

STARS AND STRIPES®

Thursday, July 9, 2020

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Littoral combat ships flex their muscles

BY SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — A standoff this spring between China and Malaysia in the South China Sea was a chance for the U.S. Navy's littoral combat ships to prove their mettle.

The USS Gabrielle Giffords and the USS Montgomery helped stave off Chinese intimidation of a Malaysian-contracted drillship — the West Capella — during April and May in disputed waters near Borneo.

The high-tech vessels were part of U.S. efforts to maintain a monthlong presence near the drillship, which had been approached by a flotilla of Chinese coast guard and paramilitary vessels.

A few years ago, lightly armed and experimental littoral combat ships might not have been trusted for such a high-profile standoff.

"The story of this ship is one that makes me ashamed and

embarrassed, as a former Navy person and as a person who's responsible to the taxpayers of my state," the late Arizona Sen. John McCain said of the vessels in 2010.

The ships were criticized for their cost, lighter armament and lower survivability standard than some larger ships. The first LCS's — the USS Freedom and USS Independence — had an expected price tag of about \$220 million but came in at \$637 million and \$704 million, respectively, according to The Baltimore Sun.

A decade later, the Navy says it has tweaked the vessels' design and honed the way it operates them during rotational deployments.

The Montgomery, for example, completed a 12-month rotation to Singapore and returned to its homeport of San Diego last month, Capt. Ann McCann, commodore of Destroyer Squadron 7, said in a statement emailed to Stars and Stripes on

June 19.

The ship made numerous port calls and participated in the first maritime drill between the U.S. and the Association of South East Asian Nations alongside seven foreign navies, she said.

The Gabrielle Giffords is still on its maiden rotational deployment to Singapore, she said.

Since arriving in September, the ship has drilled with various foreign navies and participated in the Pacific Griffin exercise near Guam in October.

Littoral combat ships are fast and agile surface combatants, optimized for operating in shallow water as well as open ocean, McCann said.

The Gabrielle Giffords is similar in size to ships operated by many other countries' navies and coast guards, making it easier to train, work alongside and build relationships with them, McCann said.

Littoral combat ships, with a top speed of more than 50 mph

and a draft of less than 13 feet, are ideal for operations in dynamic and congested sea lanes, straits and archipelagos of South and Southeast Asia, she said. The difficulty of navigating the waters was illustrated by the collision of the guided-missile destroyer USS John S. McCain with a Liberian-flagged tanker, the Alnic MC, in the Strait of Malacca near Singapore on Aug. 21, 2017.

Littoral combat ships also have the 57-mm MK 110 medium-caliber gun, which can engage known surface threats, McCann said. They carry the MH-60S Seahawk helicopter equipped with the AGM-114N Hellfire missile. The Fire Scout drones can laser designate targets for the missiles, she said.

"Within the Indo-Pacific, in the coming years, we look forward to welcoming multiple rotationally deployed littoral combat ships to the region," she said.

Theodore Roosevelt nears end of mission rocked by virus

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

The aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt is returning home to San Diego after a fateful six-month deployment scarred by a coronavirus outbreak, a leadership crisis and the loss of two sailors.

Its commander, Capt. Carlos Sardiello, in a post on the ship's official Facebook page Wednesday, reflected on how far the warship has come in half that time.

"As we near the end of this deployment I can't help but smile a little with a feeling of serenity, reflecting on where we were three months ago and where we are now," he wrote.

"When the world needed heroes, you stepped up and filled that place."

More than 1,150 Roosevelt sailors tested positive for the coronavirus and one died from the illness after an outbreak aboard the ship that started March 24, according to a Navy investigation published in May. The carrier then diverted to Guam, where it stayed for more than two months to sanitize the ship and disembark, isolate, test and treat sailors.

The lone fatality from the outbreak, Chief Petty Officer Charles Thacker Jr., 41, of Fort Smith, Ark., died April 13 and was buried Wednesday in Fort Smith, according to the Southwest Times Record newspaper.

The Roosevelt returned to sea on June 4. Two weeks later, on June 18, one of its F/A-18F Super Hornets crashed into the Philippine Sea. The pilot and weapons officer were rescued.

As the carrier steamed toward home, another sailor died on board, this time of an undisclosed medical emergency on July 2. The Navy identified him as Chief Petty Officer Justin Calderone.

Sardiello did not say exactly when the Roosevelt would pull back into its homeport, Naval Base San Diego, but two ships from the strike group — guided-missile destroyer USS Russell and guided-missile cruiser USS Bunker Hill — returned on Wednesday, according to a

Navy statement.

Sardiello took over for Capt. Brett Crozier, the carrier's previous commander, when then-acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly removed Crozier from command in April. The move came after a letter Crozier sent to Navy higher-ups pleading for help for his crew was leaked to the San Francisco Chronicle.

"The spread of the disease is ongoing and accelerating," he wrote. "We are not at war. Sailors do not need to die."

Modly resigned about a week after removing Crozier when a recording of his speech to the Roosevelt's crew criticizing the former skipper and calling him "too naive or too stupid" was leaked to the public.

Female vets call for stop to military bias

BY ROSE L. THAYER

Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — No justice, no enlistment.

That's the call from a group of female veterans in the wake of the slaying of Fort Hood soldier Spc. Vanessa Guillen, whose remains were found mutilated and buried at the hands of another soldier miles from the central Texas base where she served.

Guillen, 20, was killed April 22 during the workday in an arms room at the base. Her body was moved in a plastic box from the base and hidden near a river more than 20 miles away, according to federal court documents. One suspect, a fellow soldier, is dead, and another is in federal custody. Her remains were found June 30 and confirmed as hers by the Army on Monday.

"We are all angry and we all want to see change," said Stephanie Gattas, a Navy veteran in San Antonio.

Gattas joined a group of 20 female veterans to write a letter outlining demands to improve the "systematic failures" that they claim led to a military in which victims of sexual harassment are afraid to report other service members and an Army in which a soldier can be murdered on base and it takes more than two months to solve the crime.

"It is our job as women veterans to support our sister in arms at this time. Although her death was tragic, it's leading to change," Gattas said. "This is in the name of all those men and women who have not been able to come forward and detail their sexual assault. This is for the women of the past who've been murdered and raped who have not been able to tell their story. For all those women and men who are still not accounted for."

The women want an enlistment boycott until their demands are met. They are calling "for young Americans

to refuse to enlist or accept a commission into any branch of the armed forces until these demands are met and the systemic problems with sexual assault and sexual harassment in military culture are effectively addressed," according to the letter.

The demands, which match those made by Guillen's family, include a congressional investigation into the circumstances of Guillen's disappearance and the firing of the soldier's entire chain of command, including the Fort Hood commander. They also want the sprawling Army base to be closed. More than 36,000 service members are assigned to the base, according to its public affairs office.

"For over two months, the disturbing circumstances surrounding Spc. Guillen's disappearance and the environment of sexual harassment she endured in her unit prior to her murder have gripped the attention of various communities across the country and incited a resounding need for the utmost accountability and attention," according to the letter, which is addressed to Defense Secretary Mark Esper, Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy and leadership in Congress.

Gattas said she knows the demands and the descriptions of gender and racial discrimination in the letter are controversial.

"We have to remove ourselves from our comfort to see change. We can't move the needle forward if we don't talk about it," she said.

More than 3,000 female veterans have signed the letter since it was released online Saturday. The group continues to collect signatures and will send the letter after they have vetted each woman's military service, said retired Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Tristeza Ordex-Ramirez, another veteran behind the letter.

Ordex-Ramirez said when she reported her own sexual

harassment in the Marine Corps, she had to tell her story over and over to white men. The first man, her gunnery sergeant, said, "Maybe you shouldn't look so good."

"That is not a proper response," Ordex-Ramirez said. "That experience made me not ever want to say anything again."

The boycott is a "good way of recognizing, 'You need us. We've been serving and we need to be protected,'" Franqui-Rivera said.

Once the Army responds positively, he said he believes League of United Latin American Citizens, known as LULAC, will go back to supporting military service.

The women behind the letter agree.

"We are going to witness a very pivotal turn in history for everything being brought to the forefront today," said Gattas, who has worked with victims of military sexual trauma through the nonprofit that she founded, the Pink Berets. She's been disheartened during the years to see women who've fought for decades to change the systemic issues of the military that allow for sexual harassment to continue in the ranks. But Gattas said she's hopeful that this is the moment for change.

Despite years of increased training and awareness campaigns for the military's Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Program, the Pentagon reported there were 7,825 sexual assault reports involving service members as victims or subjects in 2019. That was a 3% rise from the previous year. The military received 1,021 formal sexual harassment complaints, a 10% increase from 2018, according to the Pentagon report on the subject released in April.

Some credit for the increase is given to victim confidence in reporting, military officials have said. But results of the most recent Defense Department Workplace and Gender

Relations Survey of Active Duty Members showed the estimated prevalence of sexual assault rose in the Army to 6,500 soldiers in 2018, compared to 5,200 estimated in 2016. Because the report is conducted every other year, the increase cited in the 2019 report can't be characterized as an increase in assaults, according to the Pentagon.

Fort Hood commanders and investigators with the Army Criminal Investigation Command maintain they have found no credible evidence to link Guillen's death with sexual harassment. Vanessa Guillen's family said the soldier told her mother and sister that she faced sexual harassment in her unit.

Sometimes it's not just a fear of reprisal that keeps a soldier from reporting harassment, but the possible perception of betraying the Army family, said Nikki R. Wooten, an associate professor at the University of South Carolina College of Social Work and lieutenant colonel in the Army Reserve. For junior enlisted soldiers, the Army offers a sense of belonging and security they might not have experienced prior to military service.

"In military units, loyalty and emotional bonds are strong and intense and the sense of purpose to something greater than oneself is unlike any other life experience," Wooten said.

The demands within the female veterans' letter are bolstered by the hundreds of veterans who have taken to social media through the #IAMVanessaGuillen campaign to share their own stories of sexual harassment and assault while serving in the military.

The stories lay bare women's experiences with unwanted sexual advances, inappropriate comments, disregarded reports to their chain of command, rape, assault and male service members entering their barracks rooms unannounced. The posts come from women of all ages, ranks and backgrounds.

Court curbs access to free birth control

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court ruled broadly Wednesday in favor of the religious rights of employers in two cases that could leave more than 70,000 women without free contraception and tens of thousands of people with no way to sue for job discrimination.

In both cases the court ruled 7-2, with two liberal justices joining conservatives in favor of the Trump administration and religious employers.

In the more prominent of the two cases, involving President Barack Obama's health care overhaul, the justices greenlighted changes the Trump administration had sought. The administration announced in

2017 that it would allow more employers to opt out of providing the no-cost birth control coverage required under the law, but lower courts had blocked the changes.

The ruling is a significant election-year win for President Donald Trump, who counts on heavy support from evangelicals and other Christian groups for votes and policy backing. It was also good news for the administration, which in recent weeks has seen headline-making Supreme Court decisions go against its positions.

In one of those earlier cases, the court rejected Trump's effort to end legal protections for 650,000 young immigrants. In another, the justices said a landmark civil rights law pro-

fects gay, lesbian and transgender people from discrimination in employment.

In its second big ruling on Wednesday, the court sided with two Catholic schools in California in a decision underscoring that certain employees of religious schools can't sue for employment discrimination.

Lay teachers whose contracts had not been renewed had sued their schools. But Justice Samuel Alito wrote in his majority opinion: "When a school with a religious mission entrusts a teacher with the responsibility of educating and forming students in the faith, judicial intervention into disputes between the school and the teacher threatens the school's independence in a way that the First

Amendment does not allow."

The court's birth-control decision was cheered by conservative groups, and White House spokeswoman Kayleigh McEnany joined in. "Today's Supreme Court ruling is a big win for religious freedom and freedom of conscience," she said in a statement.

Liberal groups and Democrats, including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, decried the decision, which she called a "fundamental misreading" of the health care law. Presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden said the decision will make it "easier for the Trump-Pence Administration to continue to strip health care from women."

High court rules prosecutor can see Trump's tax records

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Thursday upheld the Manhattan district attorney's demand for President Donald Trump's tax returns, but kept a hold on Trump's financial records that Congress has been seeking for more than a year.

The outcome in the two cases is at least a short-term victory for Trump, who has strenuously sought to keep his financial records private.

But the justices rejected arguments by Trump's lawyers and the Justice Department that the president is immune from investigation while he holds office or that a prosecutor must show a greater need than normal to obtain the records. The tax returns are being sought as part of a grand-jury investigation.

Because the grand jury process is confidential, the rulings make it likely that none of Trump's financial records will become public soon.

Trump's two high court appointees, Justices Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh, joined

the majority in both cases along with Chief Justice John Roberts and the four liberal justices. Roberts wrote both opinions.

"Congressional subpoenas for information from the President, however, implicate special concerns regarding the separation of powers. The courts below did not take adequate account of those concerns," Roberts wrote in the congressional case.

The ruling returns the case to lower courts, with no clear prospect for when the case might ultimately be resolved. The tax returns case also is headed back to a lower court.

The fight over the congressional subpoenas has significant implications regarding a president's power to refuse a formal request from Congress. In a separate fight at the federal appeals court in Washington, D.C., over a congressional demand for the testimony of former White House counsel Don McGahn, the administration is making broad arguments that the president's close advisers are "absolutely immune" from having to appear.

Senator Duckworth won't back down on promotions

CQ Roll Call

WASHINGTON — Sen. Tammy Duckworth will keep her hold on over 1,100 military promotions in place despite Wednesday's announcement of the retirement of Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, a key witness in the impeachment of President Donald Trump.

The Illinois Democrat announced the hold July 2 amid concerns that Vindman would not receive a promotion to the rank of colonel in retaliation for his testimony before the House last year.

Vindman, a former Ukraine expert to the National Security Council, was ousted from his White House job after his November testimony in which he validated many of the concerns raised by the whistleblower whose report sparked the impeachment inquiry.

Reports have suggested that Trump, who has publicly attacked Vindman, pressured the Pentagon to block Vindman's promotion.

"Through a campaign of bullying, intimidation and retaliation,

the President attempted to force LTC Vindman to choose: Between adhering to the law or pleasing a President. Vindman's patriotism has cost him his career," Vindman's attorney David Pressman said in a statement Wednesday.

The July 2 hold instituted by Duckworth, a retired Army officer who lost both legs while serving in the Iraq War, applies to 1,123 scheduled promotions of officers to the rank of 0-6 — colonel, Navy captain or above. Duckworth said last week she would lift the hold once Defense Secretary Mark Esper assured her, in writing, that Vindman would be shielded from retaliation.

Duckworth has still not received confirmation from Esper that the Army submitted a list of promotions to colonel that included Vindman, or that the list was sent to the White House for review, she said in a statement Wednesday.

The hold will remain in place "until the secretary of defense provides a transparent accounting of this disgraceful situation," she said.

Layoffs in US remaining at elevated level

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — More than 1.3 million Americans applied for unemployment benefits last week, a historically high pace that shows that many employers are still laying people off in the face of a resurgent coronavirus.

The persistently elevated level of layoffs are occurring as a spike in virus cases has forced six states to reverse their move to reopen businesses. Those six — Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Michigan and Texas — make up one-third of the U.S. economy. Fifteen other states have suspended their re-openings. Collectively, the pullback has stalled a tentative recovery in the job market and is likely triggering additional layoffs.

On Wednesday, the United States reported just short of the record 60,000 cases set a day earlier. In the U.S., the number

of confirmed cases has passed 3 million — meaning nearly one in every 100 people has been confirmed as infected — and the death toll in the pandemic is more than 132,000.

In addition, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious-disease official, is advising that some states seriously consider “shutting down” again if they are facing major resurgences of the virus, The Washington Post reported.

“I think any state that is having a serious problem, that state should seriously look at shutting down,” Fauci said Wednesday. “It’s not for me to say, because each state is different.”

Thursday’s report from the Labor Department showed that the number of applications for unemployment aid fell from 1.4 million in the previous week. The figure has now topped 1 million for 16 straight

weeks. Before the pandemic, the record high for weekly unemployment applications was fewer than 700,000.

The total number of people who are receiving jobless benefits dropped 700,000 to 18 million. That suggests that some companies are continuing to rehire workers despite job cuts by other employers.

An additional 1 million people sought benefits last week under a separate program for self-employed and gig workers that has made them eligible for aid for the first time. These figures aren’t adjusted for seasonal variations, so the government doesn’t include them in the official count.

“A full recovery in the labor market is going to be a multi-year process, and we think the resurgence in COVID-19 infections raises the risk that there will be a pause in the progress,” said Gregory Daco, chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics.

Heavy rainfall, mudslides hit scenic central Japan

Associated Press

TOKYO — Flooding and mudslides have stranded hundreds of people in scenic hot springs and hiking areas in central Japan, while rescue workers searched Thursday for more people missing in the disaster that already has killed nearly 60 people in a southern region.

Parts of Nagano and Gifu, including areas known for scenic mountain trails and hot springs, have been flooded by massive downpours.

More than 300 people, including hotel employees and visitors, were trapped in Kamikochi, as floods and mudslides hit a main road connecting the town to Mat-

sumoto, another tourist destination in Nagano. All of the stranded people were safe, prefectural officials said.

In neighboring Gifu, hundreds were also isolated in the hot spring towns of Gero and Ontake.

As of Thursday morning, the death toll from the heavy rains that started over the weekend had risen to 59, most of them from hardest-hit Kumamoto prefecture on Japan’s third largest island of Kyushu. A search continued for a dozen still missing in Kumamoto and several others elsewhere on the island.

In Oita prefecture, a family of four running an inn in the famous hot spring town of Yufuin was missing.

Floodwaters also ravaged local vegetables and fish almost ready for shipment to consumers. An eel culturing farm in Kagoshima was hit by rains just before Japan’s “unagi” season later this month. “I can’t ship them, or even go near the place to feed them or change the water,” eel grower Kazuya Kusuda told TBS television.

In the Kurume city of Fukuoka, farmer Masatoshi Inayosi said his mustard spinach, almost ready for harvest, was destroyed by the floods.

The disaster is a further blow to the local economy already hit by the coronavirus measures, just as Japan was returning to business as usual.

Marine, Navy bases in Japan fighting new virus cases

BY DAVE ORNAUER AND AYA ICHIHASHI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The Navy and Marine Corps in Japan moved Thursday to isolate and track coronavirus cases that have popped up on their installations on Okinawa and just outside Tokyo.

Meanwhile, the governor of Tokyo reported 224 new infections in the metro area Thursday, a surge that exceeded the previous high of 206 on April 17.

For a second time this week, an undisclosed number of people associated with the Marine Corps on Okinawa tested posi-

tive for the virus, adding to the number of cases there, according to a Thursday news release from Marine Corps Installations Pacific.

Naval Air Facility Atsugi, south of Tokyo in Kanagawa prefecture, also “discovered some cases” of the coronavirus Thursday, prompting base commander Capt. Lloyd Mack to order a lockdown at 2:45 p.m., a Navy spokesman said by phone Thursday.

“Just to protect the community and make sure that we prevent the spread, the skipper elected to go to shelter-in-place while it is investigated,” said spokesman Howard

Samuelson.

In Tokyo, the 224 new cases are the highest daily number since the outbreak began, Gov. Yuriko Koike said during a meeting of the city’s coronavirus response headquarters. Tokyo has been generally off-limits to U.S. troops, Defense Department civilian employees and their families.

On Okinawa, the Marines on Thursday would not specify how many people tested positive, only that they fell under the status of forces agreement and were on installations that comprise the widespread Marine Corps Base Camp Smedley D. Butler.

Congress balking at federal workers' return

From wire reports

With the number of coronavirus cases increasing across much of the country, leading members of Congress on civil service issues are challenging orders by federal agencies for teleworking federal employees to return to their regular worksites.

Senators representing Maryland and Virginia sent a letter Thursday to the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of Personnel Management warning against premature reopenings that could lead to new coronavirus cases.

About 85% of the 2.1 million federal employees work outside of the D.C. metro area. The Trump administration, which has let agencies decide when and how their workforce would return to the office, says workers can safely return with the proper precautions.

The number of coronavirus cases reported in a single day in the United States surpassed 60,000 for the first time Wednesday. The District reported 73 new cases, the highest number in approximately a month, but it was unclear if it was a blip or a change in trajectory.

Alabama

MONTGOMERY — The coronavirus outbreak in Alabama is headed in a “bad direction,” Dr. Don Williamson, the head of the Alabama Hospital Association, said Wednesday as the state reached a new high for people hospitalized with COVID-19 and a new low for available intensive care beds.

On Wednesday, 1,110 people were hospitalized because of the coronavirus across the state, according to the Alabama Department of Public Health. That is the highest number since the pandemic began. Doctors have expressed concern about the sharp rise in hospitalizations. The state had 683 hospitalized patients two weeks ago, on June 24.

Since the pandemic began, more than 46,000 people in Alabama have tested positive

for COVID-19 with about 30% of infections being reported in the past two weeks.

The state also hit a new low for available intensive care beds. Williamson said 88% of ICU beds are full, leaving 202 beds available statewide.

California

SACRAMENTO — The California Senate will delay its work because of a coronavirus outbreak at the Capitol and an increasing number of new cases across the state.

The Senate had been scheduled to return from its summer recess on Monday. But a memo from Secretary of the Senate Erika Contreras says it won't be in session next week because of the virus.

The state Assembly has already announced an indefinite hiatus after six people who work there tested positive for the virus. They include Assemblywoman Autumn Burke, a Democrat from Inglewood, who was exposed to the virus on the Assembly floor last month while wearing a mask.

Missouri

BRANSON — A surge in coronavirus cases is proving worrisome in the popular southwestern Missouri tourist destination of Branson.

Confirmed cases of COVID-19, the illness caused by the virus, have more than doubled in less than two weeks in Taney County, where Branson is located, the Kansas City Star reported. On June 26, the county had recorded just 43 confirmed cases since the start of the pandemic. That figure has more than doubled since then, standing at 107 cases and two COVID-19 deaths as of Wednesday.

Branson, with its wide array of shows and attractions, is among the most popular tourist destinations in the Midwest. Community leaders are now stressing the need for face coverings, though they have stopped short of requiring people to wear them.

North Carolina

RALEIGH — A “Top Chef” contestant's restaurant in North Carolina has permanently closed down due to revenue losses amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Katsuji Tanabe told The News & Observer on Wednesday that his business partner decided to shut down Raleigh's High Horse restaurant due to the money losses. The restaurant had opened in North Carolina's capital city in November 2019.

Tanabe told the newspaper High Horse tried offering take-out, but discovered that wasn't what diners wanted from a restaurant known for its live experiences.

He said he doesn't have a project in mind for another restaurant, but has plans to stay in the Raleigh area.

Nevada

RENO — The first coronavirus antibody study conducted in Nevada suggests that the results of COVID-19 tests dramatically underestimate the total number of people who have actually been infected by the disease, health officials said Wednesday.

The joint study by the Washoe County Health District and researchers at the University of Nevada, Reno concludes that about four to five times more people have likely been infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 than have been formally confirmed as positive cases to date in the Reno-Sparks area.

Based on blood tests for antibodies, the study conducted last month indicates 2.3% of adults in Washoe County had an infection or exposure resulting in an immune response to the virus.

That means that while only about 1,800 cases of COVID-19 had been confirmed as positive in Washoe County as of June 10 based on nasal swab testing, the real number of adult infections in the county was probably closer to 8,200.

Texas

AUSTIN — Texas reported its deadliest day of the pandemic yet with nearly 100 new deaths on Wednesday as newly confirmed cases continued soaring and Austin began preparations to turn the downtown convention center into a field hospital.

The 98 reported deaths in Texas set a record one-day high, surpassing the record 60 deaths reported a day earlier. Texas is now reporting a total of 2,813 deaths.

On Wednesday, officials in Houston canceled the Texas Republican Party's in-person convention, saying the spread of the coronavirus made it impossible to hold the event as scheduled. The move by Houston officials came after Republican activists had resolved to press forward with the indoor three-day convention this month.

Wisconsin

MADISON — The Wisconsin Capitol building will not reopen next week, as had been planned, and state employees will have to wear masks whenever they're working indoors to help slow the spread of the coronavirus, Gov. Tony Evers' administration announced Wednesday.

The Capitol building has been closed to the public since Evers issued a stay-at-home order in March. The state Supreme Court struck down that order in May and Evers' administration had planned to reopen the building Monday. But infection rates have been climbing in Wisconsin over the last two weeks and the administration announced that the Capitol will remain closed indefinitely.

The administration also announced that starting Monday, all state employees must wear masks whenever they're inside a state facility, including offices, parking garages, elevators and bathrooms, or waiting in line to enter a state facility. They also must wear one whenever they're inside any enclosed building on state business.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Dad finds son who went missing on family hike

UT SALT LAKE CITY — An Idaho father was reunited with his 9-year-old son after conducting his own search for the boy, who went missing during a hike with extended family in Utah.

Summit County Sheriff Justin Martinez said the dad drove to Utah where his son, Stratton Joshua Wright, became separated from his uncle, cousins and siblings Wednesday around 8 p.m. during a hike near Bear Lake, KSL-TV reported.

Stratton was found by his dad in an open field Thursday, authorities said. Stratton was slightly dehydrated and tired, but otherwise healthy.

"I guess that's a testament to a father-son bond, because he was able to find him faster than we were as the professionals," Martinez said, adding that helicopters, trained search and rescue crews and horses had also been searching for him.

Police: Man mistook pen for bullet, detained kids

NM HOBBS — A New Mexico man is facing charges after police said he held a group of children against their will when he thought one of them had a .50-caliber round.

Police say the boy had a pen. The Hobbs News-Sun reported Danny Billington was arrested last week after he waved down a police officer in Hobbs and told the officer a juvenile had a .50-caliber round on him. According to a criminal complaint, Billington, 41, took the supposed round from the child and laid it on the ground before talking to the officer. The child told police the instrument was a pen for writing.

The complaint says Billington told the officer that he lined

up the juvenile with the pen and the children he was playing with to question the group of five. Billington was charged with robbery, false imprisonment and battery.

Authorities dismantle homemade pipe bomb

IA BOONE — Authorities dismantled a homemade pipe bomb that was set to explode at an Iowa hunting area.

The Boone County Sheriff's Office said in a Facebook post that two deputies responded Monday after receiving a report about the device that was found on the lid of a container in the area.

The post said the Iowa State Fire Marshal's Office was called and that the device was examined and dismantled.

The post said the device was "set to explode in a delayed manor and without any supervision."

Town's water system woes extend to prison

IN CARLISLE — Some 2,000 inmates were being provided with bottled water at a southwestern Indiana prison after a boil order was issued for the town water system that services the facility, a prison official said Tuesday.

Water was available for showers and toilets at the Wabash Valley Correctional Facility in Carlisle, but not yet for drinking.

The problem started Sunday when a computer system failure occurred at the town's water treatment plant, Carlisle officials said. The water system lost pressure, resulting in a loss of water availability throughout the Sullivan County town about 30 miles south of Terre Haute.

Customers were warned to only drink the water after boiling it until test results con-

firmed it was safe to drink from the tap, officials said.

Black bear tranquilized, then moved from suburb

MO ST. LOUIS — Wildlife officials have relocated a black bear that had wandered into a St. Louis suburb and drew a crowd of hundreds curious to see the out-of-place animal.

The bear has been popular on social media pages for weeks as it plodded hundreds of miles from Wisconsin, through Illinois and briefly into Iowa before wandering into Missouri. Wildlife officials said they were spurred to take action over the weekend when the bear — dubbed "Bruno" on social media — found itself in the Wentzville city limits and cornered between interstates 70 and 40, and a crowd of about 400 people gathered to see it.

Fearing for the safety of the bear and the public, conservation officers decided Sunday to tranquilize the bear and moved it to an undisclosed area.

Sheriff's car broken into outside his home

FL SARASOTA — A Florida sheriff's department-issued vehicle was broken into outside his home late Sunday or early Monday morning, officials said.

The vehicle was parked outside the home of Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight's home in Venice, the Sarasota Herald-Tribune reported. Sheriff's spokeswoman Megan Krahe didn't say what was taken from the vehicle.

"I can confirm that no weapons or Tasers were taken," Krahe said. "There was forced entry. Other than that we're waiting on further details. It was not left unlocked."

Bellagio error may be record sportsbook loss

NV LAS VEGAS — The nearly quarter-million dollars in winning wagers reportedly placed at MGM Resorts last Sunday might be the largest sportsbook loss in Las Vegas history on bets made after an event has started.

Seven longtime Las Vegas bookmakers can't recall a larger loss, the Las Vegas Review-Journal reported. But each oddsmaker has taken hits on past posts and said it's a fairly common occurrence at books.

According to an ESPN report, Sunday's bets were allowed to be placed because incorrect start times were posted on some Korean and Chinese baseball games due to a manual entry error. Among the bets was a \$250, 10-leg parlay that paid more than \$137,100.

The Nevada Gaming Control Board is reportedly investigating the matter.

Summons is issued to man who had machete

CO BOULDER — A machete was taken from a Colorado man police said was seen waving the knife at cars and climbing on apartment balconies.

The Boulder Police Department responded to calls last Friday around 10 a.m. near downtown Boulder, reporting a man yelling at cars and swinging a machete, KMGH-TV reported. Police said that he cooperated after they made contact with him.

Authorities retrieved the knife from the man before issuing him a summons and releasing him from custody. The man was referred to a program with resources for mental health concerns, police said.

From wire reports

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Ivy League suspends all fall sports

Associated Press

The Ivy League on Wednesday became the first Division I conference to suspend all fall sports, including football, leaving open the possibility of moving some seasons to the spring if the coronavirus pandemic is better controlled by then.

“We simply do not believe we can create and maintain an environment for intercollegiate athletic competition that meets our requirements for safety and acceptable levels of risk,” the Ivy League Council of Presidents said in a statement.

“We are entrusted to create and maintain an educational environment that is guided by health and safety considerations. There can be no greater responsibility — and that is the basis for this difficult decision.”

Though the coalition of eight academically elite schools does not grant athletic scholarships or compete for an NCAA football championship, the move could have ripple effects throughout the big business of college sports.

It was the Ivy League’s March 10 decision to scuttle postseason play that preceded a cascade of cancellations. All major college and professional sports were halted within days.

Football players in the Power Five conferences have already begun workouts for a season that starts on Aug. 29, even as their schools weigh whether to open their campuses to students or continue classes remotely. More than a dozen prominent programs from Clemson to LSU to Oklahoma have reported positive tests among their athletes in the few weeks since voluntary workouts began. Some have temporarily shut down the workouts, including Ohio State and North Carolina on Wednesday alone.

Dr. Chris Kratochvil, the chair of the Big Ten’s infectious disease task force, said there is no “hard deadline” for a decision on sports.

“Of course, we watch everything that’s going on,” said Big 12 commissioner Bob Bowlsby, whose league has schools in five states from West Virginia

to Iowa and Texas. “But we’re going to go forward and do our own evaluation, and so far our scientists and medical people are telling us that we should stay the course, and learn as we go and move slowly and evaluate as we go.”

The Ivy League announcement affects not just football but soccer, field hockey, volleyball and cross country, as well as the fall portion of winter sports like basketball. Wednesday’s decision means Harvard and Yale will not play football in 2020, interrupting a rivalry known as The Game for the first time since the two World Wars.

“This news is disappointing for all of us,” Harvard athletic director Erin McDermott said. “While the Fall 2020 experience will be unlike any other, I am confident that we will find positive opportunities in this challenging time. We will keep moving forward through this painful but temporary experience, together.”

The league said it has not yet determined whether some seasons can be moved to the spring.

But the conference noted that its schools already are limiting gatherings, visitors and travel for students and staff.

“As athletics is expected to operate consistent with campus policies, it will not be possible for Ivy League teams to participate in intercollegiate athletics competition prior to the end of the fall semester,” the league said.

Ivy League schools are spread across seven Northeastern states that, as of mid-July, have seen some success at mitigating the spread of COVID-19. But most of those states still ban large gatherings; under the Massachusetts reopening plan, Harvard would not be allowed to have fans in the stands until a vaccine is developed.

Harvard has already announced that all classes for both semesters will be held virtually; dorms will be open only to freshmen and seniors. Yale said it would limit its dorms to 60% capacity and said most classes would be conducted remotely. Princeton will also do most of its teaching online, with dorms at half capacity.

Stanford drops 11 athletic programs due to virus

Associated Press

Stanford was already facing some difficult financial choices as it tried to support one of the nation’s largest athletics departments.

The coronavirus pandemic forced a dramatic and painful decision: Faced with a nearly \$25 million deficit next year, Stanford became the first known Power Five school to eliminate athletic programs because of the pandemic, announcing Wednesday that 11 of its 36 varsity sports will be shuttered next year.

The school will discontinue men’s and women’s fencing, field hockey, lightweight rowing, men’s rowing, coed and women’s sailing, squash, synchronized swimming, men’s

volleyball and wrestling after the 2020-21 academic year. Stanford also is eliminating 20 support staff positions.

“As you can imagine, this has been a heartbreaking day for all of us, especially with those student-athletes and coaches involved,” athletic director Bernard Muir said. “We came to this decision only after exhausting all other viable alternatives. It recently became painfully clear we would not remain financially stable and support 36 varsity sports at a nationally competitive level, which is what we desire.”

The pandemic shut down sports in March, including the massive revenue-generating NCAA basketball tournaments. With no March Madness, the NCAA was short \$375 million

scheduled to be distributed to its member schools, which are already facing questions about enrollment levels and tuition shortfalls.

Fall sports such as football are still in question for some schools; the Ivy League, hours after Stanford’s announcement, called off all fall sports. But some tough choices have already been made.

At least 171 sports programs from four-year schools have been cut since the pandemic began in the United States, according to research by The Associated Press. Of those disbanded teams, 51 are from 18 Division I schools. One conference in Division II and one in Division III suspended fall sports competitions and at least 18 small colleges across Divi-

sion III and the NAIA won’t compete this fall.

Stanford’s decision to drop sports is likely the first of many by Power Five schools across the country.

“If it can happen at Stanford, it can happen any place,” Big 12 Commissioner Bob Bowlsby said. “They’re the broadest, most successful program in the history of college athletics and so to see them drop a third of their program is a shocking thing.”

Stanford originally projected a deficit of \$12 million for the 2021 fiscal year, a number that more than doubled as it faced fewer donations, sponsorships and ticket sales. Muir said the \$25 million deficit for 2021 would likely double if the football season is canceled.

MLS restarts with moment of silence

Associated Press

KISSIMMEE, Fla. — Nani called it beautiful and emotional.

He wasn't talking about either goal he played a part in during Orlando City's 2-1 victory over Inter Miami on Wednesday night.

Nearly 200 players took the field for an 8-minute, 46-second moment of silence to protest racial injustice before Major League Soccer's return to action. Players wore black T-shirts, black gloves and black facemasks emblazoned with Black Lives Matter. The shirts had varying slogans that included Black And Proud, Silence Is Violence and Black All The Time.

The players walked toward midfield, raised their right arms one at a time and held the pose so long that some could be seen stretching fatigued muscles afterward.

It was a poignant moment

that put two of the nation's most prominent changes over the last four months — masks and movements — at the forefront of the sport's return.

"I felt for a couple of minutes," Nani said shortly after scoring the go-ahead goal in the seventh minute of stoppage time. "We all want to change the world. We want a better world — no differences, no discrimination. ... Everyone in the world should stop for a couple of minutes and think about our children and teach them how to be a better person and create a better world."

The group setting the tone was formerly called the Black Players Coalition of MLS but changed its name this week to Black Players for Change. Originally announced on June 17, the group started in the wake of George Floyd's death with the hope of combating systemic racism both in soccer and the players' communities. The league and the players' union

endorsed the organization.

Several other players from Orlando City and Inter Miami took a knee near midfield during the demonstration.

The two in-state teams delivered their own moment of silence by taking a knee along with the referee and the line judges just before the opening kick.

The national anthem was not played before or after the demonstration. MLS previously said it would not be played because no fans were in attendance.

Floyd, a Black man, died May 25 after a white Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee on Floyd's neck for nearly eight minutes. Prosecutors said that a police officer had his knee on the neck of Floyd for 7 minutes, 46 seconds — not the 8:46 that has become a symbol of police brutality.

MLS players had weeks to decide what to do prior to the MLS is Back tournament at ESPN's Wide World of Sports

complex at Disney World.

The league's teams are sequestered in resorts for the duration of the World Cup-style tournament, which began with a Group A match that was the first meeting between two Sunshine State teams.

FC Dallas withdrew Monday after 10 players and a coach tested positive for COVID-19. A day later, Nashville SC's status was thrust into doubt with five confirmed positive tests.

Nashville was supposed to play Chicago in the second game of a doubleheader Wednesday but it was postponed.

MLS shut down because of the coronavirus pandemic on March 12, after the league's teams had each played two regular-season games.

The reboot had a considerably different feel — without fans and with plenty of concern even amid a safety bubble.

"Today we made the noise," Orlando coach Oscar Pareja said.

More MLB players return to field following testing

Associated Press

As Major League Baseball cautiously tiptoes closer toward beginning its delayed 2020 season, several teams welcomed back players who might have been exposed to the coronavirus, and the San Francisco Giants resumed workouts Wednesday after finally receiving the results of COVID-19 tests administered over the weekend.

The San Diego Padres, however, revealed that newly acquired infielder Jorge Mateo's intake test for coronavirus came back positive and he's experienced symptoms. Mateo was obtained last week from Oakland for a player to be named or cash in the first trade since the transaction freeze was lifted.

Padres manager Jayce Tingler said Mateo has not been to the ballpark and is self-isolating.

San Diego announced last week that outfielder Tommy Pham tested positive for coronavirus and was asymptomatic. He has not yet rejoined the team.

In Boston, third baseman Rafael Devers practiced at Fenway Park for the first time since the Red Sox opened summer camp. Devers and an unspecified number of other players were working out at nearby Boston College and have since tested negative three times.

When tests reveal "pending" or inconclusive results, the Red Sox have decided to keep those players out of full-team workouts — even if a player hasn't had a positive test.

"We have to be overly cautious," manager Ron Roenicke said.

Devers batted .311 with a league-leading 54 doubles, 32 homers and 111 RBIs in 2019. He was scheduled to get a few at-bats when the Red Sox hold

their first intrasquad scrimmage on Thursday.

The Giants, meanwhile, resumed workouts at Oracle Park after receiving test results from Saturday, all of which were negative for players and staff. A delay in receiving the outcome of those tests forced the club to cancel practice Tuesday.

Devers wasn't the only player in the big leagues to get a late start joining his team.

Texas Rangers first baseman Ronald Guzman was on the field Wednesday after missing the first five days of workouts. Although he was at the facility, he wasn't cleared for workouts while still going through intake screening.

The only Texas players still not cleared to participate are right fielder Joey Gallo and left-hander Brett Martin, both of whom tested positive for coronavirus.

In Cleveland, outfielder Franmil Reyes was cleared by the team's medical staff to re-

turn to the field after being isolated for attending a party over the July 4 weekend.

The Indians kept Reyes away from Progressive Field after he attended a holiday gathering without wearing a mask. The Indians learned of Reyes' off-field actions on a social media posting.

Manager Terry Francona said Reyes was re-tested and can now participate in the team's training camp.

Also, Indians outfielder Delino DeShields Jr., who tested positive for COVID-19, is traveling to Cleveland after he had one negative test. He will be tested again when he arrives.

"He was obviously excited. Said he was planning on traveling like the Michelin Man today through the airport," Francona said.

DeShields is in his first season with the Indians, who acquired him in December from Texas in the trade involving ace Corey Kluber.