

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Trump seeks to bring home some troops

The Washington Post

When President Donald Trump spoke with Pentagon leaders early last month about U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan, he was anxious for a hefty reduction by Election Day in November, according to U.S. officials familiar with the discussion.

Reminded that withdrawals below the current level of approximately 8,600 — about the same as when Trump first took office — were contingent upon still-unmet conditions outlined in the U.S.-Taliban deal signed early this year, he questioned whether U.S. forces in Syria could be decreased.

Not advisable, Trump was told of the approximately 800 troops there, most still engaged in fighting Islamic State and keeping Russia, Iran and Turkey from expanding their reach.

“I am sure they’re going to stay in [Syria] until the end

of the year, beyond the election, regardless of who wins,” a senior U.S. official said in the wake of the meeting. U.S. and foreign officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive troop withdrawal issue.

Just weeks later, Trump announced that he was reducing U.S. deployments in Germany by 9,500, from the current total of 34,500.

Since taking office, Trump has been struggling to fulfill his 2016 campaign pledge to significantly reduce the nearly 200,000 military personnel then overseas, already the smallest number in many decades. In countries such as Afghanistan, U.S. troops are merely serving as “police,” he has argued, while Germany, South Korea and others that could afford to defend themselves are getting U.S. protection on the cheap at taxpayer expense.

But Trump has been stymied at virtually every turn. While there have been some relative-

ly minor shifts in distribution — and since 2017 the Defense Department no longer includes troops in Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq in its unclassified, published tallies — the overall total of those serving abroad is believed to have slightly increased since Barack Obama left office.

In the past, members of his own administration, including military leaders, have talked Trump out of specific withdrawals or employed delaying tactics. When the president ordered him in 2018 to tell Persian Gulf partners to send their own troops to Syria so the U.S. could get out, former national security adviser John Bolton wrote in his recent book, he slow-walked the idea until it went away. Trump eventually cut the numbers, without any Arab replacements or financial contribution.

The idea of bringing home the troops resonates with many across the political spectrum. But numerous lawmakers of both parties have objected to Trump’s efforts. Most recent-

ly, senior Republicans have warned that a major reduction in Germany would limit U.S. military flexibility in Europe and beyond, decrease U.S. influence in NATO and be a gift to Russia. Late last month, Senate Republicans Lindsey Graham, of South Carolina; Marco Rubio, of Florida; and Mitt Romney, of Utah, joined Democratic Sens. Chris Coons, of Delaware; Tim Kaine, of Virginia; and Jeanne Shaheen, of New Hampshire, in sponsoring an amendment to the fiscal 2021 Defense Authorization Act that would limit the use of funds to reduce active-duty troops in Germany unless the Defense Department could certify that a long list of restrictive conditions had been met.

U.S. opinion polls detailing Trump’s plummeting popularity are being closely watched in NATO capitals and at the Brussels headquarters. NATO policymakers say that if Democrat Joe Biden is elected, they expect the troop reductions to be off the table.

Esper: No decision to withdraw troops from S. Korea

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Mark Esper on Tuesday dismissed reports that he was developing plans to reduce the number of American troops in South Korea.

“I’ve issued no orders to withdraw forces in the Korean Peninsula,” Esper said during a virtual discussion with The International Institute for Strategic Studies, a think tank.

The Wall Street Journal reported Friday that the Penta-

gon had presented options to the White House for drawing down the number of military personnel on the peninsula because of the ongoing disagreement between the two countries over how much South Korea should pay to offset the cost of having American troops stationed in the country.

President Donald Trump had demanded a fivefold increase to about \$5 billion per year, though U.S. negotiators have said they reduced that demand to an unannounced amount.

The previous Special Mea-

sures Agreement expired Dec. 31. In April, U.S. Forces Korea, which commands some 28,500 service members on the divided peninsula, furloughed about 4,500 South Korean employees, about half the local national workforce, because there is no agreement.

The United States and South Korea are still negotiating for a new agreement.

However, Esper also said Tuesday that the Pentagon is still implementing the National Defense Strategy. That has meant looking at the geographic combatant commands

and making sure the United States is positioned well to accomplish its mission, he said. That includes looking at adjustments “to make sure we are optimizing our forces.”

“We’re moving toward additional concepts, new concepts such as dynamic force employment. And I continue to want to pursue more rotational forces — force deployments into theaters, because it gives us, the United States, greater strategic flexibility in terms of responding to challenges around the globe,” Esper said.

Nimitz strike group trains with Indian ships

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The Nimitz Carrier Strike Group met up with ships of the Indian navy on Monday for an exercise in the Indian Ocean, the Navy said in a statement.

The strike group was most recently in the South China Sea, where it operated in tandem with the USS Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group.

“It was a privilege to operate with the Indian Navy,” Rear Adm. Jim Kirk, commander of the Nimitz strike group, said in a Navy statement Monday.

Kirk described the Indian Eastern Fleet as “a powerful and highly skilled fleet,” saying that the series of exercises were “a testimony to the flex-

ibility of both our navies.”

Military forces of both India and the United States have been grappling with China’s increasingly assertive armed forces. In June, at least 20 Indian soldiers died during a savage clash with Chinese troops in a contested border area in the Himalayas.

Relations between Washington and Beijing have frayed this year as China appears to be taking advantage of the worldwide coronavirus pandemic to step up control over the South China Sea.

The presence of the Nimitz and Ronald Reagan strike groups in those waters last week was just the latest in the Navy’s high-profile operations pushing back on China’s maritime claims.

The Navy did not say how long the Indian Ocean exercises would last. Indian media outlets reported that the Nimitz strike group entered the Indian Ocean through the Malacca Straits on Saturday and is on its way to the Middle East.

The strike group includes the flagship carrier USS Nimitz, guided-missile cruiser USS Princeton and guided-missile destroyers USS Sterett and USS Ralph Johnson.

Among the Indian ships participating in the exercise were the destroyer Rana, the frigates Sahyadri and Shivalik and the anti-submarine corvette Kamorta.

In a tweet Monday, an Indian navy spokesperson described it as a *passex*, an exercise in

which multiple ships operate in close vicinity of one another as they steam toward a destination.

The exercise is meant to improve handling and navigating skills for all crews involved.

“Naval engagements such as these exercises improve the cooperation of U.S. and Indian maritime forces and contribute to both sides’ ability to counter threats at sea, from piracy to violent extremism,” the Navy statement said. “These engagements also present opportunities to build upon the pre-existing strong relationship between the United States and India and allow both countries to learn from each other.”

Surge puts Army at 7,282 virus cases; Navy at 5,629

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Army became the first military service to surpass 7,000 coronavirus cases as of Monday, less than a week after reaching 6,000 cases, according to the Pentagon.

The Army had 683 more soldiers test positive for the coronavirus since Friday, bringing the number of soldiers infected to 7,282, according to the Pentagon’s cumulative coronavirus case chart.

The Army saw 1,480 more cases among its soldiers between July 13 and Monday, according to the Pentagon. If the Army were its own state, it would have had more cases than 14 states and the District of Columbia during the last 7 days, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data.

During the past few weeks, the U.S. has seen a surge in cases in several states, mostly in the south and southwest.

The Pentagon recorded

21,909 service members have tested positive for the coronavirus as of Monday, an increase of 3,893 cases during the past week.

Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Friday during a town hall discussion at the Pentagon that the military has “relatively low rates of infection” compared to “other parts of the society and the world.”

A spokesperson for the chairman did not respond to a request Monday for the military’s infection rate.

In the early weeks of the pandemic, the Navy led the other military services in cases, in part due to outbreaks aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt and USS Kidd. The service now has the second highest number of cases, with 5,629 as of Monday, an increase of 349 more sailors becoming infected since Friday.

As of Monday, the Air Force has 3,263 cumulative cases, the National Guard has 3,016, and the Marine Corps has 2,470 cases.

USMC bans Hiroshima visits amid uptick in virus cases

BY JAMES BOLINGER
Stars and Stripes

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan — Hiroshima has been declared off-limits to those living and working at MCAS Iwakuni due to an increase in coronavirus cases in the city.

The ban took effect Tuesday and applies to all personnel, including service members, Defense Department civilian employees and family members, looking to travel to Hiroshima in their spare time, according to a post Monday on the air station’s official Facebook page. Hiroshima has recorded new coronavirus cases almost daily since July 1, according to the city’s website. On Monday, it reported four infections.

MCAS Iwakuni personnel who live in Hiroshima are still allowed onto the installation but are asked to take appropriate measures to prevent the virus spreading from the city to the air station.

“If there is something you want to buy that is not essen-

tial, please travel outside Hiroshima City to do so,” the post stated. Essential services include work, school, medical appointments, fuel and groceries.

Travel to the city via personal vehicles was authorized June 19, following a monthlong lockdown during which base residents could only leave the air station for essential tasks.

The new travel ban will affect anyone from the base who planned to visit the Peace Memorial Park for the coming 75th anniversary of the Aug. 6, 1945, bombing of Hiroshima. The attack marked the first use of an atomic bomb and hastened the end of World War II.

Troops can still travel throughout Honshu, as long as they do not use public transportation or visit off-limits areas like Hiroshima and Tokyo.

MCAS Iwakuni reported its first cases of coronavirus last week when a family of three tested positive after arriving from the U.S., according to the Japanese Ministry of Defense.

Stars and Stripes reporter Hana Kusumoto contributed to this report.

Trump vows to send federal agents to cities

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Homeland Security officials said Monday that they are preparing to deploy federal agents to Chicago, and President Donald Trump threatened to send U.S. law enforcement personnel to other Democratic-led cities experiencing spates of crime as he defended his use of force in Portland, where agents have clashed nightly with protesters and made arrests from unmarked cars.

Calling the unrest in Portland “worse than Afghanistan,” Trump’s rhetoric escalated tensions with Democratic mayors and governors who have criticized the presence of federal agents on U.S. streets, telling reporters at the White House that he would send forces into jurisdictions with or without the cooperation of their elected leaders.

“We’re looking at Chicago, too. We’re looking New York,” he said. “All run by very liberal Democrats. All run, really, by

the radical left.

“This is worse than anything anyone’s ever seen,” Trump continued. “And you know what? If Biden got in, that would be true for the country. The whole country would go to hell.”

With his poll numbers sinking amid widespread frustration at his response to the coronavirus pandemic, Trump has cast himself as a law-and-order strongman who will pacify U.S. communities roiled in recent months by spreading disease, the economic crisis and large street protests for racial justice.

Three Department of Homeland Security officials said Monday that the agency has been making preparations to deploy agents from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to Chicago, but the officials said operational details of the plan are not yet finalized.

The officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe the plans, said the agents, who are part of ICE’s Homeland

Security Investigations division, would not engage in immigration enforcement operations, and would probably assist with intelligence-gathering and targeting of the drug-trafficking groups and gangs driving the violence.

Trump has mentioned New York and Philadelphia as two other cities where his administration is looking to send in federal agents, but two DHS officials said Chicago is the only city where their plans have advanced.

The Chicago Tribune first reported on the plans Monday, and said up to 150 agents would be involved, but the DHS officials said the size of the HSI contingent remains in flux and would likely be smaller.

DHS officials involved in the preparations also said the federal agents would be directed by the Department of Justice, and their assignment in Chicago would be very different from the standoff between federal forces and protesters in Portland, despite the president’s attempts to link the two.

Workers protest racial inequalities on day of strikes

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Workers from the service industry, fast-food chains and the gig economy rallied with organized labor Monday to protest systemic racism and economic inequality, staging demonstrations across the United States and around the world seeking better treatment of Black Americans in the workplace.

Organizers said at least 20,000 workers in 160 cities walked off the job, inspired by the racial reckoning that followed the deaths of several Black men and women at the hands of police. Visible support came largely in protests that drew people whose

jobs in health care, transportation and construction do not allow them to work from home during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Strike for Black Lives was organized or supported by more than 60 labor unions and social and racial justice organizations, which held a range of events in more than two dozen cities. Support swelled well beyond expectations, organizers said, although a precise participation tally was not available.

Where work stoppages were not possible for a full day, participants picketed during a lunch break or dropped to a knee in memory of police brutality victims, includ-

ing George Floyd, a Black man killed in Minneapolis police custody in late May.

Dozens of janitors, security guards and health care workers observed a moment of silence in Denver to honor Floyd.

In San Francisco, 1,500 janitors walked out and marched to City Hall. Fast-food cooks and cashiers in Los Angeles and nursing home workers in St. Paul, Minn., also went on strike, organizers said.

At one McDonald’s in Los Angeles, workers blocked the drive-thru for 8 minutes and 46 seconds, about how long prosecutors said a white police officer held his knee on Floyd’s neck as he pleaded for air.

Officer charged in rubber pellet shooting at protests

Associated Press

DETROIT — A police corporal accused of shooting three photojournalists with rubber pellets while they covered protests in Detroit against police brutality was charged with felony assault, prosecutors said Monday.

Detroit Police Cpl. Daniel Debono, 32, faces multiple counts of felonious assault for allegedly firing rubber pellets at the three photojournalists during a May protest, Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy said.

Shortly after midnight on May 31 in

downtown Detroit, MLive.com photojournalist Nicole Hester, 30, and two independent photojournalists, Seth Herald, 28, and Matthew Hatcher, 29, encountered Debono and two other officers.

Each of the photojournalists was wearing press credentials, identified themselves as news media and raised their hands as they asked to cross the street, Worthy said. Debono, dressed in riot gear, struck all three with rubber pellets that inflicted bruises and other injuries.

“The evidence shows that these three journalists were leaving the protest area and that there was almost no one else on

the street where they were,” Worthy said. “There are simply no explicable reasons why the alleged actions of this officer were taken.”

The photojournalists were covering the protest in downtown Detroit, which was sparked by the May 25 death of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

Detroit Police Sgt. Nicole Kirkwood said Monday in an email to The Associated Press that an investigation was “immediately launched” after the department learned about the incident, and Police Chief James Craig suspended the officer.

Trump and Congress spar over aid package

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump acknowledged a “big flareup” of COVID-19 cases, but divisions between the White House and Senate Republicans and differences with Democrats posed fresh challenges for a new federal aid package with the U.S. crisis worsening and emergency relief about to expire.

Trump convened GOP leaders at the White House on Monday as Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell prepared to roll out his \$1 trillion package in days. But the administration criticized the legislation’s money for more virus testing and insisted on a full payroll tax repeal that could complicate quick passage. The timeline appeared to quickly shift.

“We’ve made a lot of progress,” Trump said, but added, “Unfortunately, this is something that’s very tough.”

Lawmakers returned to a Capitol still off-limits to tourists, another sign of the nation’s difficulty containing the coronavirus. Rather than easing, the pandemic’s devastating cycle is churning again, leaving Congress little choice but to engineer another costly rescue. Businesses are shutting down again, many schools will not fully reopen and jobs are disappearing, all while federal aid will expire in days.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said any attempt by the White House to block money for testing “goes beyond ignorance.”

The political stakes are high for both parties before the November election, and even more so for the nation, which now has registered more coronavirus infections and a higher death count — 140,800 — than any other country.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and acting chief of staff Mark Meadows were to meet privately Tuesday with Pe-

loshi and Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer..

Mnuchin vowed passage by month’s end, as a \$600 boost in jobless aid is set to expire, and said he expected a fresh \$1 trillion jolt of business tax breaks and other aid would have a “big impact” on the struggling economy.

On Capitol Hill, McConnell faces not just pressure from the White House but also splits within his ranks, which have chiseled away at his majority power and left him relying on Democrats for votes.

The package from McConnell, being crafted behind closed doors, is expected to include \$75 billion to help schools reopen. It will likely replace an expiring \$600 weekly unemployment benefits boost with a smaller amount. The cut in unemployment assistance is designed to ensure that jobless people do not receive a greater benefit than if they were working. Regular state benefits vary widely, and the measure would peg the federal bonus payment to a percentage of the state benefit.

McConnell’s package may also send a fresh round of direct \$1,200 cash payments to Americans below a certain income level, likely \$75,000, and create a sweeping five-year liability shield against coronavirus lawsuits.

But the administration was panning the proposal’s \$25 billion in new funds for virus testing and tracing and insisting on the payroll tax cut, Republicans said.

At Monday’s White House meeting, Trump said he wants a full payroll tax repeal, said one Republican who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the private meeting. Trump then put economist Art Laffer on speakerphone. Laffer is part of a conservative group favoring the tax break. The GOP leaders indicated only a partial repeal would be included in the coming bill.

Easing the payroll tax is dividing Trump’s party because it is used to finance Social Security and Medicare. The tax is already being deferred for employers under the previous virus relief package. Supporters say cutting it now for employees would put money in people’s pockets and stimulate the economy, but detractors warn it would do little for out-of-work Americans and add to the nation’s rising debt load.

GOP senators swiftly pushed back as the Republicans and the White House battled over priorities.

GOP Sen. John Cornyn of Texas was among several Republicans saying he’s “not a fan” of a payroll tax holiday.

Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, the chairman of the Health committee, said, “All roads to opening school, going back to work, opening child care lead through testing.”

Trump has insisted that the virus would “disappear,” but the president’s view did not at all match projections from the leading health professionals straining to halt the alarming U.S. caseload and death toll.

Schumer warned Monday his side will block any effort from McConnell that falls short, reviving a strategy from the last virus aid bill that forced Republicans to the negotiating table. This time, the House has approved Pelosi’s sweeping \$3 trillion effort, giving Democrats momentum heading into negotiations.

Joe Biden, the Democrats’ presumed presidential nominee, stated his own priorities. The new package should “deliver a lifeline to those who need it most: working families and small businesses,” he said.

Trump raised alarms on Capitol Hill when he suggested last month at a rally in Oklahoma that he wanted to slow virus testing. Testing is seen as the best way to track the virus to contain its spread.

Trump reverses course, calls wearing mask ‘patriotic’

Bloomberg

The mask may have reached a tipping point.

President Donald Trump’s administration Monday pushed to encourage mask-wearing, explicitly endorsing a measure widely seen as crucial to stemming the coronavirus pandemic, and potentially quelling a bitter debate that experts say costs lives.

The president, who for months resisted covering his face in public, tweeted that “it is Patriotic to wear a face mask when you can’t socially distance.” And Vice Presi-

dent Mike Pence told governors in a teleconference that he supported their mask mandates, with the administration even sending a memorandum to New Jersey recommending that it continue its order. The reversal followed polls that showed Trump’s refusal to champion masks was out of step with citizens terrified by rising case counts nationwide.

It also comes as Republican governors, facing outbreaks spiraling beyond control, begin to break with Trump on the issue. Texas Governor Greg Abbott last week cast masks as key to ensuring the state wouldn’t need to shut down its economy a

second time, though he resisted ordering their use.

Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves on Monday required residents of 23 hard-hit counties to start wearing masks.

“We have to take COVID-19 seriously,” Reeves said at a news conference. “This virus is not going away. There are lives on the line.”

Coronavirus cases in the U.S. increased Monday to 3.79 million, according to data collected by Johns Hopkins University and Bloomberg. The disease has killed almost 141,000 Americans so far.

Houston optimistic as state hits 4K deaths

Associated Press

AUSTIN — Texas surpassed 4,000 deaths in the coronavirus pandemic Monday, but officials in Houston, one of the hardest-hit cities in the United States, have said they are cautiously optimistic about recent trends following weeks of alarming surges at hospitals.

Texas reported more than 7,400 confirmed new cases and at least 62 new deaths. The virus has continued to take a particularly hard toll along the Texas-Mexico border: Hidalgo County has reported more than 140 deaths over the past week, and the county judge on Monday signed a shelter-at-home order.

The new order, which goes into effect Wednesday, limits travel and gatherings, sets a curfew and recommends all nonessential businesses cease any activity that can't be provided at curbside or by takeout.

In Houston, officials have said they are seeing signs of optimism. Dr. David Persse, Houston's health authority, said during a news conference that the positivity rate for COVID-19 testing has slightly dipped in recent days and the number of people requiring hospitalization "seems to have tapered off a bit." The positivity rate was at 24.5% on Friday, slightly down from a high of 25.9% earlier this month, Persse said, adding that the positivity rate was still "very high."

California

SAN FRANCISCO — Another California death row inmate has died from what appears to be complications of the coronavirus amid an outbreak sweeping through San Quentin State Prison, authorities said Monday.

Troy A. Ashmus, 58, died Monday outside of the prison near San Francisco, according to the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

The exact cause of his death was under investigation but appeared to be COVID-19-related, prison officials said.

Ashmus was the seventh death row prisoner and the 12th overall at San Quentin to die from confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infections.

Florida

ST. PETERSBURG — Florida teachers sued Monday to block what they call the "reckless and unsafe reopening" of public school campuses for face-to-face instruction.

The Florida Education Association lawsuit argues that reopening this fall would put students and school employees at risk — as well as accelerate the spread of the coronavirus. The lawsuit, filed in state Circuit Court in Miami, names as defendants Gov. Ron DeSantis, Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran, the Florida Department of Education and Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Gimenez.

Florida reported another 10,000 new coronavirus cases Monday, the 12th day since the Fourth of July the number has topped that threshold. The state Department of Health reported 10,347 new cases and 90 deaths. That brings the state's totals for the entire pandemic to more than 360,000 cases and over 5,100 deaths.

Hospitalizations for the disease continued to increase, standing at 9,452 statewide in the late morning Monday — up about 160 from the day before. Though the increase has slowed when compared to about a week ago, those additional patients have been straining intensive care units of some hospitals in the South Florida, Tampa, Orlando and Jacksonville areas.

Georgia

ATLANTA — New York's Democratic governor flew to Georgia on Monday, pledging to help the city of Savannah fight COVID-19 in a barely concealed rebuke to Georgia's Republican leadership as virus cases continued to rise in the southern state.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo declined to directly criticize Georgia

Gov. Brian Kemp, but warmly praised Savannah Mayor Van Johnson, a native New Yorker who has been a scorching critic of Kemp in recent days.

Cuomo said New York has to be interested in what's happening in other parts of the country because infected people from other states are likely to spread virus cases in New York, and has previously promised to aid Atlanta and Houston. He portrayed his mission as an effort to help overcome political divisions on how to fight COVID-19.

Kansas

TOPEKA — Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly issued an order Monday requiring masks and daily temperature checks in the state's K-12 schools, setting some coronavirus-inspired rules that are stricter than guidelines adopted by the Republican-controlled State Board of Education.

Kelly also released the text of a proposed order to delay the reopening of public and private elementary, middle and high schools for three weeks from mid-August until Sept. 9, after the Labor Day holiday. Kansas law requires the state school board's approval for a delay and it is scheduled to meet Wednesday morning.

The Democratic governor's plans for schools are inspiring criticism from Republicans in the GOP-controlled Legislature and conservatives outside state government already critical of her handling of the pandemic. The small-government, free-market Kansas Policy Institute, influential with GOP conservatives, called Kelly's actions "simply unwarranted."

Missouri

O'FALLON — The Archdiocese of St. Louis on Monday announced plans to resume in-person classes next month as one area Catholic school deals with a coronavirus outbreak.

At least 19 St. Dominic High School students, as well as two guests, tested positive for

COVID-19 after attending an outdoor graduation ceremony July 8 and prom July 10, according to the O'Fallon school. The school had previously canceled student activities through Aug. 9.

The announcement of the outbreak came on the same day the Archdiocese of St. Louis unveiled a reopening plan that calls for students who attend the more than 100 Catholic schools in the St. Louis area to return to the classroom starting next month.

The Archdiocese of St. Louis said each Catholic school will follow the guidance of its local government and county health department on issues such as social distancing and other safety precautions.

New Hampshire

CONCORD — New Hampshire students of all ages are eager to return to school, but neither parents nor teachers are confident that young children or teens will comply with restrictions aimed at preventing the spread of the coronavirus, according to a survey released Monday.

The state's school reopening task force heard from more than 56,000 respondents, including nearly 42,000 parents, as it developed the guidance published last week.

About eight in 10 parents surveyed said their children were eager to return to the classroom, though parents were split on whether that should happen. Asked to rank their preferences, about half said their top choice would be onsite instruction. Among teachers, 38% listed onsite instruction as their top choice, with 27% picking remote learning and 26% favoring a hybrid model.

Compared to parents, teachers were more likely to say they would be concerned about their health and safety and that of their students. And teachers were far less likely to say students will be able to maintain new restrictions such as social distancing and avoiding congregating in groups.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man gets 9 years for \$200 armed robbery

VA SALEM — A Virginia man is set to spend nearly a decade in prison after pleading guilty to stealing \$200 from a convenience store during an armed robbery.

The Roanoke Times reported that Shomari Terrell Knight, 25, pleaded guilty last week to robbery and gun charges. He was sentenced to nine years in prison.

Knight was arrested last year on charges of robbing a 7-Eleven store in Salem. Police said two suspects using masks demanded money from two clerks. A second suspect has not been arrested.

Slave market historical marker damaged

TN MEMPHIS — A historical marker in Tennessee noting the location of a slave market owned by Nathan Bedford Forrest was cracked from its base in a possible act of vandalism, officials said.

The marker outside the Calvary Episcopal Church in downtown Memphis was broken apart sometime Saturday and wasn't on display Sunday morning, news outlets reported.

The 2018 marker titled "Forrest and the Memphis Slave Trade" pinpoints the location of Forrest's slave market and explains his part in slave trading, stating Forrest "engaged in the buying and selling of Africans illegally smuggled into the United States, in violation of an 1808 congressional ban."

The broken marker was being stored in the church, which is looking to repair the marker with help from the Metal Museum.

Highway map traces state's music culture

KY FRANKFORT — Kentucky's latest official highway map is now available, and it includes specific routes highlighting the state's music culture.

State transportation officials said the highway map has been a navigation aid for motorists since first published by the Transportation Cabinet in 1929. They said it has evolved over the years to include information about what Kentucky has to offer in recreation, food, adventure, history and the arts.

That rich music culture is traceable along specific routes in Kentucky. Officials said those routes include the U.S. 23 "Country Music Highway" linking the birthplaces of such stars as Loretta Lynn, Dwight Yoakam, Patty Loveless, Ricky Skaggs, Tyler Childers and others.

12-year-old facing charges in car theft

DE NEW CASTLE — Police in Delaware say a 12-year-old boy stole a pickup truck from a gas station then led officers on a high-speed chase before crashing and trying to escape on foot.

Delaware State Police said the boy stole the 2003 Ford Ranger while its owner was using the ATM at a Wawa gas station Saturday in New Castle.

When police located the truck, the boy refused to stop and led police on a chase. After crashing into a parked car, police said the suspect did a U-turn, sped up and then crashed into a guardrail.

Police said the boy tried to flee on foot before he was arrested. He is facing multiple charges, including three felonies, and was released to his guardian on an \$8,008 bond.

Lynching memorial to be open at night

AL MONTGOMERY — The national lynching memorial in Alabama will begin opening to visitors at night, offering a new way to see a moving attraction that has drawn thousands.

The National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery will start operating from 9 p.m. until 10:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. The founder of the organization that built the memorial, Bryan Stevenson, said the attraction is particularly poignant at night.

The memorial includes the names of more than 4,000 people who were killed in acts of racial terror from the 1870s to the 1950s. Their names are etched on about 800 steel slabs, and there are also statues to document racial oppression.

Park closes campsites due to foraging bears

CA SACRAMENTO — Lassen Volcanic National Park in northern California has temporarily banned overnight camping in some parts of its park after several interactions between campers and foraging bears.

The decision was made last week to close down back-country camping in the Twin, Rainbow, Swan and Snag Lake areas after multiple visitors reported that bears had come to their campsites and searched their backpacks for food. The areas will remain open to the public for hiking, but the park has warned visitors to be careful, The Sacramento Bee reported.

The National Park Service website said the policy will not only protect campers, but "protect the bears by promoting the offending bear(s) to return to normal foraging behavior."

Marker set for former slave trading hub

RI NEWPORT — A nonprofit group that marks sites in Rhode Island that have a historical connection to slavery has scheduled an event to mark a spot in Newport.

Rhode Island Slave History Medallions will be installing a medallion on Bowen's Wharf, in partnership with Bowen's Wharf Co., during a ceremony Thursday, according to The Newport Daily News. Newport was a major hub of the North American slave trade in the 18th century. The medallion placed on the Chandlery building, which dates to 1783, will educate visitors on the role that the location played in history.

Snow collapses on hiker in White Mountains

NH GORHAM — A hiker had to be assisted down a trail and taken to a hospital on Saturday after a snow formation collapsed on him in the White Mountains, the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department said.

Conservation officers received an emergency call from another hiker on the Tuckerman's Ravine Trail. They determined the caller witnessed the collapse of the Tuckerman Snow Arch.

Alphonse Rieng, 28, of Quincy, Mass., had gone off the trail and under the snow arch to take a video when the arch collapsed, crushing him with what was described as, "a basketball court size amount of snow." Other hikers helped move the ice and snow blocks that fell on him and moved him to safety, officials said.

Rescue crews helped Rieng to a shelter, then he was taken by ATV to an ambulance, which took him to the hospital.

From wire reports

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DODEA Pacific calls off football for fall

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Football and other hard-contact sports have been shelved by DODEA Pacific until at least the spring, perhaps longer, due to concerns about the coronavirus pandemic.

That announcement was made Thursday as part of DODEA Pacific's plan for reopening schools late next month.

The hope is to offer what it called "low-contact ... and some moderate-contact sports with mitigation measures" for the fall season, according to the plan. "Final details on fall athletics will be provided before the start of the school year."

It was not immediately known what sports those would be, DODEA Pacific spokeswoman Miranda Ferguson said.

"DODEA Pacific and DODEA Headquarters are continuing to discuss what the fall sports season will look like," she said.

DODEA Europe has yet to make an official announcement regarding the status of its fall athletics schedule, which typically includes football, vol-

leyball, cross country, tennis and golf. The DODEA Europe school year is set to begin Aug. 24.

Reaction among coaches around the Pacific was negative, but understanding considering the pandemic, which has caused nearly 4 million positive cases and more than 141,000 deaths in the U.S., according to Johns Hopkins University data.

"I think the chance to defend the title will have to wait until 2021," Zama athletics director and football coach Scott Bolin said. His Trojans won last year's Far East Division II football title for the third time in school history and first time since 2012.

Bolin said he understands "the desire to maintain as safe an environment as possible and I support the decision."

"I understand that the safety of our student-athletes is of the utmost importance and the No. 1 priority," Humphreys coach Steven Elliott said, adding that he remains "hopeful" that a vaccine can be available and football can "return again next fall," if not sooner.

This is the first time even a

portion of a Pacific high school football season was scrapped since the weeks following 9/11 and the first time an entire season has been canceled in DODEA Pacific history.

"Crazy times we live in," said Frank Macias, coach of 2019 Far East D-II runner-up Matthew C. Perry.

Zama beat Perry 47-13 for the D-II title Nov. 8.

The next night at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, Kadena edged Humphreys 14-12 for the Division I title.

The Panthers were in good position to defend their title, said coach Sergio Mendoza, adding that Kadena had "lots of starters" returning.

"We were going to have one of our top teams (that) you get once every 10 years," he said.

Seniors are the ones who will suffer most, Macias and Elliott said.

"They'll never have the opportunity to play high school football again," Elliott said. "Nor will our families and fans get the chance to cheer us on this season."

One of those seniors is Humphreys quarterback Deontaye Gregory. He carried the ball

on the last play of the 2019 season, a quarterback sneak on which he was ruled having just missed breaking the plane of the end zone, preserving Kadena's victory.

"We (Humphreys) wanted another shot at Kadena," Gregory said. "This is ... the last time I will ever play football as a high school student-athlete and now I won't be able to do so. But the decision ... was done in an effort to ensure everyone's safety."

Coaches said they hope football can be moved to sometime later in the school year, perhaps late winter or spring.

"Coaches are united on that idea," Dan Joley of Kinnick said.

Bolin said he has sent a recommendation to DODEA's Japan district and Pacific-area office about moving football to spring and swapping it with lower-risk sports such as baseball and softball "in hopes of not having it completely nixed from the schedule," he said.

"I'm not sure how that will go, but it's at least an attempt to hold on a bit more, even if somewhat unrealistic," Bolin said.

Several Giants players, manager kneel during anthem

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — San Francisco Giants manager Gabe Kapler plans to use his position to speak out against racial injustice and provide a voice for those who aren't heard.

Kapler and several of his players knelt during the national anthem before their 6-2 exhibition victory against the Oakland Athletics. Kapler shared his plans when he addressed the team earlier Monday, and he said everyone would be supported by the Giants no matter what they decided to do.

"I wanted them to know that I wasn't pleased with the way our country has handled police brutality and I told them I wanted to amplify their voices

and I wanted to amplify the voice of the Black community and marginalized communities as well," Kapler said. "So I told them that I wanted to use my platform to demonstrate my dissatisfaction with the way we've handled racism in our country. I wanted to demonstrate my dissatisfaction with our clear systemic racism in our country and I wanted them to know that they got to make their own decisions and we would respect and support those decisions. I wanted them to feel safe in speaking up."

Right fielder Jaylin Davis, who is Black, and first base coach Antoan Richardson also took a knee as shortstop Brandon Crawford stood between them with a hand on each of their shoulders. Davis held his

right hand over his heart, while Richardson, who is Black and from the Bahamas, clasped his hands in front of him.

Much discussion went into each person's choice, and Kapler said some of the Giants reached out to other organizations. Kapler said the Giants would continue to have such important discussions together as a team and "make them a part of the fabric of our clubhouse."

"We've had a lot of conversations about the anthem over the course of the last 72 hours and when I say we, I mean our coaching staff and our players," Kapler said. "We connected with small groups of players, we connected with players individually and had meaningful conversations about this topic."

It was on the same field where

former A's catcher Bruce Maxwell in 2017 became the first major leaguer to kneel for the anthem.

Kapler, beginning his first season managing the Giants after two disappointing years guiding the Phillies, didn't say for certain how often he would kneel except that "we're going to have 60 chances in the regular season to make the same decision that we made today, to either stand or kneel or do something different. Right now it's another opportunity tomorrow night."

Kapler has been outspoken about social injustice and racial issues and athletes' roles in helping spur positive change.

"They felt strong(ly) about the issue so they knelt," A's pitcher Mike Fiers said.

Jays talking to Bucs about use of park

Associated Press

TORONTO — The Toronto Blue Jays are talking to the Pittsburgh Pirates about sharing their major league ballpark this season after Canada's government barred them from playing in their home stadium amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Pirates President Travis Williams confirmed the talks and sounded ready to welcome the Blue Jays.

"In an effort to help in the return of the game we all love, we continue to have active discussions with Major League Baseball and the Toronto Blue Jays organization regarding the possibility of hosting home games for the Blue Jays at PNC Park this season," Williams said in a statement Monday.

"This will be a monumental challenge for our staff, but leaning in to help others is what Pittsburghers do best. If we are able to safely accommodate, not only will it bring additional international attention to our city, it will also bring with it jobs and revenue for local hotels, restaurants and other businesses that will support the Blue Jays organization as well as additional visiting teams."

Blue Jays manager Charlie Montoyo said he was pleased to read what the Pirates said.

"That's encouraging that they feel that way about us coming," he said. "Going to Pittsburgh, that's a beautiful ballpark. I already brought 10 Roberto Clemente T-shirts that I brought with me for some reason."

Pirates manager Derek Shelton said he would have no prob-

lem with the Blue Jays moving in.

"I think if it's a situation where they need some place to play and we can help out then I think we should," Shelton said following an 11-7 loss in Cleveland. "I do feel that major league teams should play in major league ballparks. If it works out way above my pay grade and they figure it out, then I think it would be cool."

Shelton doesn't envision there being any conflict since the Blue Jays would be at PNC Park when the Pirates are out of town.

The Pirates are led by former Blue Jays executives Ben Cherington and Steve Sanders.

Blue Jays general manager Ross Atkins said earlier Monday that his team has more than five contingency plans and was

in talks with other teams. He declined to name them.

"We are focused on getting into a major league facility," Atkins said.

Canada denied the Blue Jays' request to play at Rogers Centre because the regular-season schedule would require frequent travel back and forth from the United States, where COVID-19 cases are surging.

Atkins said if the Blue Jays can't find a major league park, their Triple-A affiliate in Buffalo, N.Y., would be their most likely site for home games.

But based on what the players want and the collaboration they are getting from other teams and Major League Baseball, Atkins said the Blue Jays are focused on major league parks, as long as they can be safe.

Source: NFL offered to eliminate preseason games

Associated Press

The NFL has offered to scrap all preseason games, a person familiar with the decision told The Associated Press.

The players' association had sought no preseason games and the league had reduced the exhibition schedule to two games. But on Monday evening, the NFL said it would eliminate those preseason contests and also would offer players 18 days for acclimation, up from seven days. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the offer had not been made public.

Another part of the offer is to provide a means for players concerned about participating in training camp and/or games to opt out and receive a stipend.

The union has not yet accepted the offers. Should it do so, both sides would have taken a major step toward starting the season on time.

Earlier Monday, the league said players will be tested daily for the coronavirus for at least the first two weeks of train-

ing camp, per the league's new testing protocols.

The NFL and the players' union reached an agreement as rookies for Houston and Kansas City were set to report to camp. Rookies for other teams begin arriving Tuesday.

Players and all Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 2M or Tier 3 individuals must test negative two times separated by 72 hours using a nasal swab before initially entering the building to begin physical exams or any form of team activity. The tiers designate which employees can go where inside the team facilities.

After two weeks of daily testing, if the positivity rate of those tests falls below 5% among players and Tier 1 and Tier 2 individuals, as described previously in NFL protocols, testing would go to every other day. If the positivity rate doesn't fall below that threshold, daily testing would continue until it drops.

"There's no finish line with health and safety and I think these protocols are very much living and breathing docu-

ments, which means they will change as we gain new knowledge about this virus, as we gain new knowledge about transmission, as we gain new knowledge about testing and there are new tests and new techniques that come online," said Dr. Allen Sills, the NFL chief medical officer. "We very much anticipate that these protocols will change."

The NFL has sought input from other leagues that have already returned to action, including leagues outside the country. It's not known how many positive tests would result in shutting down the football season.

"These are complicated issues which involve a lot of factors," Sills said. "But suffice it to say we very much look at it from a medical and public health standpoint, and we want to make sure that first and foremost we're creating the safest possible environment for our players, for our coaches and our staff, but that we're also operating within the safest environment for each one of our clubs' locations, which means

ongoing and regular communication with the public health authorities in those areas."

The league and the NFLPA already finalized protocols regarding team travel, media, and treatment response, and updated the facilities protocol to specifically address training camp based on recommendations from a joint committee of doctors, trainers and strength coaches formed by the league and players' union.

"Our union has been pushing for the strongest testing, tracing and treatment protocols to keep our players safe. The testing protocols we agreed to are one critical factor that will help us return to work safely, and gives us the best chance to play and finish the season," the union said in a statement Monday.

On Friday, the league sent players and teams an "Education Protocol" for camp that requires clubs to distribute joint educational materials and to conduct educational sessions for players, staff and family members.