have three assistant coaches who fall into the high-risk category for the coronavirus and will work remotely all season.

At Fenway Park, weights and other exercise equipment were set up Thursday in the concourse under the seats that Red Sox fans won't be allowed to occupy when the season finally starts.

Things certainly are different for baseball's resumption amid the pandemic, three weeks before the start of a 60-game regular season. The Rangers, Mets, Mariners and Red Sox were among the teams set for their first official summer workouts Friday, along with the defending World Series champion Washington Nationals minus first baseman

Ryan Zimmerman and pitcher Joe Ross after they opted out of the season.

After the Toronto Blue Jays received a Canadian government exemption Thursday to work out at Rogers Centre, every team will be at its home ballpark to restart preseason workouts that abruptly came to a halt March 12 in Arizona and Florida.

The Rangers will hold the first official team activity in their new retractable-roof stadium, even though some players have been working out there for several weeks. Players will be in different groups and times for workouts after Woodward's remarks by video conference.

Along with some similarity to what he said in February when the team initially gathered at its spring training complex in Surprise, Ariz., Woodward is focusing on the protocols and safeguards put in place by MLB in response to COVID-19, and the urgency of being ready for the sprint of a season that will be 102 games shorter than usual.

"This is a little different. Following protocols, being safe, making sure we're on time, sticking to schedules, those are things that are critical for our success this year," he said. "If we can limit the amount of exposure we have, or the risk

factor in getting this virus, the team that keeps their people on the field, their players on the field, is probably going to have an advantage."

While the home ballparks are bigger than those at spring training, teams have to adjust to making a camp environment without having several extra fields next to each other, and the absence of some additional workout-specific spaces.

"It's a great challenge. I mean, last week I think I grew a few more grey hairs just brainstorming through this," first-year Mets manager Luis Rojas said. "But we've had fun definitely with the excitement of getting baseball back and going through this path. But we did come up with different ideas, and we're going to stagger the guys. I mean, we're going to come in in groups."

Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker signed an order Thursday allowing the Red Sox to open Fenway Park without fans. The weights and exercise equipment in the concourse will allow players to work out with more social distancing than would be possible in the usual cramped facilities.

Mariners bullpen coach Brian De Lunas won't be on the field in Seattle because of long-term kidney issues. The team said hitting coach Tim Laker (colitis) and 68-year-old first

base coach Perry Hill, who is also the infield coach, will also work remotely all season.

The Mets will be at Citi Field without Davis, and Rojas said the timeline for the hitting coach to join the team there is uncertain. The New York Post was first to report that Davis wouldn't be there in person for the beginning of practices because of concerns about the coronavirus. The Post, citing unidentified sources in its report, said Davis does not have the virus.

The Yankees won't have their first full workout until Saturday, but Gerrit Cole and Adam Ottavino threw bullpens to coaching assistant Radley Haddad at Yankee Stadium on Thursday. Cole, preparing for the July 23 opener at Washington, reached 95-98 mph and pitched three innings. Ottavino pitched two. Each had their own bag of balls.

Aaron Judge, Aaron Hicks and Like Voit were the batters. New York used the home, visitors and auxiliary clubhouses and five mounds: two in each bullpen and one on the field.

"I think the biggest thing right now is just taking inventory when everyone comes in and kind of just making sure they're kind of at the spot that maybe they talked about being at," new pitching coach Matt Blake said.

Source: NFL considering playing 'Black anthem'

Associated Press

"Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing" will be performed live or played before "The Star-Spangled Banner" prior to each NFL game during Week 1 and the league is considering putting names of victims of police brutality on helmet decals or jersey patches, a person familiar with the discussions told The Associated Press.

The person said the league is working collaboratively with players to recognize victims of systemic racism through-

out the season in a variety of ways. The person spoke to the AP on Thursday on condition of anonymity because discussions between the league and the NFL Players Association are ongoing.

Additional plans include the use of educational programs and storytelling about the victims and their families similar to the league's PSA on Botham Jean released in January and the Super Bowl commercial on Corey Jones featuring his cousin, former NFL star Anquan Boldin.

"Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing" is traditionally known as the Black anthem. It'll be played first when the Super Bowl champion Kansas City Chiefs host the Houston Texans to kick off the NFL regular season on Sept. 10.

It's uncertain whether fans will be in attendance Week 1 or at all this season because of the coronavirus pandemic. The league is considering asking fans to sign a waiver and wear masks, according to a person familiar with those conversations.

The NFL announced last month it is committing \$250 million over 10 years to social justice initiatives, targeting what it calls "systemic racism" and supporting "the battle against the ongoing and historic injustices faced by African Americans."

Following the nationwide protests sparked by the death of George Floyd, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell denounced racism in a video prompted greatly by a players' video seeking NFL action.