

STARS AND STRIPES[®]

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Iran fires missile at mock aircraft carrier

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard fired a missile from a helicopter targeting a replica aircraft carrier in the strategic Strait of Hormuz, state television reported Tuesday, an exercise aimed at threatening the U.S. amid tensions between Tehran and Washington.

The drill, in a waterway through which 20% of all traded oil passes, underlines the lingering threat of military conflict between Iran and the U.S. after last summer saw a series of incidents targeting oil tankers in the region. In January, a U.S. drone strike killed a top Iranian general in Baghdad and Tehran responded by firing ballistic missiles targeting American forces in Iraq.

While the coronavirus pandemic has engulfed both Iran and the U.S. for months, there have been increasing signs of a confrontation as America argues to extend a yearslong U.N. weapons embargo on Teh-

ran that is due to expire in October. A recent incident over Syria involving an American jet fighter approaching an Iranian passenger plane also has renewed tensions.

Iranian commandos fast-roped down from a helicopter onto the replica in the footage aired Tuesday from the exercise called "Great Prophet 14." Other footage showed fast boats encircling the mock-up, kicking up white waves in their wake.

Iranian troops also fired anti-aircraft batteries at a drone target in the exercise from a location that state television described as being near the port city of Bandar Abbas. Troops also fired missiles launched from trucks on land and fast boats at sea, as well as shoulder-fired missiles.

The Guard will use "long-range ballistic missiles with the ability to hit far-reaching aggressor floating targets" during the drill, said Abbas Nilforoushan, the Guard's deputy commander for operations, according to Guard website sepahnews.com.

That suggests the drill could see a repeat of what happened in 2015, when the Guard mock-sunk a replica.

It wasn't immediately clear if all the footage was from Tuesday, as one overhead surveillance image that appeared to be shot by a drone bore Monday's date. The exercise had been expected as satellite photos released Monday showed the fake carrier being moved into place by a tugboat.

A black-and-white satellite photo taken Tuesday by Colorado-based firm Maxar Technologies showed damage to the replica's bow and several of its fake jet fighters.

The replica used in the drill resembles the Nimitz-class carriers that the U.S. Navy routinely sails into the Persian Gulf from the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the waterway. The USS Nimitz, the namesake of the class, just entered Mideast waters late last week from the Indian Ocean, likely to replace the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower in the Arabian Sea.

Barr defends federal response to civil unrest in US

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Attorney General William Barr defended the aggressive federal law enforcement response to civil unrest in America, saying on Tuesday "violent rioters and anarchists have hijacked legitimate protests" sparked by George Floyd's death at the hands of Minneapolis police.

Barr told members of the House Judiciary Committee at a much-anticipated election year hearing the violence taking place in Portland, Ore., and other cities is disconnected from Floyd's killing, which he called a "horrible" event that prompted a necessary national reckoning on the relationship between the Black community and law enforcement.

"Largely absent from these scenes of destruction are even superficial attempts by the rioters to connect their actions to George Floyd's death or any legitimate call for reform," Barr said of the Portland protests.

The hearing marks Barr's first appearance before the House Judiciary Committee, bringing him face-to-face with a panel that voted last year to hold him in contempt

and is holding hearings on what Democrats allege is politicization of the Justice Department under his watch. It comes during a tumultuous stretch in which Barr has taken actions cheered by President Donald Trump but condemned by Democrats and other critics.

Opening the hearing, committee Chairman Jerry Nadler said the Trump administration had "twisted the Department of Justice into a shadow of its former self," serving the powerful before average Americans. He said the committee has a responsibility to protect Americans "from that kind of corruption."

Nadler said Barr had "aided and abetted" Trump's worst impulses.

"Your tenure is marked by a persistent war against the department's professional core in an apparent effort to secure favors for the president," Nadler said.

Nadler also excoriated Barr and the Justice Department for turning a blind eye to necessary reforms to police departments, for dismissing Black Lives Matter protests and for flooding streets with federal agents to stop protesters.

Republicans hit back hard in defense

of Barr and Trump's administration. The top Republican on the panel, Ohio Rep. Jim Jordan, showed an eight-minute video that spliced together images of violence by protesters around the country, showcasing law enforcement officers under attack in Chicago, Portland and New York. The images were cut from hundreds of hours of racial injustice footage of largely peaceful protests around the nation.

Barr, in a prepared statement, defended the department in other controversies that have shadowed his tenure, including his handling of the investigation into Trump campaign ties to Russia, which he derisively refers to as "the bogus 'Russiagate' scandal." Barr didn't read that part of his statement in the hearing room, but it was in remarks sent out by the department.

Barr said "many of the Democrats on this Committee have attempted to discredit me by conjuring up a narrative that I am simply the President's factotum who disposes of criminal cases according to his instructions. Judging from the letter inviting me to this hearing, that appears to be your agenda today."

Taliban to suspend military operations during Eid ul Adha

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD — The Taliban announced Tuesday they won't carry out military operations in Afghanistan for three days during the Muslim holiday of Eid ul Adha that starts this weekend.

In a statement promising a brief respite to the fighting, Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahed said commanders had been ordered not to carry out operations for three days and nights, but can defend themselves if attacked.

The statement also said Taliban fighters are not to fraternize with Afghan security forces personnel and neither side is to cross into the other's territory.

The Afghan government welcomed the Taliban announcement, and presidential spokesman Sediq Sediqqi said Afghan security forces were also ordered not to attack but only defend themselves.

The Taliban announcement follows a conciliatory message by leader Maulvi Hibatullah Akhundzada earlier Tuesday to mark the Muslim holiday. Both communiques come as Washington's peace envoy returns to the region to try and jump-start negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

In his Eid message, Akhundzada said the Taliban doesn't seek to monopolize power in a future political makeup of Afghanistan. He also said they support education for all and are abiding by

the peace deal signed with the U.S. in February. The lengthy message repeatedly references an Islamic government the Taliban seek to establish, without elaborating how it would be different.

U.S. peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad was expected in the Afghan capital of Kabul, as well as in Qatar, where the Taliban maintain a political office. He was also expected in Islamabad, but there was some question about whether Pakistan was still part of his itinerary.

The U.S.-Taliban deal signed Feb. 29 was touted as the best hope for peace in Afghanistan after decades of war. While the U.S. and NATO have already begun reducing their troop strength, the second phase of the deal — which calls for talks between the Taliban and the Kabul political leadership — has been delayed. Much of the delays have been as a result of Kabul's reluctance to free several hundred of the Taliban prisoners identified for release as part of the agreement.

Kabul had claimed those Taliban prisoners were hardened criminals, guilty of major crimes.

But on Tuesday, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said he was ready to free the remainder of the prisoners, without specifying why the change of heart or if an agreement had been reached with the Taliban to substitute some of them, a proposal the Taliban earlier rejected.

Navy ships return to Oahu after hurricane

BY WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — Navy vessels that sortied out of Hawaii during the approach of Hurricane Douglas over the weekend began returning Monday to Oahu, which was largely spared damage by wind or flooding from the storm.

"There is no damage to the piers from the storm, and Navy vessels are beginning to return to port," Navy Region Hawaii said in a statement Monday. "This will be completed in the coming days."

The Navy did not disclose the number of ships and submarines that sortied.

The Army resumed normal operations at all gates at Schofield Barracks and Fort Shafter at 7 a.m. Monday, while the Coast Guard lifted all remaining restrictions on commercial ports in the state.

An Air Force Reserve crew dubbed the Hurricane Hunters collected weather data during flights above the storm, which was the first hurricane of the Pacific this season. The reconnaissance squadron is based at Keesler Air Force Base, Miss.

The eye of the hurricane passed roughly 35 miles north of Oahu at about 7:30 p.m. Sunday, according to the Central Pacific Hurricane Center. It then passed 40 miles north of Kauai island around midnight.

The state's major military installations are on Oahu, while the Navy's Barking Sands Pacific Missile Range Facility is on Kauai.

Robert Ballard, science and operations officer for the Central Pacific Hurricane Center, on Monday told Hawaii Public Radio that the islands missed a direct hit by a "razor thin" margin that could have easily closed because hurricanes do not move in a straight line.

US' South Korean envoy shaves mustache, cites mask discomfort

BY KIM GAMEL

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — The U.S. ambassador to South Korea has shaved his controversial mustache, saying it made wearing a mask to prevent spreading the coronavirus more uncomfortable in the summer heat.

Ambassador Harry Harris, a retired Navy admiral, was clean-shaven when he led U.S. Pacific Command before arriving in Seoul to take up his new post in July 2018.

Harris said he grew the mustache to mark his new diplomatic career after four decades in the military.

However, the facial hair irritated some South Koreans who associated it with the 1910-45 Japanese colonial rule of the peninsula since many Japanese governors had mustaches.

The ambassador, who was born in Japan to a Japanese mother and an American Navy officer, acknowledged that his mustache had become "a point of some fascination" in South Korea.

Harris offered a practical explanation for shaving it off over the weekend, along with an implicit endorsement for rules requiring masks to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, the respiratory disease caused by

the coronavirus.

"Glad I did this. For me it was either keep the 'stache or lose the mask. Summer in Seoul is way too hot & humid for both," he tweeted on Saturday. "#COVID guidelines matter & I'm a masked man."

The U.S. Embassy also produced a playful video showing Harris going into the barber shop and getting a shave from the barber identified as Mr. Oh, who of course was wearing a mask.

"Wow, I haven't seen this face in years," Harris said afterward. "I feel so much cooler now."

DODEA extends virtual learning deadline

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKANAVALBASE, Japan — Defense Department schools have extended a deadline to apply for the virtual learning option this school year.

Department of Defense Education Activity parents now have until 6 p.m. EST on Thursday to decide whether they will send their children back to school for in-person instruction or keep them home for virtual learning as the coronavirus pandemic rages on. The previous deadline was Tuesday.

“DODEA will provide a full-time virtual learning option for students and families with health vulnerabilities related to COVID-19 or who are concerned about returning to a brick-and-mortar school setting,” the agency said in a statement.

Defense Department schools closed this spring in favor of online instruction as the coronavirus spread across the world.

Schools in Italy shut their doors Feb. 24, followed by Bahrain and South Korea two days later. Schools in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Turkey and Spain, Japan and the United Kingdom closed in March.

Next month, DODEA plans to reopen schools in areas where the health protection condition is at Bravo or better while also offering a virtual option. Health Protection Condition Bravo indicates the risk level is moderate with an increased chance of community transmission, according to the Defense Department.

The deadline extension was made to “allow parents additional time to make an informed decision about choosing a virtual option,” DODEA said on its website.

The extension comes as the Federal Education Association is urging parents to select the online option.

Precautions for the classroom include social distancing, using face masks when social distancing is not possible and regular

handwashing and sanitizing, according to a 34-page document on DODEA’s planned operational guidelines.

Parents will also be required to pre-screen students before they go to school, checking their children’s temperatures and looking for coronavirus symptoms such as shortness of breath or fatigue.

They must sign a form at enrollment “acknowledging their responsibility to perform the prescreening protocol each day before their child departs for school or a school sponsored activity,” according to the document.

DODEA director Tom Brady, in a statement on the DODEA website, said “face-to-face instruction and the routines of school add significantly to success and growth for all students.”

“We have always believed that instruction in the classroom is the optimal learning environment for most of our military-connected students,” Brady said.

White House, Dems at odds about virus aid

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Unemployment assistance, eviction protections and other relief for millions of Americans are at stake as White House officials launched negotiations late Monday with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Democratic Senate leader Chuck Schumer on a new coronavirus aid package that’s teetering in Congress ahead of looming deadlines.

While Senate Republicans struggled to roll out their own \$1 trillion proposal, Pelosi explored the White House and GOP

lawmakers to stop the infighting and come to the negotiating table with Democrats. Aid runs out Friday for a \$600/weekly jobless benefit that Democrats call a lifeline for out-of-work Americans. Republicans want to slash it to \$200 a week, saying that the federal bump is too generous on top of state benefits and is discouraging employees from returning to work.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said he wanted to hit “pause” on new spending after Congress approved a sweeping \$2.2 trillion relief package in March.

McConnell, flanked by top GOP chairs Monday at the Capitol, unveiled his long-awaited proposal. It provides some \$105 billion to schools and colleges, the K-12 funds tilted toward campuses that reopen with in-person learning. There’s more money for virus testing, \$15 billion for child care centers and benefits for businesses, including a fresh round of loans under the Paycheck Protection Program, tax breaks and a sweeping liability shield from COVID-19-related lawsuits.

Republicans also included another round of \$1,200 direct

payments to households that Democrats also support.

The GOP bill also provides \$1.7 billion for a new FBI headquarters in Washington, a non-pandemic-related expense that’s a top priority for the president but not for lawmakers or McConnell. Trump’s hotel is across the street from it on Pennsylvania Avenue.

But Democrats said the proposal was insufficient, and conservative Republicans quickly broke ranks on McConnell’s plan, arguing the spending was too much and priorities misplaced.

Virus woes loom as Texas cleans up after Hanna

Associated Press

WESLACO, Texas — As recovery and cleanup efforts got underway Monday in South Texas in the wake of a downgraded Hanna, worried residents confronted the prospect of undertaking the effort amid a surge in coronavirus cases that has left many fearful about their health.

For Nora Esquivel, 66, who

has mostly stayed in her home in Weslaco, Texas, in Hidalgo County since March because of the pandemic, flooding damage from Hanna meant a greater chance of exposure to the virus.

“No contact with nobody, only my daughter once in a while, and now with this, I have to allow people to come into my house, the insurance and all this and I’m scared,” said a

tearful Esquivel.

In the aftermath of Hanna, which dumped up to 16 inches of rain in some parts of South Texas and Northern Mexico, officials reported two people died in the northern Mexican city of Ramos Arispe, near Monterrey, after torrents of water unleashed by Hanna swept their vehicle away.

Three people were reported missing in Monterrey and

three more were missing in the border city of Reynosa, across from McAllen, Texas, according to Mexico’s national civil defense office.

Gov. Greg Abbott said the state was sending additional testing supplies and hospital personnel to South Texas communities impacted by Hanna to ensure the storm doesn’t exacerbate the spread of the virus.

Nevada unveils new reopening strategy

Associated Press

CARSON CITY — Nevada Gov. Steve Sisolak announced plans to implement a long-term reopening strategy that allows for more granular decision-making as the coronavirus continues to spread and leaves Nevada unable to follow its original reopening plan.

Sisolak's new strategy will replace broad guidelines with narrower reopening criteria, evaluating data on a business-by-business basis rather than targeting entire industries. Sisolak said the new strategy would hone in on municipalities and even individual zip codes instead of evaluating data at the county level.

The governor said the new plan includes tougher enforcement of businesses and local governments that flout safety measures, like the state's mask mandate. The time for spreading awareness and hoping businesses would comply was over, he said.

Sisolak also announced bars in three counties — Humboldt, Lander and Lyon County — had met the criteria necessary to reopen after they were forced shut two weeks ago. The state will still mandate social distancing, face-covering and capacity limits. Bars that don't serve food in Clark, Washoe, Nye and Elko County will remain closed.

Arizona

WINDOW ROCK — Hundreds of people who had been on paid leave from their jobs with the Navajo Nation's gambling enterprise won't be paid after Monday.

Brian Parrish, who heads the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise, said 900 employees began receiving letters and phone calls over the weekend about the layoffs.

Another 125 employees will be paid for another week, he said. A skeleton crew will stay on the payroll to handle human resources work, security, management and finances, Parrish among them.

California

SACRAMENTO — Demonstrators chained themselves to a fence outside Gov. Gavin Newsom's home Monday, calling for mass inmate releases and an end to immigration transfers because of the coronavirus pandemic, as deaths mounted at a San Francisco Bay Area prison.

The California Highway Patrol cut the chains linking protesters to the bars of the gate at the front of the residence in suburban Sacramento after about two hours.

Television footage showed 14 demonstrators sitting cross-legged and chained to each other and the front gate, wearing surgical-style masks and plastic face shields to keep from spreading the virus.

They were arrested without injury or incident on charges of unlawful assembly, trespassing and failing to disperse after a warning, the CHP said. It said demonstrators also spray-painted messages in the street and sidewalk.

Florida

MIAMI — A South Florida man fraudulently obtained \$3.9 million in federal coronavirus relief loans, using some of it to buy a \$318,000 Lamborghini Huracan, prosecutors said.

David T. Hines, 29, of Miami, was arrested and charged last week with bank fraud, making false statements to a financial institution and engaging in transactions in unlawful proceeds.

Defense attorney Chad Piotrowski said Hines is a legitimate business owner who is anxious to tell his story.

Hines applied to a bank for approximately \$13.5 million in Paycheck Protection Program loans on behalf of different companies, according to a criminal complaint. Fraudulent loan applications were submitted about the companies' respective payroll expenses, investigators said. Hines was approved for \$3.9 million, officials said.

Georgia

ATLANTA — Georgia's governor said he's withdrawing a request for an emergency hearing in a lawsuit that aims to block the state's largest city from ordering people to wear masks in public or imposing other restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gov. Brian Kemp earlier this month sued Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms and the City Council, but a spokesman announced late Monday that the governor wanted "to continue productive, good faith negotiations." As a result, the governor decided to withdraw the request for a hearing that was scheduled for Tuesday morning, spokesman Cody Hall said.

The move doesn't withdraw the underlying lawsuit, but it means a judge won't immediately weigh in on whether Kemp or Bottoms is right in a dispute about the extent of Kemp's powers under Georgia's public health state of emergency. The Republican governor argues local leaders cannot impose measures that are more or less restrictive than those in his executive orders.

Maine

LEWISTON — A medical center that serves two of the hardest-hit counties in Maine is slated to receive a boost from the federal government to offer more testing for the coronavirus.

Community Clinical Services in Lewiston has been awarded more than \$320,000 to expand testing and training capacities, Sens. Susan Collins and Angus King said Monday. The center serves Androscoggin and Cumberland counties, which are two of the three hardest hit counties in the state of Maine in terms of caseload.

The senators said the money has been awarded via the Paycheck Protection Program & Health Care Enhancement Act. They said Community Clinical Services will be able to use the money to expand its range

of testing and testing-related activities, including contact tracing.

New Mexico

KIRKLAND — A New Mexico restaurant that sparked anger for erecting a sign that blamed China for the pandemic has had its food service permit suspended.

The Farmington Daily Times reported that the New Mexico Environment Department suspended the food service permit last week for the Country Family Restaurant after accusing the Kirtland restaurant of violating statewide health orders. That order prohibits indoor dining and requires workers to wear masks.

Country Family Restaurant owner Steve Jackson told The Daily Times the state has not shown any proof that indoor dining increases the spread of COVID-19.

In March, Jackson generated anger for posting a sign blaming China for the coronavirus. "CLOSED you can thank CHINA!!!" the sign read outside the Country Family Restaurant.

Virginia

RICHMOND — The Virginia High School League has voted to postpone fall sports until the winter and spring because of reopening restrictions during the coronavirus pandemic.

On Monday, the League's executive committee voted 34-1 to play all sports between December and June, effectively canceling the fall football season, news outlets reported.

League Executive Director Billy Haun said high-risk sports couldn't be played until the state moved out of reopening Phase Three or until restrictions such as social distancing and group limitations were loosened.

Fall sports are tentatively scheduled to start practice on Feb. 15, with opening games beginning March 1. Offseason workouts can occur. Dates are subject to change.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

2 shot after man fired into street race crowd

PA PHILADELPHIA — Authorities said two people were struck by gunfire after a man fired into a crowd gathered to watch a street race in southwest Philadelphia.

WPVI-TV reported that hundreds of people were gathered outside a gas station at a popular spot for street racing when investigators said an argument broke out between two groups. Police said a man driving a three-wheeled vehicle pulled out a gun and fired at least 16 shots into the crowd.

Police said a 31-year-old woman and a 48-year-old man were struck. The man was taken to Delaware County Memorial Hospital in critical condition while the woman was in stable condition at Penn Presbyterian Hospital.

Famed treasure box was found in Wyoming

NM SANTA FE — Famed art and antiquities collector Forrest Fenn said the man who found his hidden treasure last month located it in Wyoming.

The 89-year-old Fenn filled a bronze chest with gold, jewels and other valuables worth an estimated \$2 million and hid it a decade ago somewhere in the Rocky Mountain wilderness.

A man who did not want his name released found the chest, and Fenn said he promised the finder that he wouldn't reveal who found it or where.

But Fenn now says "the finder understood how important some closure is for many searchers," so he agreed to reveal the treasure was found in Wyoming, according to the Santa Fe New Mexican.

Liquor sales see 12% jump during fiscal year

NC RALEIGH — Liquor sales in North Carolina jumped 12% during the fiscal year that ended June 30, according to data from the state's Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission.

The increase largely came in March after Gov. Roy Cooper shut down bars and restaurants due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, The Fayetteville Observer reported.

Charles Hill owns multiple liquor stores in the state. He told the newspaper that customers said they purchased large amounts of alcohol because of fears Cooper would also shut down liquor stores.

3 officers injured in shooting, chase

MO ST. LOUIS — One police officer was shot and wounded, while two others were injured when a Missouri man fired at them and later rammed into one of their vehicles, authorities said.

Peter Webb, 23, was charged with three counts of first-degree assault, armed criminal action, one count of unlawful use of a weapon and one count of resisting, news outlets reported.

St. Louis Metropolitan police said the three officers were at a gas station dispersing loiterers when Webb drove past them and fired at their cruisers.

Police said the officers pursued Webb while he continued to shoot at them. St. Louis Police Chief John Hayden said the chase ended when Webb pulled a U-turn and rammed into one of the police vehicles before crashing into a traffic light.

Webb ran off but was captured by two officers.

Statue of Harvard's namesake vandalized

MA CAMBRIDGE — A statue of Harvard University's namesake was vandalized on campus.

The John Harvard statue in Harvard Yard was spray-painted with the words "devil worship," WCVB-TV reported.

Campus police said the vandalism was reported Saturday morning.

Unveiled in 1884, the statue honors the university's first benefactor. The graffiti at the base of the statue was covered up by university staff.

Officials consider renaming historic park

KY LEXINGTON — Officials are considering a proposal to rename Cheapside Park, which has served as a public square in downtown Lexington since 1780, to Henry A. Tandy Centennial Park.

A parks advisory board unanimously approved the proposal and it will go before the Urban County Council for consideration in August, Lexington Mayor Linda Gorton said.

Tandy was a freed slave who co-owned Tandy & Byrd, a masonry contractor in Lexington that constructed many buildings in the area, including the Historic 1899 Courthouse, the city said in a statement.

Popular music venue closing until next year

AL HUNTSVILLE — A popular Alabama music venue is closing at least through next year amid the COVID-19 public health crisis.

Huntsville's Tangled String Studios made the announcement on its Facebook page. The post said Tangled String

wants to expand its custom guitar business to increase output. That will reduce the venue space. The post said Tangled String hopes to reopen for musical acts in 2022.

Inmates captured after escaping juvenile prison

VA RICHMOND — Two inmates who escaped from a Virginia juvenile prison two weeks ago were captured in Michigan, federal authorities said.

A fugitive task force in Grand Rapids, Mich., led by U.S. marshals arrested Rashad E. Williams, 18, and Jabar Ali Taylor, 20, at a Battle Creek hotel without incident, according to a news release.

The Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice said the two escaped from Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center on July 13.

Taylor had been convicted of two counts of second-degree murder and aggravated malicious assault. Williams was convicted of malicious wounding and robbery.

Prosthetic leg lost in water, later recovered

IN INDIANAPOLIS — Indianapolis firefighter crews have helped a woman who was boating recover her prosthetic leg that fell into the water.

Fire officials said crews were finishing a training exercise on Geist Reservoir when a woman lost the leg while spending the day on her family's anchored pontoon boat.

The crews spent about an hour looking for the prosthetic leg valued at \$20,000. The prosthetic leg was found 20 feet under water about 100 yards off the shore.

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STARS AND STRIPES®

Depth crucial to NBA teams' success

Associated Press

NBA teams recognize that bench strength will likely be more of a factor than usual during this pandemic-delayed title chase in which a positive coronavirus test could sideline an elite player at any moment.

"Depth is going to be at a premium for everyone," New Orleans Pelicans general manager David Griffin said.

The good news for teams is that league officials said last week that 346 players had been tested on the NBA campus since the last coronavirus results were announced July 13, with no positives. But the reality they also recognize is how a positive test could impact a team's roster.

Notable players to test positive for the coronavirus before teams left for Disney's Wide World of Sports include Houston's Russell Westbrook, Sacramento's Harrison Barnes and Milwaukee's Eric Bledsoe, though all of them have since cleared protocols to return to Florida. Washington's Bradley Beal heads the list of players who have opted out of participating in the restart.

The Brooklyn Nets won't have Wilson Chandler, Spencer Dinwiddie, DeAndre Jordan and Taurean Prince for the re-

start and already were without injured stars Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving.

And that doesn't even account for basketball-related setbacks such as the foot injury Sacramento Kings forward Marvin Bagley sustained in practice to knock him out of the restart.

Because of the 4½-month break between regular-season games, teams are likely to give their starters limited minutes, particularly in the early going.

The increased risk of losing players for an extended period at any time also will require teams to prepare backup plans.

"If you've been in the league a long time, you've had to deal with one injury, two injuries, three injuries, and the timing of it can be not the best," Milwaukee Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer said. "You have to find a way to continue to persevere and work and get better and find ways to advance if it's the playoffs. We're in a bubble. It's unique. It's different. But there are things that all of us have had to deal with if you've been in long playoff runs for a long time."

Here's a look at some players who might not be on fans' radars but could play bigger roles during the restart:

Troy Brown Jr., Washington Wizards: Brown was averag-

ing 24.9 minutes before the hiatus, but he could turn into even more of a featured performer during the restart with the Wizards missing Beal and Davis Bertans. The 6-foot-6 forward from Oregon averages 9.7 points, 5.3 rebounds and 2.3 assists per game.

Alex Caruso, Los Angeles Lakers: Caruso was averaging 5.4 points, 1.9 rebounds and 1.8 assists in 17.8 minutes when the hiatus began. With Avery Bradley opting out of the restart and Rajon Rondo breaking his thumb in practice this month, the 6-5 Caruso should have a greater role off the Lakers' bench during the restart. The Lakers announced July 13 that Rondo would miss six to eight weeks.

Lu Dort, Oklahoma City Thunder: The rookie from Arizona State has thrived this season with 6.2 points and 1.9 rebounds per game. Oklahoma City has a 16-5 record in games that Dort has started. Although the potential return of Andre Roberson from a ruptured patellar tendon that has kept him out 2½ years could complicate Dort's situation, Dennis Schroder expects to leave the bubble temporarily at some point with his wife due to give birth. Dort figures to get more minutes in Schroder's absence.

George Hill, Milwaukee Bucks: Hill was shooting 48%

from three-point range — well above his career average of 38.5% and light years better than his 2018-19 average of 28% — before the stoppage in play. The 34-year-old guard as well as teammate Donte DiVincenzo could be even bigger factors in the early part of the restart since Bucks teammates Eric Bledsoe and Pat Connaughton have tested positive for coronavirus, although both are now in Florida.

Tyler Johnson, Brooklyn Nets: Although he signed with the Nets only a month ago, Johnson could have a featured role because of all the players his new team is missing. The 6-foot-4 guard had played in 31 games for Phoenix this season and averaged 5.7 points, 1.7 rebounds and 1.6 assists in 16.6 minutes before getting waived in February. He posted double-figure scoring averages three consecutive seasons from 2016-17 to 2018-19.

Gary Trent Jr., Portland Trail Blazers: Trent showed flashes of his potential in the month prior to the pandemic, as he scored 22 against Miami on Feb. 9, 20 against Indiana on Feb. 27 and 24 against Orlando on March 2. The 6-5 guard has averaged 7.7 points and 20 minutes but likely will get more playing time now that teammate Trevor Ariza has opted out of the restart.

League's TV audience likely to get new sights, sounds

Associated Press

During a normal NBA season, the sights and sounds of arenas serve as both a showy backdrop and home court advantage for its teams.

But with no fans allowed in the stands for the upcoming restart because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the league's Orlando-area bubble restart will have a decidedly different feel for both players and coaches, as well as the television audience watching from afar.

The NBA has promised to do its best to bring some of the familiar noises and environment that players are used to playing in and fans have grown accustomed to seeing when the curtain officially drops on Thursday night.

Count former NBA coach Stan Van Gundy, who will serve as an analyst for one of TNT's broadcasts on opening night, among those curious to see how players will be affected by the atypical setup and what kind of previously inaudible insights on

the court could be available to fans peering in remotely.

"I think the idea is right, because with no noise, it's almost eerie," Van Gundy said. "I mean, it's just not what any player or coach is used to."

Visually, the NBA will be taking advantage of the unique setting by trying to bring fans even closer to the action on the court via a 31-camera setup, the majority of which will be operated robotically.

NBA head of Next Gen telecast Sara Zuckert said the

league will be employing an "audio soundscape" that will try to mimic — at least as much as possible — teams' home arenas.

The league began testing some of their new enhancements during scrimmages last week, though they are saving a lot for when games officially count.

"Amplifying microphones in the arena can really lead to an enhanced feel and sound. You'll hear a lot of sneaker squeaks and ball bounces," Zuckert said.

College football vulnerable

Associated Press

Those working to get college sports up and running have been hoping the return of professional sports would provide valuable information that could aid their efforts to play through a pandemic.

A COVID-19 outbreak for a Major League Baseball team three days into its season forced two games to be postponed Monday and brought a glimpse of how difficult the task will be.

"We're still learning things and this is a data point, there's no doubt about that," Big 12 Commissioner Bob Bowlsby said. "We're doing what our scientists and doctors are telling us to do. Move forward slowly and constantly reevaluate."

"I think this will just be the new normal. There will be ebbs and flows and there'll be disruptions."

Like MLB — and unlike the NBA, NHL, WNBA and MLS — college sports will try to conduct their seasons outside

a controlled, virus-free bubble. The first major college football games in an evolving schedule that should start to come into focus this week are a little more than a month away.

COVID-19 flare-ups have shut down voluntary workouts throughout July at about two dozen major college football programs, including Ohio State, North Carolina, Kansas State and Houston. Last week, Michigan State and Rutgers both announced positive tests among players and staff led to 14-day quarantine for their entire teams.

Full-blown practices for teams trying to start their seasons around the Labor Day weekend will begin by early next week.

Greater challenges lie ahead and what happened to the Marlins could be an ominous sign, said Zachary Binney, an epidemiologist at Oxford College of Emory University.

"The biggest thing that I see is this is a demonstration of just

how quickly COVID-19 can rip through a clubhouse and a team even in a sport like baseball where practices and games are pretty conducive to physical distancing," Binney said. "It's definitely alarming. You have to expect things would look even worse in a sport like football where the practices have contact, the games have contact and you have bigger rosters. Because the virus getting into a team is just a numbers game. The more people you have the more likely it sneaks in."

The Miami Marlins outbreak rippled through baseball. Not only was their home opener with Baltimore postponed, but so was the Phillies' game against the Yankees. The Marlins played at Philadelphia on Sunday after several players tested positive and the next day the total number of positive players and staffers was more than a dozen.

When the Marlins or the Phillies will play next is unclear.

Goodell outlines season

Associated Press

NEW YORK — NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell has sent a letter to fans outlining the league's plans to play during the coronavirus pandemic.

As veterans begin reporting to training camps this week, Goodell noted Monday how COVID-19 has "turned the world upside down."

"COVID-19 will continue to present a major challenge to nearly every area of American life. Football is no exception," Goodell wrote.

"Every step of the way, our focus has been on the safety of players, coaches, personnel, fans and our communities. Our planning has followed the lead of medical experts and public health officials, including the CDC, the White House Task Force, governors and state health officials. As we have developed our 2020 playbook for the return of football, safety continues to be our first priority; that commitment will remain paramount as players return to the field."

The league and the players' union reached agreement on a plan last Friday, after all preseason games were canceled. Team facilities were shut down by Goodell in late March and only began reopening on a cautious basis this summer.

"The NFL in 2020 will not look like other years," Goodell added. "Players and coaches will be tested for the virus regularly, including every day for a while. Preseason games have been canceled. Everyone in the team environment must follow rigorous health and safety protocols to keep themselves and each other safe. When there is a positive test, strict regulations will be enforced to isolate and care for that individual and to contain the virus before it spreads."

NHL teams adjusting to bubble format

Associated Press

When the Boston Bruins boarded their flight bound for Toronto, they thought of it as just another long road trip.

Sure, they were spaced out and masked up on the plane, but they were en route to compete for the Stanley Cup that they fell one win short of earning last season. Patrice Bergeron said he was "excited and looking forward to what's coming next."

It unfolded a little differently for Edmonton goaltender Mike Smith when he checked into a downtown hotel Sunday minutes from his house for a stay he hopes will last more than two months.

"Reality definitely set in," Smith said.

NHL players from the 24 playoff teams woke up to their new reality Monday in the hub

cities of Toronto and Edmonton, Alberta. Quarantined bubble life began with the league reporting zero positive coronavirus test results last week, and this existence away from the public is scheduled to last until the Stanley Cup is awarded in the fall.

"We asked our group right from the start just to keep open minds because everything's going to change, everything's fluctuating constantly, daily, minutely," Minnesota coach Dean Evason said.

"It's different. You've got a walkway with fences. People can't see in. You can't see out. But if you embrace it and are willing just to go with things, it's pretty cool."

While Major League Baseball postponed at least two games and grappled with the Miami Marlins' COVID-19 outbreak, the NHL reported none

of the 800-plus players tested in the final week of training camps came back positive for the virus.

That information and the low amount of confirmed cases in the Canadian provinces where games will take place added a layer of confidence to the first day of practices.

Like the NBA and Major League Soccer in Florida, the NHL set up a quarantined environment for players, coaches and staff that allowed those in the bubble to contrast that method of finishing the season to the less stringent way MLB and the NFL are trying to get through theirs.

"We are in a bubble. Major League Baseball is not," Boston coach Bruce Cassidy said. "Obviously once you get to the bubble, it appears to be a very safe environment."

Marlins outbreak setback for MLB

Associated Press

MIAMI — The Miami Marlins' coronavirus outbreak could endanger the Major League Baseball season, Dr. Anthony Fauci said Tuesday, although he doesn't believe games need to stop now.

More than a dozen Marlins players and staff members tested positive for COVID-19, stranding the team in Philadelphia and raising anew questions about MLB's attempts to conduct a season.

"This could put it in danger," said Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert. "I don't believe they need to stop, but we just need to follow this and see what happens with other teams on a day-by-day basis."

Fauci made his comments on ABC's "Good Morning America."

"Major League Baseball — the players, the owners, the managers — have put a lot of effort into getting together and putting protocols that we feel would work," Fauci said. "It's very unfortunate what happened with the Miami (Marlins)."

Their outbreak continued to

disrupt Major League Baseball's schedule Tuesday, the sixth day of the pandemic-delayed season, with the Marlins' home game against Baltimore postponed and the New York Yankees' game at Philadelphia postponed for the second straight day, according to a person familiar with the league's decision.

The Yankees, as the visiting team, would have been in the same clubhouse the Marlins used last weekend.

Nine Marlins players on the 30-man roster, two taxi squad players and two staff members tested positive, a person familiar with the situation told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity because the results hadn't been publicly disclosed.

"Obviously, we don't want any player to get exposed. It's not a positive thing," Commissioner Rob Manfred said on the MLB Network. "But I don't see it as a nightmare. ... We think we can keep people safe and continue to play."

The Yankees are staying in Philadelphia and have their own clubhouse staff with the team

there, a person familiar with their plans said, also speaking on condition of anonymity because details were not disclosed. The Marlins postponed their flight home Sunday night after their series finale against the Phillies.

The Orioles planned to fly to Baltimore from Miami on Monday night. They are scheduled to host the Marlins in a two-game series starting Wednesday.

"If the testing results are acceptable, the Marlins will resume play in Baltimore on Wednesday against the Orioles," Manfred said.

Meanwhile, Chicago White Sox manager Rick Renteria will be kept away from his team after experiencing a "slight cough and nasal congestion," general manager Rick Hahn said.

The Marlins' outbreak was the talk of baseball, and Washington Nationals manager Dave Martinez choked on his words as he discussed the situation. Martinez missed time last season because of a heart condition, and the Nationals are scheduled to play in Miami

this weekend.

"I'm going to be honest with you: I'm scared," Martinez said. "My level of concern went from about an eight to a 12. I mean this thing really hits home now. ... I got guys in our clubhouse that are really concerned, as well."

MLB announced the postponement of the two Monday games about eight hours before the scheduled first pitch and said additional COVID-19 testing was being conducted.

"The members of the Marlins' traveling party are self-quarantining in place while awaiting the outcome of those results," MLB said in a statement.

The Marlins placed infielder Garrett Cooper, outfielder Harold Ramirez and right-hander Jose Urena on the injured list. They claimed right-hander Justin Shafer and left-hander Josh Smith off waivers from Cincinnati, and will likely rely heavily on reinforcements from their training camp in Jupiter, Fla.

Because there are no minor league games this season, teams are allowed to retain 60 players each.

Roundup

Rays pitchers strike out 19 in romp over Braves

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Hunter Renfroe homered twice and Tampa Bay pitchers set a team nine-inning record with 19 strikeouts in the Rays' 14-5 romp over the Atlanta Braves on Monday night.

Atlanta starter Mike Foltynewicz (0-1) gave up six runs, four hits and four walks in 3¹/₃ innings. The 2018 All-Star was designated for assignment after the game.

Tyler Glasnow struck out nine and allowed one hit over four innings in his first start after missing part of summer camp with the Rays after testing positive for the coronavi-

rus. Diego Castillo (1-0) struck out two in a 10-pitch fifth and Jalen Beeks fanned seven over his three innings.

Dansby Swanson and Matt Adams homered for the Braves. Swanson tied a career-high with five RBIs and stopped a 41-game homerless streak in Atlanta's 14-1 win Sunday night over the New York Mets.

Cubs 8, Reds 7: Anthony Rizzo homered for the third time and Chicago let most of a seven-run lead slip away before Jeremy Jeffress closed out a victory at Cincinnati.

Athletics 3, Angels 0: Mark Canha homered for the first time this season, Chris Bas-

sitt (1-0) escaped a big jam and host Oakland beat Los Angeles as the teams concluded their season-opening wraparound series.

Brewers 6, Pirates 5 (11): Eric Sogard doubled home Brock Holt in the 11th inning and Milwaukee rallied for a rain-delayed win at Pittsburgh.

Astros 8, Mariners 5: Alex Bregman hit his 100th career homer, a three-run shot, and Jose Altuve added a solo drive to give host Houston a win over Seattle.

Padres 6, Diamondbacks 2: Fernando Tatis Jr. raced around the bases on a three-run triple that highlighted a five-run rally

and Trent Grisham hit his first home run for San Diego, which took three of four games in its opening series at home.

Blue Jays 4, Nationals 1: Teoscar Hernandez hit two of Toronto's four solo homers off Anibal Sanchez (0-1) to account for all of his team's scoring in a win at Washington.

Royals 14, Tigers 6: Maikel Franco hit two of Kansas City's six home runs, spoiling Detroit's fan-free home opener.

Mets 7, Red Sox 4: Michael Conforto, Pete Alonso and Dominic Smith all homered, Michael Wacha pitched well over five innings and New York won at Boston.