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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Tilting forces firefighters off burning ship

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Firefighters temporarily evacuated the USS Bonhomme Richard overnight Wednesday as a safety precaution when excessive amounts of water used to fight the fire caused the ship's tilt to worsen, according to the Navy.

Crews were cleared from the ship and the pier at Naval Base San Diego, Calif., "due to an initial shift in the ship's list" as officials monitored the situation as the ship settled, according to a statement from Naval Surface Force U.S. Pacific Fleet late Wednesday.

The ship is tilting due to the amount of water being used inside the Bonhomme Richard and dropped on top of the ship

from helicopters to extinguish the fires aboard.

Firefighters were off the ship for less than an hour before they were able to board again and continue their work, Lt. Cmdr. Patricia Kreuzberger, a spokeswoman for Naval Surface Force U.S. Pacific Fleet, said in a statement Thursday.

No other information was provided about the shift of the ship's tilt.

As of Thursday, 40 sailors and 23 civilians had been treated for minor injuries including heat exhaustion and smoke inhalation while fighting the fire aboard the amphibious assault ship, according to the Navy.

Since the fire began Sunday morning, it spread throughout the ship from the cargo

hold, where Navy officials believe it started. The fire has destroyed the ship's forward mast and damaged its superstructure, which sits on top of the ship and where the bridge is located, according to Rear Adm. Philip Sobeck, the commander of Expeditionary Strike Group 3, which includes the Bonhomme Richard.

The more than 400 firefighters have had to move compartment to compartment to contain the fire, and are encountering fallen debris such as scaffolding from the maintenance work that was being done.

"There is no threat to the fuel tanks, which is well below any active fires or heat sources," Sobeck said earlier this week. "The ship is stable, and the structure is safe."

Navy ship sails near Spratlys after US rejects China's claims

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

The Navy sent a guided-missile destroyer on a freedom-of-navigation operation in the South China Sea on Tuesday, a day after the United States officially rejected Beijing's claims there.

The USS Ralph Johnson, assigned to the 7th Fleet, sailed within 12 nautical miles of the Spratly Islands, according to a statement by the U.S. Pacific Fleet on Tuesday. The cluster of more than 100 islands and reefs comprise less than 3.1 square miles.

China, Vietnam and Taiwan claim to own all of the Spratlys. The Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei also lay claim to portions of them.

China has reclaimed land and built military infrastructure in the Spratlys since 2014, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative.

"This freedom of navigation operation upheld the rights, freedoms and lawful uses of the sea, recognized in international law, by challenging restrictions on innocent passage imposed by China, Vietnam and Taiwan," the Navy statement said.

Though the U.S. has been conducting freedom-of-navigation exercises in the region for years, the Ralph Johnson's operation came after Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Monday for the first time announced the official U.S. stance on China's claims and operations in the South China Sea.

"We are making clear: Beijing's claims to offshore resources across most of the South China Sea are completely unlawful, as is its campaign of bullying to control them," he said in his announcement.

Beijing has been "working to undermine the sovereign rights of other coastal states and deny them access to offshore resources — resources that belong to those states, not to China," assistant secretary of state David R. Stillwell said Tuesday to a virtual audience with the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"Beijing wants dominion for itself," he said. "It wants to replace international law with rule by threats and coercion."

Beijing believes it has a historic right to the region, pointing to early maps China published that include a line which claims the South and East China Seas as its own. A United Nations panel in 2016, however, ruling in a case brought forth by the Philippines, rejected these claims.

In his statement, Pompeo said China has "offered no coherent legal basis" for these claims, which were first announced in 2009.

"The world will not allow Beijing to treat the South China Sea as its maritime empire," he said. "America stands with our Southeast Asian allies and partners in protecting their sovereign rights to offshore resources, consistent with their rights and obligations under international law."

'We are making clear: Beijing's claims to offshore resources across most of the South China Sea are completely unlawful, as is its campaign of bullying to control them.'

Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State

Fired contractors stranded on Afghan base

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — Some foreign workers stuck at the largest U.S. airfield in Afghanistan have been living in what they describe as jail-like conditions for months after their jobs were cut, but they've been unable to return home.

"Red-badged" employees of the U.S.-based Fluor Corporation, which the military contracts with for services including construction, security and food services, have been confined to temporary lodging quarters at Bagram Airfield, where they are constantly monitored by security guards, several contractors said.

Visitors to Bagram who don't meet certain security criteria are given red badges — green badges allow more freedom — and are not allowed mobile phones, regular internet access or trips to the store.

Due to COVID-19-related travel restrictions, some workers have lived in these conditions for up to four months. They haven't

been paid since their jobs were terminated, they said.

Fluor is one of two companies in Afghanistan operating the umbrella service contract LOGCAP IV. Those services were to be reduced after the U.S. agreed to shut down five bases and withdraw thousands of troops earlier this year, U.S. military officials said in April.

The military has acknowledged that foreign contractors from several countries have been unable to leave Bagram because of travel restrictions related to COVID-19.

Fluor was trying to repatriate about 200 people from the base last week, according to an official from the company who was not authorized to disclose the figure.

By Wednesday, most of those employees had returned home, company spokesman Brian Mershon said.

However, a Kenyan contractor who was red-badged two months ago told Stars and Stripes on Wednesday that at least 19 people he knew of were still living in the austere transit conditions at the base.

He was among several contractors stuck at Bagram who contacted Stars and Stripes to report the conditions after one of their former co-workers, a Macedonian, was found dead this month in the showers — one of the few places where they are allowed privacy. He had taken his own life.

"We are depressed, we can't call our families [who] are suffering back home, we are the ones who provide for them," another Kenyan who also has been waiting two months to return home said in an email. All the contractors who spoke insisted on anonymity for fear of reprisal.

Another Macedonian is also in their room, the Kenyans said. North Macedonia is allowing its nationals to return, but repatriation to countries welcoming their citizens back has been delayed because of the COVID-19 travel disruption, Fluor said, calling the situation "extraordinary, unprecedented and unforeseen" in a statement.

The Macedonian who died waited two months to return home, colleagues said.

At Aviano, high marks for Air Force's new M18 pistol

BY NORMAN LLAMAS
Stars and Stripes

AVIANO AIR BASE, Italy — Airmen gave high marks to the Air Force's new service pistol, the SIG Sauer M18, which they've been training with at this base in northern Italy since last month.

The M18 is "more modern, easier to use and easier to understand for an inexperienced shooter" than the M9 Beretta, which has been in service for 30 years, said Capt. Taylor Buraczewski, officer in charge of supply and logistics for the 31st Security Forces Squadron.

It also has "a much lighter and crisper trigger and ... balances much better than the old M9," Buraczewski said, calling the 9 mm M18 "an amazing evolution for us as a career field."

The M18 was chosen as the Air Force's new service pistol as part of the Reconstitute Defender Initiative, a program that aims to modernize and im-

prove weapon systems, according to previous reports from the Air Force Small Arms Program Office.

With small, medium or large handgrips, the M18 can be customized to individual shooters, and because it's made of polymer, not metal, it's lighter than the M9.

"I really like it," said Senior Airman Jaclyn R. Edwards, a monitoring facility operator assigned to the 31st SFS. "It fires ... much smoother than the M9, maybe due to the fact that the M18 lacks a double safety pull."

Testing conducted in 2017 found that the M18 could fire accidentally if dropped and sometimes ejected a live round along with a spent cartridge case during normal use, said a report released in January 2018 by the Pentagon's Office of the Director, Operational Test and Evaluation.

SIG Sauer fixed the problems before shipping the guns to the military, media reports said.

Task force troops reflect on 1st virus deployment

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — When a medical detachment of Army soldiers first arrived at University Hospital in Newark, N.J., in mid-April to assist the mounting coronavirus fight there, they found overwhelmed doctors and nurses treating patients in hallways.

The rooms in the state-run, civilian hospital were filled to capacity and its emergency room was flooded with new patients arriving with coronavirus-like symptoms, soldiers who deployed there this spring said Wednesday. Doctors and nurses at the hospital, in many cases, had worked for weeks without a day off, as between 30% and 50% of their colleagues were forced into isolation after contracting the virus, the soldiers said.

When the 85-soldier Urban Augmentation Medical Task Force 332-1 arrived at Univer-

sity Hospital on April 14, New Jersey was among the states hardest hit by the spreading pandemic. State health officials that day reported nearly 69,000 coronavirus cases statewide and more than 2,800 deaths. The hospital was at its "breaking point," described Army Staff Sgt. Mauricio L. Pena, the task force's top enlisted soldier and a respiratory therapist.

This week, as coronavirus cases have surged in other parts of the country, the Army has deployed six more Urban Augmentation Medical Task Forces, or UAMTFs, primarily to San Antonio and Houston, U.S. Northern Command announced Monday. Some medical soldiers have also been dispatched to California.

Army officials said Wednesday thousands of additional medical troops — including at least some of those who served at University Hospital — have been placed on prepare to deploy orders.

Jobless aid seekers stuck at 1.3 million

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of laid-off workers seeking unemployment benefits remained stuck at 1.3 million last week, a historically high level that indicates many companies are still cutting jobs as the viral outbreak intensifies.

The elevated level of applications for jobless aid is occurring as new confirmed cases of coronavirus are spiking across much of the Sunbelt, threatening to weaken the economic recovery. Case counts are rising in 40 states and 22 states have either paused or reversed their efforts to reopen their economies, according to Bank of America.

Rising infections paralleled rising applications for aid in some states getting hit right now, and fell in states with declining infections. In Florida claims doubled to 129,000, and in Georgia they rose nearly one-third to 136,000, according to the Labor Department's Thursday report. In California they increased 23,000 to nearly 288,000. Applications also rose in Arizona and South Carolina.

Applications fell in Texas, which has seen infections spike, and in New Jersey and New York, where the virus is mostly under control.

"Conditions in the labor market remain weak and the risk of mounting permanent job losses

is high, especially if activity continues to be disrupted by repeated virus-related shutdowns," said Rubeela Farooqi, chief U.S. economist at High Frequency Economics.

A separate government report showed that retail sales jumped 7.5% in June, a healthy gain that suggested the economy was healing just before the viral resurgence has weighed on hopes for a steady recovery.

The Census Bureau reported Thursday that retail sales are 1.1% higher than their levels from a year ago, after a brutal plunge in March and April was offset by a decent rebound in May and June.

While applications for jobless aid fell by about 10,000 from the previous week, the figure has now topped 1 million for 17 straight weeks. The record high for weekly unemployment applications before the pandemic was nearly 700,000.

Those figures are adjusted for seasonal variations, a practice intended to filter out trends that don't reflect on the economy, such as the firing of seasonal workers after the winter holidays. Yet the impact of the coronavirus has made such adjustments less relevant, economists say, because claims are so far above normal levels.

Before seasonal adjustment, applications actually rose 100,000 to 1.5 million, a sign that layoffs are worsening.

Tourists face restrictions amid fear of virus surge

Associated Press

MADRID — From the palm-fringed beaches of southern India to the bar-lined streets of a Spanish island and the rolling hills of Ireland, restaurants, pubs and clubs are emerging as frontlines in efforts to prevent the re-emergence of the coronavirus.

With Europe's summer vacation season kicking into high gear for millions weary of months of lockdown, scenes of drunken British and German tourists on Spain's Mallorca island ignoring social distancing rules and reports of American visitors flouting quarantine measures in Ireland are raising fears of a resurgence of infections in countries that have battled for months to flatten the COVID-19 curve.

Germany's foreign minister condemned the rowdy tourists for imperiling hard-won gains in efforts to contain the virus.

"We just recently managed to open the borders again in Europe. We cannot risk this by reckless behavior," Heiko Maas told Funke Media Group on Thursday. "Otherwise, new measures will be inevitable."

In a move designed to stop the spread of the coronavirus and shake off the region's reputation as a party hub, regional authorities in the Balearic Islands ordered the closure from Thursday of all establishments along Mallorca's "Beer St." and "Ham St.," as the popular party areas near the beach of Palma

de Mallorca are known, and on another boulevard in nearby Magaluf.

Another European tourism hotspot, Greece, lifted a ban on flights from Britain on July 15 and on Thursday welcomed the first arrivals with random testing at the airport in Athens.

Finland is one of the countries to have eased lockdown measures. On Wednesday night, dozens of people queued shoulder-to-shoulder waiting to get into a Helsinki night club.

Americans heading overseas were causing consternation in Ireland, amid fears that some were ignoring the government's requirement that they self-isolate for 14 days after arrival.

In France, which has been seeing new outbreaks, Prime Minister Jean Castex said masks would be mandatory in closed public places as of next week — sooner than Aug. 1 as previously announced.

India's record daily increase of nearly 32,700 cases pushed its total close to 1 million and led authorities to reimpose a three-day lockdown and night curfew in the popular western beach state of Goa, two weeks after it was reopened to tourists.

The state's top elected official, Pramod Sawant, said people there were flouting social distancing rules and not wearing face masks. Nearly 40,000 people have been fined in the past two weeks for not wearing masks.

Virus case at Iwakuni turns out to be false positive

By JAMES BOLINGER
Stars and Stripes

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan — One case of the coronavirus reported Tuesday at this base in southern Japan turned out to be a false positive, MCAS Iwakuni announced in a statement Thursday.

The person had driven in a private vehicle from Kansai Airport before entering the mandated, 14-day quarantine at MCAS Iwakuni, the statement said.

Marine officials learned of the error Thursday from Japanese officials. The test result was "miscommunicated," according to the statement.

In a separate case, the air station said a group that tested positive after arriving Monday posed a low risk of exposure, based on contact tracing by Japanese health authorities and authorities at MCAS Iwakuni.

Japanese Defense Minister Taro Kano on Tuesday identified the group as a U.S. military family of three. He said the fam-

ily misled authorities at Haneda Airport in metro Tokyo on Sunday and took a commercial flight Monday to Iwakuni.

U.S. military personnel arriving in Japan aboard commercial flights are barred from using domestic air travel or other public transportation to reach their destination.

"The circumstances of this incident are still under investigation," the statement said. "Failure to abide by the policies in place increases the risk to our host nation and local population, and may result in administrative or disciplinary action."

Russia accused of hacking vaccine trials

Associated Press

LONDON — Britain, the United States and Canada accused Russia on Thursday of trying to steal information from researchers seeking a COVID-19 vaccine.

The three nations alleged that hacking group APT29, also known as Cozy Bear and said to be part of the Russian intelligence service, is attacking academic and pharmaceutical research institutions involved in coronavirus vaccine development.

Britain's National Cybersecurity Centre made the announcement, which was coordinated with authorities in the U.S. and Canada.

"It is completely unacceptable that the Russian Intelligence Services are targeting those working to combat the coronavirus pandemic," Brit-

ish Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said in a statement. "While others pursue their selfish interests with reckless behaviour, the U.K. and its allies are getting on with the hard work of finding a vaccine and protecting global health."

The persistent and ongoing attacks are seen by intelligence officials as an effort to steal intellectual property, rather than to disrupt research. The campaign of "malicious activity" is ongoing and includes attacks "predominantly against government, diplomatic, think-tank, healthcare and energy targets," the National Cybersecurity Centre said in a statement.

It was unclear whether any information actually was stolen, but the center said individuals' confidential information is not believed to have been

compromised. The Russian Foreign Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Cozy Bear, also known as the "dukes," was identified by Washington as one of two Russian government-linked hacking groups that broke into the Democratic National Committee computer network and stole emails before the 2016 presidential election. The other group is often called Fancy Bear.

The director of operations for the British cybersecurity center, Paul Chichester, urged "organizations to familiarize themselves with the advice we have published to help defend their networks."

The statement did not say whether Russian President Vladimir Putin knew about the vaccine research hacking, but British officials believe such

intelligence would be highly prized.

The malware, called WellMess and WellMail, had not been associated with the hacking group, the advisory said.

"In recent attacks targeting COVID-19 vaccine research and development, the group conducted basic vulnerability scanning against specific external IP addresses owned by the organizations. The group then deployed public exploits against the vulnerable services identified," the advisory said.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's cybersecurity agency warned in April that cybercriminals and other groups were targeting COVID-19 research, noting at the time that the increase in people teleworking because of the pandemic had created potential avenues for hackers to exploit.

US sanctions companies linked to 'Putin's Chef'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration has imposed sanctions on companies connected to a Russian businessman who is close to Russian President Vladimir Putin and suspected of helping finance the covert social media campaign aimed at American voters ahead of the 2016 presidential election.

The actions announced Wednesday take aim at front companies that officials say Yevgeny Prigozhin has relied on to process millions of dollars and to evade sanctions in Sudan, where the Trump administration says Russia has been involved in paramilitary operations and supporting authoritarian regimes.

"Today's actions will further limit attempts by Prigozhin and his backers to foment disorder or undermine democratic reforms in Sudan," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement announcing

the sanctions by the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control.

Prigozhin, whose close relationship to Putin has earned him the nickname of "Putin's Chef," attracted attention in 2018 after he and Russian companies he controlled were indicted in special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into ties between Russia and the Trump campaign. He was accused of financing an effort to use social media posts to spread disinformation and to divide American public opinion on hot-button social issues ahead of the election.

The Justice Department in March dropped charges against two of those companies, Concord Management and Consulting LLC and Concord Catering, citing concerns that the entities would use the case to send sensitive law enforcement tools back to Russia while facing no meaningful punishment even if convicted.

Private firm now responsible for pandemic-related data

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Hospital data related to the coronavirus pandemic in the U.S. will now be collected by a private technology firm, rather than the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — a move the Trump administration says will speed up reporting but one that concerns some public health leaders.

The CDC director said Wednesday that he's fine with the change — even though some experts fear it will further sideline the agency.

The CDC has agreed to step out of the government's traditional data collection process "in order to streamline reporting," Dr. Robert Redfield said during a call with reporters set up by the agency's parent, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

HHS officials recently posted a document on the agency's website that redirected hospitals' daily reporting of a range

of data meant to assess the impact of the coronavirus on them. TeleTracking Technologies, based in Pittsburgh, will now collect that information.

If hospitals are already directly reporting to state health departments, however, they can get a written release from the state to keep doing that.

The information includes bed occupancy, staffing levels, the severity level of coronavirus patients, ventilators on hand and supplies of masks, gowns, and other personal protective equipment. The CDC will continue to collect other data, like information about cases and deaths, from state health departments.

Michael Caputo, an HHS spokesman, said the CDC has been seeing a lag of a week or more in data coming from hospitals and that only 85% of hospitals have been participating. The change is meant to result in faster and more complete reporting, he said.

US carries out 2nd execution this week

Associated Press

TERRE HAUTE, Ind. — The United States on Thursday carried out its second federal execution this week, killing by lethal injection a Kansas man whose lawyers contended he had dementia and was unfit to be executed.

Wesley Ira Purkey was put to death at the Federal Correctional Complex in Terre Haute, Ind.. Purkey was convicted of kidnapping and killing a 16-year-old girl, Jennifer Long, before dismembering, burning and dumping her body in a septic pond. He also was convicted in a state court in Kansas after using a claw hammer to kill an 80-year-old woman who had polio.

Purkey was strapped to a gurney inside the execution chamber. A prison official removed a mask from Purkey's face and asked him if he wanted to make a final statement.

He leaned his head up slightly from the gurney and said: "I deeply regret the pain and suffering I caused to Jennifer's family.

I am deeply sorry." He also expressed remorse for his own adult daughter's suffering his actions caused. "I deeply regret the pain I caused to my daughter, who I love so very much," he said. His last words were: "This sanitized murder really does not serve no purpose whatsoever. Thank you."

As the lethal chemical was injected, Purkey took several deep breaths and blinked repeatedly, laying his head back down on the gurney. His time of death was 8:19 a.m. EDT.

His spiritual adviser was in the room, wearing a face mask and a surgical mask and appeared to be praying, his gloved hands held together at the palms.

The Supreme Court cleared the way for the execution to take place just hours before, ruling in a 5-4 decision. The four liberal justices dissented, like they did for the first case earlier this week.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote that "proceeding with Purkey's execution now, despite the grave questions and factual findings regarding his mental competency,

casts a shroud of constitutional doubt over the most irrevocable of injuries." She was joined by Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen Breyer and Elena Kagan.

It was the federal government's second execution after a 17-year hiatus. Another man, Daniel Lewis Lee, was put to death Tuesday after his eleventh hour legal bids failed.

Both executions were delayed into the day after they were scheduled as legal wrangling continued late into the night and into the next morning.

The Justice Department has been questioned for holding the executions in the middle of the worsening coronavirus pandemic, prompting lawsuits over fears those who would travel to the prison could become infected.

The decision to resume executions after nearly two decades was criticized as a dangerously political move in an election year, forcing an issue that is not high on the list of American priorities considering the 11% unemployment rate and the pandemic.

Berkeley moving forward with police reform proposal

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — After hours of emotional public testimony and a middle-of-the-night vote by Berkeley leaders, the progressive California city is moving forward with a novel proposal to replace police with unarmed civilians during traffic stops in a bid to curtail racial profiling.

The City Council early Wednesday approved a police reform proposal that calls for a public committee to hash out details of a new Berkeley Police Department that

would not respond to calls involving people experiencing homelessness or mental illness. The committee also would pursue creating a separate department to handle transportation planning and enforcing parking and traffic laws.

The council voted for the committee to find ways to eventually cut the Police Department's budget by half and approved analysis of police calls and spending.

A tired but excited Berkeley Mayor Jesse Arreguin said he doesn't expect a new transportation department overnight

because conversations will be hard and detailed with complicated logistics to figure out. But he said communities of color in his city feel targeted by police and that needs to change.

"There may be situations where police do need to intervene, and so we need to look at all that," he said.

It's believed the plan to separate traffic enforcement from police is the first of its kind in the U.S. and comes as many cities seek broad public safety reforms, including reducing law enforcement budgets.

Pompeo downplays chance of another N. Korea summit

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo downplayed the possibility of another summit between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un before the U.S. presidential election, saying Trump would only want to engage if there were real prospects of progress.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who has called for another Trump-Kim meeting ahead of the election in November, acknowledged Thursday that U.S. and South Korean relations with North Korea were still like "walking on ice" after two

years of high-stakes summits.

During a parliamentary speech, Moon urged North Korea to return to inter-Korean dialogue, which has also stalled, and called for South Korean lawmakers to support government policies aimed at reviving cross-border cooperation. He made no direct comment on the prospects for U.S.-North Korea talks.

Pompeo's comments during a forum in Washington on Wednesday followed repeated North Korean statements insisting it would no longer gift Trump high-profile meetings he could boast as foreign policy achievements when it's not being substan-

tially rewarded in return.

"The North Koreans have given mixed signals, but the truth is President Trump only wants to engage in a summit if we believe there's a sufficient likelihood that we can make real progress in achieving the outcomes that were set forth in Singapore," Pompeo said during the event, referring to the first Trump-Kim summit in June 2018.

"You need to have a willing partner, and the North Koreans have chosen at this point in time not to engage in a way that can lead to a potential solution. We hope they'll change their mind."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Mayor steps in to save wedding ceremony

MA MASPEE — A couple gathered with family for a Cape Cod wedding found themselves without an officiant minutes before being wed, until a Massachusetts mayor wrangled special permission to perform the ceremony.

Carlo DeMaria, the mayor of Everett, Mass., was on vacation near the venue in West Yarmouth on Saturday, when the mother of the bride asked if he could help.

The minister who was supposed to perform the ceremony had canceled at the last minute because of an emergency.

DeMaria said he called Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker and Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito to request special authorization to wed the couple, who recently moved to Cape Cod from Pittsburgh.

Matt and Naomi Kalliath are both physicians and will start positions at hospitals in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

DeMaria officiated the couple's union at sunset wearing a polo shirt and shorts and reading their vows off a cellphone. On Tuesday, the newlyweds met DeMaria again for lunch to thank him.

Patrol: Chase reached speeds of 155 mph

NE GRAND ISLAND — An attempt to stop a speeding car on Interstate 80 led to a high-speed chase over 60 miles that reached 155 mph, the Nebraska State Patrol said.

The incident happened Monday night, when a Seward County sheriff's deputy tried to stop a speeding Camaro on the interstate near Seward, the patrol said in a news release. Troopers later spotted the speeding car at Waco, where it hit traffic cones in a construc-

tion site, and near Henderson. Troopers were unable to get the driver to stop.

The Camaro was later found abandoned, and the suspected driver, 23-year-old Utah man, was arrested at a Grand Island hotel, the patrol said.

Law enforcement officials have lamented a growing problem with excessive speeding along the interstate since the coronavirus outbreak began earlier this year, including a chase in late May in which a car was clocked at 174 mph before it was stopped.

'Body' at tracks is sex doll, detectives discover

GA ALLENHURST — It seemed like a major crime for Allenhurst, a town in southeast Georgia. A female body was spotted by the railroad tracks. Liberty County deputies gathered at the scene and waited for the coroner.

It took a while before they realized the joke was on them: The corpse was actually a sex doll.

Detective Mike Albritton said officers found the female humanoid Tuesday afternoon, WSAV-TV reported. Under department policy, deputies can't touch a dead body until the coroner arrives.

Once the coroner came to the scene, detectives began checking the body for injuries and immediately realized it was a sex doll.

It's unclear whether authorities will investigate.

Beach swimmers saved by surfer, boogie board

ME KENNEBUNK — A 14-year-old surfer saved a woman from drowning at Gooch's Beach in Kennebunk by pulling her onto his surfboard.

Lucas Drinkwater told

WGME-TV that the drama unfolded last weekend when he and another person heard screams and paddled to a mother and daughter in the water. He helped one of the women while someone on a boogie board helped the other.

"She was struggling to stay up, exhausted," Drinkwater said. "I said, 'Yeah, we're going to be fine,' reassuring her. And then I looked back at the beach and said, 'OMG, we're so far away,'" he told WGME-TV.

Kennebunk Fire Rescue Division Chief John Brady said that the two women got in trouble at the beach despite being experienced and familiar with it.

Rescuers take 46 dogs from overwhelmed man

NC MOORESVILLE — Two rescue groups worked together to retrieve 46 beagles from a home where a man said he had become overwhelmed trying to take care of the dogs.

Triangle Beagle Rescue and Piedmont Animal Rescue worked together to get the dogs out of the Iredell County home, news sources reported Tuesday.

Jason Bengé with Piedmont Animal Rescue in Mooresville said he received a call to help a hunter who bred and raised beagles.

"He's been doing this for many, many years and as his health declined, he still felt like he could do this and it just got too overwhelming him," Bengé said.

Rescuers said they found 46 purebred beagles, some as young as eight weeks and as old as about 11. Fifteen of the beagles are in Raleigh with Triangle Beagle Rescue and will soon be ready for adoption. Another 25 went to a All 4 Paws, a

rescue in Pawley's Island, S.C., while the rest stayed at Piedmont Animal Rescue.

Car hits trooper's SUV, damages ambulance

AZ BENSON — Arizona law enforcement officials said a car collided with a state trooper's SUV pulled over on the side of a highway near Benson on Tuesday, shoving the SUV into an ambulance.

The Arizona Department of Public Safety said the driver of the car, a 23-year-old California man, was injured but his injuries were not life-threatening.

The trooper was not in the SUV at the time of the crash and was not injured. The people inside the ambulance were also not injured in the crash, KPHO-TV reported.

The ambulance and trooper were on the side of the Interstate 10 after responding to an earlier accident.

The California man was driving a Tesla, which was in an autopilot mode, DPS said.

Police rescue miniature horse found tied to truck

IL CHICAGO — A Chicago police officer rescued a miniature horse after finding the animal tied to a truck outside without access to water or shade, police said.

Police said an officer discovered the horse Monday afternoon in the city's Back of the Yards neighborhood. The horse was tied to a tow truck in a vacant lot and it had no access to food or water, and the truck was not parked in the shade, WLS-TV reported.

A 30-year-old man who police said owned the horse was charged with one misdemeanor count of violating animal owner duties.

From wire reports

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Dallas, Prescott can't reach long-term deal

Associated Press

Dak Prescott will play whatever becomes of the 2020 season under the one-year franchise tag after the Dallas Cowboys and their star quarterback couldn't agree on a long-term contract.

Clubs had until Wednesday afternoon to reach multiyear deals with players given the franchise tag. Of the 14 tagged in March, two have agreements, including NFL rushing leader Derrick Henry with Tennessee just before the deadline.

Two more — Cincinnati receiver A.J. Green and defensive end Yannick Ngakoue of Jacksonville — haven't signed the one-year contract that goes with the tag. They can stay away from team activities without the risk of being fined. Ngakoue has said he won't play for the Jaguars and wants to be traded.

Prescott signed his \$31.4 million contract in June. The 2016 NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year earned slightly more than \$4 million total in the four years of his rookie contract after being drafted in the fourth round.

The Cowboys and Prescott have been working for more than a year on a long-term contract for a two-time Pro Bowler

who has started every game of his career.

Prescott replaced an injured Tony Romo during the 2016 preseason and led a franchise-record 11-game winning streak that carried the Cowboys to the top seed in the NFC playoffs. Romo, a 10-year starter, never got his job back.

Henry and the Titans agreed on a multi-year deal a day after Kansas City secured Pro Bowl defensive end Chris Jones on a four-year contract that could be worth up to \$85 million. Henry's deal is reported to be at \$50 million over four years.

The Bengals used the \$17.9 million tag on Green despite the seven-time Pro Bowler missing all of last season with an ankle injury.

Leonard Williams of the New York Giants is set to play on the \$16.1 million tag for a defensive tackle, although the union has filed a grievance intended to classify him as a defensive end earning \$17.8 million.

Williams was acquired from the Jets in October for two draft picks. He has 17½ sacks in five seasons, but finished with a career-low half sack last year.

Matthew Judon of Baltimore is set to earn \$16.8 million as the midpoint between

linebacker and defensive end, according to the NFL Network. The 2016 fifth-round pick led the Ravens with a career-high 9½ sacks last season.

NFL sacks leader Shaquil Barrett of Tampa Bay and Pittsburgh's Bud Dupree are classified as linebackers (\$15.8 million), but the NFL Network has reported that both have filed grievances seeking the defensive end salary of \$17.8 million.

Barrett had 19½ sacks in his first season with the Bucs after signing a \$4 million, one-year contract. In his first five NFL seasons with Denver, Barrett totaled 14 sacks. Dupree broke through in a "prove-it" season with a career-high 11½ sacks.

LA Chargers tight end Hunter Henry is set to earn \$10.6 million. He was one of Philip Rivers' most reliable targets last season, finishing with 55 catches for 652 yards while missing four games with a knee injury. With Rivers gone to Indianapolis in free agency, Tyrod Taylor is expected to start.

Anthony Harris of Minnesota and Denver's Justin Simmons are set to play under the \$11.4 million tag for a safety. Guards Joe Thuney of New England and Brandon Scherff of Washington are set to earn \$14.8 million.

MLB players, managers still adjusting to virus safety rules

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Washington Nationals manager Dave Martinez wanted to hug, high-five and fist bump his players. After all, the defending World Series champions spent nearly four months apart before resuming workouts last week.

Then, he remembered: Those are out. And just like crying, now there's no spitting in baseball, either.

"The first thing you want to do when you see the guys come in after not seeing them for a while, you want to give them a big hug, a fist bump, high-five," Martinez said.

Players are adjusting to a new normal after nearly four months away following the shutdown of training camps because of the COVID-19 pandemic. They are being asked to set aside behaviors stitched into the game's fabric.

Imagine this:

Someone hits a game-ending home run and no one mobs him as he crosses the plate. A manager goes out to argue a call and gets tossed for coming too close to the umpire.

Under the new rules detailed in a 113-page manual, it's possible. And that's not the only change.

With spitting prohibited, forget about sunflower seeds in the dugout. Tobacco, too.

Don't expect players and coaches to sit too close together. And inactive players might wind up in the stands, at least six feet apart. Players are also encouraged to skip tossing the ball around the infield after outs, as has been done forever.

If a player wants to lick his fingers to get a better grip on the ball, well, that's against the rules, too. But a pitcher can, instead, keep a wet rag in his back pocket.

Olympics

American sprinter banned 18 months

Associated Press

MONACO — Olympic finalist sprinter Deajah Stevens was banned for 18 months on Thursday for missing doping tests and will miss the Tokyo Games.

The Athletics Integrity Unit, which prosecutes cases in track and field, said Stevens was unavailable for three doping controls in 2019 in Oregon and West Hollywood. Three whereabouts violations within one year can lead to a ban.

The 25-year-old American runner's ban was backdated to start on Feb. 17, 2020. It will expire days after the scheduled closing ceremony of the postponed Tokyo Olympics in August 2021.

Stevens cited issues with her telephone for officials being unable to contact her for two of the missed visits, according to the published ruling from her

disciplinary hearing.

Stevens can appeal against the ban at the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

Burroughs planning to wrestle until 2024

Jordan Burroughs, the face of U.S. wrestling for nearly a decade, said he plans to compete another four years with the hope of finishing his career at the Paris Olympics in 2024.

Burroughs laid out his future in a statement Wednesday, saying he will leave his long-time training headquarters in Lincoln, Neb., and join the Pennsylvania Regional Training Center in Philadelphia as a resident athlete in September 2021.

Burroughs, who failed to medal at the 2016 games in Rio de Janeiro, will attempt to make a third straight Olympics.

Elliott joins dad as All-Star race winner

Associated Press

BRISTOL, Tenn. — Chase Elliott collected the checkered flag and soaked in the sounds of fans in the grandstands. The spectators at Bristol Motor Speedway surged to the fence, chanted “USA! USA!” and celebrated NASCAR’s most popular driver.

Cue the siren at the Dawsonville Pool Room — another Elliott is an All-Star winner.

Chase Elliott joined his father, Hall of Famer “Awesome” Bill Elliott, as winner of NASCAR’s annual All-Star race, earning the \$1 million prize Wednesday in front of limited spectators at the Tennessee track.

“Tonight felt like an event again and I felt like we’ve been missing that piece for a couple months,” said Elliott, who won races at Charlotte in the Cup Series and Truck Series with no fans. “It felt good to have NASCAR back. NASCAR is about the fans. I felt like the vibe was back.”

Back in his Georgia hometown, the pool room marks every win by the father or son

by blaring its horn no matter the time of day or night.

“I hope someone got a good video of it for me,” Elliott said. “That’s such a special tradition.”

Over in victory lane, the normally reserved Elliott celebrated like never before. He accepted the track’s gladiator sword trophy and waved it in the air, stabbed it toward his Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet — he drives No. 9, just like his father did — and pretended to vanquish his foes with it in his celebration.

“What a special race to win. It’s extremely special to join Dad in winning this race,” Elliott said. “To me this is one of the prestigious events on the schedule. There’s a lot of hype around it. It means a lot to me ... you are racing against the very best. To beat the best is always special.”

Elliott won the second and third stages of the event and earned the right to choose which lane he wanted to restart for the final 15-lap sprint to the finish. He picked the outside

lane and pulled buddy Ryan Blaney with him on the restart but was never challenged and beat Kyle Busch to the finish line.

Bill Elliott won the race in 1986, the only year it was held at Atlanta Motor Speedway. The race began in 1985 at Charlotte Motor Speedway and was held at that North Carolina track every year but one until it was moved during this pandemic-altered year.

Tennessee officials allowed NASCAR and Speedway Motorsports to sell 30,000 tickets to the All-Star race, so it was moved from Charlotte because North Carolina would not authorize spectators for the race.

It was the most spectators at a sporting event in the United States since March. Because the speedway is privately owned, attendance numbers will not be released, but there appeared to be about 20,000 people in the grandstands. Tickets were on sale through Tuesday evening and still available on Bristol’s website until the deadline.

Bristol, dubbed “The Last

Great Colosseum,” can hold about 140,000 spectators. Speedway Motorsports had those in attendance socially distanced through the grandstands and masks were only required upon entrance. Fans were told they could remove them once in their seats.

Following the post-race fireworks, an announcement was made to the crowd telling fans they’d be dismissed by row.

Elliott won in his fifth All-Star appearance and is the 25th different driver to win the made-for-TV race. He and his father join Hall of Famers Dale Earnhardt and Dale Earnhardt Jr. as winning father-son duos of the event.

“Anytime you can join the Earnhardts in anything in racing, and to join Dad in winning this event, that’s not just special. That’s a lot of years and a lot of history. For everything to come full circle like that is pretty dang cool,” Elliott said.

Bubba Wallace was wrecked out of the qualifying race, ruining his shot of racing for the \$1 million prize.

Pacers’ Oladipo backtracks on sitting out season

Associated Press

Victor Oladipo is having second thoughts about calling it a season.

If all goes well for the next two weeks, the Indiana Pacers could get their two-time All-Star back.

Twelve days after announcing he would sit out because of concerns over his surgically repaired right knee, Oladipo told reporters Wednesday the workouts in Orlando, Fla., have forced him to rethink his decision.

“It was hard for me to assess where I was,” Oladipo said. “But being able to come down here and practice with my guys at a high level, I think there’s a strong possibility that I might play. I want to be smart because I want to play the next 10 years.”

Oladipo’s presence could give the Pacers a big boost when the season resumes, especially with starting guard Malcolm Brogdon also expected to be healthy.

Indiana is scheduled to play three scrimmages before facing Philadelphia on Aug. 1, the first of eight regular-season games. First-round playoff games are set to begin Aug. 17.

Oladipo told team officials last week he would only practice — not play — when the team arrived in Florida. Kevin Pritchard, the Pacers president of basketball operations, and coach Nate McMillan both said they supported Oladipo, whose minutes were being closely monitored when the season was suspended in mid-March.

Still, Oladipo’s decision drew criticism from those who

thought the former Indiana University star was trying to protect himself for a potentially big payday in free agency after next season.

Instead, Oladipo followed the plan.

“I was always going to come down here and test it out,” he said. “When I made my decision, I wasn’t able to play five on five, wasn’t able to get up and down the floor and wasn’t able to do things at a high level, so I didn’t think I would be able to play. But after coming down here and working with the guys, rebounding, running and jumping, I’m trending in a positive direction. So hopefully when it’s time to play, I can play.”

The Pacers hope so, too.

Oladipo had surgery for a ruptured quad tendon last year and missed 12 months of action.

When he returned in late January, Oladipo wasn’t the same. In 13 games, he averaged 13.8 points 3.2 rebounds and 3 assists while shooting just 39.1% from the field.

This spring, McMillan said he would be cautious with Oladipo — if he played — though he acknowledged Wednesday that Oladipo has not been limited in practice.

“I think it’s something that’s going to be a collective decision based off me, the medical staff, my trainer, the upper office, the coach,” Oladipo said. “I think it’s going to be a collective decision because stubbornly, I want to go out and play 40 minutes. But this is a different situation.”

Brogdon tore a muscle in his thigh March 4 and was listed as week to week.