

Rise in cases worries US surgeon general

Associated Press

The U.S. surgeon general said Sunday that he's concerned about what lies ahead with cases of COVID-19 increasing in every state, millions still unvaccinated and a highly contagious virus variant spreading rapidly.

Noting that nearly all coronavirus deaths now are among the tens of millions of people who haven't received shots, despite widespread vaccine availability, Dr. Vivek Murthy painted an unsettling picture of what the future could hold.

"I am worried about what is to come because we are seeing increasing cases among the unvaccinated in particular. And while, if you are vaccinated, you are very well protected against hospitalization and death, unfortunately that is not true if you are not vaccinated," Murthy said on CNN's "State of the Union."

U.S. cases of COVID-19 last week increased by 17,000 nationwide over a 14-day period for the first time since late fall, and an increase in death historically follows a spike in illness. Much of the worsening problem is being driven by the delta varia-

nt first identified in India, that has since hit the United Kingdom and other countries, said Murthy.

While U.S. case numbers and hospitalizations are still far below levels from the worst of the pandemic early this year, Murthy said the worsening situation shows the need to convince more people to get inoculations.

"It is our fastest, most effective way out of this pandemic," he said.

About 186 million Americans have received at least one shot, but another 90 million eligible Americans haven't. Officials are trying to overcome a refusal among some — particularly conservative, rural white people — to get vaccinated, but it's unclear how to do that. So, for the meantime at least, some places have reverted to health precautions that had been cast aside.

In Las Vegas, some resorts and casinos are again requiring employees to wear masks in response to a recommendation issued by health officials amid rising COVID-19 case rates in Nevada; it ranks fifth among U.S. states for the most new cases per capita over the last two weeks.

Los Angeles County late Saturday reinstated rules requiring everyone to wear masks inside public buildings.

But in conservative Alabama, where COVID-19 hospitalizations have more than doubled in a month and only about a third of the population is fully vaccinated, officials have refused to reinstitute statewide health rules or use gimmicks such as lotteries to boost immunizations.

"I think the best thing for us to do is just encourage everyone to use their common sense and practice personal responsibility and make themselves and their families safe," Gov. Kay Ivey told reporters last week.

Cases also are on the rise in Springfield, Mo., where Mayor Ken McClure told CBS-TV's "Face the Nation" that false information about the pandemic was hampering the fight to get people vaccinated.

"I think we are seeing a lot spread through social media as people are talking about fears which they have, health related fears, what it might do to them later on in their lives, what might be contained in the vaccinations," he said.

US power on display during Pacific drills

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE

Stars and Stripes

The U.S. military with its allies is producing twin displays of air, land and sea power in Guam, the Northern Marianas and Australia this month in a demonstration for potential adversaries of its ability to move and fight.

Air Force commands in Alaska, Idaho, Hawaii and Japan are fielding more than 35 aircraft, many of them fifth-generation stealth fighters, to Guam and Tinian for Pacific Iron 2021, according to a Pacific Air Forces news release from July 12. That exercise, scheduled through the remainder of this month, will test the Air Force's ability to disperse its aircraft and fight them effectively, according to PACAF.

"Pacific Iron 2021 is a PACAF dynamic force employment operation to project forces" into the Indo-Pacific Command area of responsibility as part of the 2018 National Defense Strategy, according to the release.

The exercise will entail simulated combat flight operations from local airports on Guam, a U.S. territory, and Tinian, 106 nautical miles to the northeast in the Northern Marianas.

Meanwhile, a biennial exercise in Australia involving 17,000 U.S., Australian, New Zealand, Japanese, South Korean and British troops got underway Wednesday. Talisman Sabre hones the military and humanitarian capabilities of the participating nations. The exercise ends in August.

At Talisman Sabre this year, U.S. troops for the first time fired a live Patriot air-defense missile in Australia. Soldiers of the Army's 1st Battalion, 1st Air Defense Artillery Regiment, deployed from Okinawa, hit a drone target with a missile Friday at Shoalwater Bay Training Area in Queensland, according to video of the shot posted online by the Marine Corps.

The exercise demonstrated the Army's

ability to quickly move and bring to bear its missile defense units, demonstrations the Marine Corps has made recently, too.

For Pacific Iron, PACAF dispatched approximately 10 F-15E Strike Eagles from the 389th Fighter Squadron out of Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho; 25 F-22 Raptors from the 525th Fighter Squadron, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, and the 199th Fighter Squadron, Hawaii Air National Guard at Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam, Hawaii; and two C-130J Super Hercules from the 374th Airlift Wing from Yokota Air Base, Japan, according to the statement.

Anderson Air Force Base posted photos of F-22s arriving Sunday and F-15Es arriving Thursday for Pacific Iron on its website.

They will operate from Anderson and its Northwest Airfield and A.B. Won Pat International Airport, both on Guam, and Tinian International Airport, according to PACAF.

Marine general upholds corporal's discharge

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

A Marine general's decision not to suspend Cpl. Thae Ohu's bad conduct discharge could jeopardize her mental health care, despite a diagnosis that led a judge to recommend the suspension earlier this year.

Ohu was the subject of a complicated and high-profile assault case in which the man she attempted to stab in April 2020, her then-boyfriend, had called on the Corps not to punish her, but to help her get treatment for issues stemming from a rape she reported years earlier in Japan.

Advocates highlighted it as emblematic of the military's mishandling of sexual assault and mental health issues.

"This whole situation has been disparaging towards my service,

my assault, my care and now my future," Ohu said in a statement issued on the website justicefor-ThaeOhu.com on Thursday. "I still cannot fathom the contemptuous behavior of the Corps towards me from the moment I reported, along the way when I sought care and now a final infliction to hinder my care post service."

Maj. Gen. Julian D. Alford, commanding general of Marine Corps Training Command, suspended any brig time beyond Ohu's 328 days of "time served" before trial, the service said in a statement. But he imposed the remainder of the sentence, including reduction to private and the discharge, "as adjudged without suspension."

Ohu was released in May from the Navy Consolidated Brig in

Chesapeake, Va., after pleading guilty to several charges, including aggravated assault with a dangerous weapon, which stemmed from the 2020 attack. She and the victim have said the attack came during a mental breakdown.

Ohu's case made headlines last year after her family called on the Marine Corps to release her into mental health treatment. It was one of a series of cases that gained attention in the wake of the disappearance and killing of Spc. Vanessa Guillen at Fort Hood, Texas, and as lawmakers pushed for reform to the military's handling of sexual assault cases.

Ohu's victim, Michael Hinesley, never wanted the service to prosecute her, he wrote in a statement to the court earlier this

year.

Judge Lt. Col. Michael Zimmerman cited her mental health history in recommending Alford hold off on the punitive discharge for a probationary period.

Ohu was born in a refugee camp and had a difficult upbringing, with a history of mental illness before joining the service. She began having mental health challenges after arriving at her first duty station in Japan in 2014, the nonprofit investigative news site The War Horse reported.

Hinesley said her condition worsened after another Marine raped her on Okinawa in 2015, and that locking her up for assaulting him "stripped away" any progress she'd made in treatment. Her advocates say she suffered post-traumatic stress disorder after the rape.

Veteran submariner takes command of Navy on Guam

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

A veteran submariner with three recent deployments in the Indo-Pacific region aboard a submarine tender took the helm of U.S. Naval Base Guam on Monday.

Capt. Michael Luckett relieved Capt. Jeffrey Grimes during a ceremony at the base's Cmdr. William C. McCool Elementary/Middle School. The day provided significant memo-

ries for the outgoing Grimes, who took command of the base in July 2018.

The cafeteria and gymnasium were the first shelters for crew of the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt when COVID-19 broke out aboard the ship while at sea last year, Grimes said.

The episode proved a defining moment for the Navy early in the pandemic. The Theodore Roosevelt's commander at the time, Capt. Brett Crozier, reported the

first of 1,273 cases of COVID-19 aboard the ship on March 24, 2020. The carrier steamed to Guam and off-loaded its crew of 4,800, one of whom, Chief Petty Officer Charles Robert Thacker Jr., 41, died weeks later at the naval hospital there. Crozier's handling of the outbreak led to his dismissal.

The pandemic dominated Grimes' tenure as base commander. He oversaw the construction of a 150-bed emergent

medical facility and the creation of standard procedures to address outbreaks like the one aboard the Theodore Roosevelt, according to an email from base spokeswoman Theresa Cepeda.

Luckett, a native of Banning, Calif., most recently commanded the USS Emory S. Land, lead ship of the Emory S. Land-class submarine tenders. Under Luckett, the Land spent more than 10 months in the Indo-Pacific, according to Cepeda.

Gitmo inmate sent back to Morocco in Biden policy shift

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration on Monday transferred a Guantánamo Bay detainee to his home country for the first time, a policy shift from the Trump presidency that repatriated a Moroccan man years after he was recommended for discharge.

The prisoner, Abdullatif Nasser, who's in his mid-50s, was cleared for repatriation by a review board in July 2016 but remained at Guantánamo under President Donald Trump. In announcing his transfer Monday, the Pentagon cited the board's determination that Nasser's deten-

tion was no longer necessary to protect U.S. national security.

Nasser, also known as Abdul Latif Nasser, arrived Monday in Morocco, where police took him into custody and said they would investigate him on suspicion of committing terrorist acts — even though he was never charged

while in Guantánamo.

The State Department said in a statement that President Joe Biden's administration would continue "a deliberate and thorough process" to reducing the Navy base's detainee population "while also safeguarding the security of the United States and its allies."

Trump recasts attackers as martyrs and heroes

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A cocktail of propaganda, conspiracy theory and disinformation — of the kind intoxicating to the masses in the darkest turns of history — is fueling straight-up delusion over the agonies of Jan. 6.

Hate is “love.” Violence is “peace.” The pro-Donald Trump attackers are patriots.

Months after the then-president’s supporters stormed the Capitol that winter day, Trump and his acolytes are taking this revisionism to a new and dangerous place — one of martyrs and warlike heroes, and of revenge. It’s a place where cries of “blue lives matter” have transformed into shouts of “f— the blue.”

The fact inversion about the siege is the latest in Trump’s contorted oeuvre of the “big lie” compendium, the most specious of which is that the election was stolen from him, when it was not.

It is rooted in the basic formula of potent propaganda through the ages: Say it loud, say it often, say it with the heft of political power behind you, and people will believe. Once spread by pamphlets, posters and word of mouth, now spread by the swipe of a finger, the result is the same: a passionate, unquestioning following.

Techniques of glorifying your side and demonizing the other with skewed information, if not outright lies, have been in play at least since World War I, when the U.S. government roused sentiment for the cause with posters depicting the German soldier as an

ape-human with an American maiden in his clutches. That paled next to what followed years later with Nazi Germany’s terrifying use of propaganda for the slaughter and subjugation of millions.

Whether the deception feeds warmongering or merely a defeated president’s ego, some of the methods are the same, like telling the same fabrication over and over until it sticks.

Trump perfected the art of repetition — about the “election hoax,” the “rigged election” and “massive voter fraud,” with none of those accusations substantiated but engrained nonetheless among his supporters.

Four years ago, Trump appeared to equate white supremacists and racial justice protesters in Charlottesville, Va., with his comment that there were “very fine people, on both sides.”

Trump and many Republicans have cycled through various characterizations of the insurrection, each wholly unlike the previous one. The attackers were said to be leftist antifa followers in disguise. Then they were said to be overexcited tourists. Now they are heralded as foot soldiers for freedom.

Each iteration has required Americans to ignore the rage they saw on their screens, and some lawmakers to ignore that they were among the shocked targets of the attackers that day.

The revisionists and their believers are “swimming in a vast sea of nonsense,” said Brendan Buck, a former top aide to House Speaker Paul Ryan.

Capitol rioter given 8 months

Associated Press

A Florida man who breached the U.S. Senate chamber carrying a Trump campaign flag was sentenced Monday to eight months behind bars, the first resolution for a felony case in the Capitol insurrection.

Paul Allard Hodgkins apologized and said he was ashamed of his actions on Jan. 6. Speaking calmly from a prepared text, he described being caught up in the euphoria as he walked down Washington’s most famous avenue, then followed a crowd of hundreds up Capitol Hill and into the Capitol building.

“If I had any idea that the protest ... would escalate (the way) it did ... I would never have ventured farther than the sidewalk of Pennsylvania Avenue,” Hodgkins told the judge. He added: “This was a foolish decision on my part.”

Prosecutors had asked for Hodgkins to serve 18 months behind bars, saying in a recent filing that he, “like each rioter, contributed to the collective threat to democracy” by forcing lawmakers to temporarily abandon their certification of Joe Biden’s 2020 election victory over President Donald Trump and to scramble for shelter from incoming mobs.

In pronouncing the sentence, Judge Randolph Moss said that Hodgkins had played a role, if not as significant as others, in one of the worst episodes in American history. Still he chose to give Hodgkins a year less in prison.

“That was not, by any stretch of the imagination, a protest,” Moss said. “It was ... an assault on democracy.” He added: “It left a stain that will remain on us ... on the country for years to come.”

US, allies: Microsoft Exchange hack leads to China

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration and Western allies formally blamed China on Monday for a massive hack of Microsoft Exchange email server software, and accused Beijing of working with criminal hackers in ransomware attacks and other cyber operations.

The announcements, though not accompanied by sanctions against the Chinese government, were intended as a forceful condemnation of activities a senior Biden administration official described as part of a “pattern of irresponsible behavior in cy-

berspace.” They highlighted the ongoing threat from Chinese government hackers even as the administration remains consumed with trying to curb ransomware attacks from Russia-based syndicates that have targeted critical infrastructure.

The broad range of cyberthreats from Beijing disclosed on Monday included ransomware attacks from government-affiliated hackers that have targeted victims — including in the United States — with demands for millions of dollars. U.S. officials allege that China’s Ministry of State Security has been using criminal contract hackers

who have engaged in cyber extortion schemes and theft for their own profit, officials said.

The European Union and Britain also called out China. The EU said malicious cyber activities with “significant effects” that targeted government institutions, political organizations and key industries in the bloc’s 27 member states could be linked to Chinese hacking groups. The United Kingdom’s National Cyber Security Centre said the groups targeted maritime industries and naval defense contractors in the U.S., Europe and Finnish parliament.

Germany defends flood prep, mulls lessons

Associated Press

BERLIN — German officials are defending their preparations for flooding in the face of the raging torrents that caught many people by surprise and left over 190 people dead in Western Europe, but concede that they will need to learn lessons from the disaster.

Efforts to find any more victims and clean up the mess across a swath of western Germany, eastern Belgium and the Netherlands continued Monday as floodwaters receded. So far, 117 people have been confirmed dead in the worst-affected German region, Rhineland-Palatinate, 46 in the neighboring state of North Rhine-Westphalia and at least

one in Bavaria, parts of which saw heavy rain and flooding over the weekend. At least 31 people died in Belgium.

The downpours that led to usually small rivers swelling at vast speed in the middle of last week were forecast, but warnings of potentially catastrophic damage didn't appear to have found their way to many people on the ground — often in the middle of the night.

“As soon as we have provided the immediate aid that stands at the forefront now, we will have to look at whether there were things that didn't go well, whether there were things that went wrong, and then they have to be corrected,” Economy Minister Peter

Altmaier told the Bild newspaper. “That isn't about finger-pointing — it's about improvements for the future.”

Federal and state authorities faced criticism from opposition politicians for allegedly failing to warn citizens of the impending disaster, which came ahead of a national election in September. But Interior Minister Horst Seehofer dismissed claims that federal officials had made mistakes, and said warnings were passed to local authorities “who make decisions on disaster protection.”

“I have to say that some of the things I'm hearing now are cheap election rhetoric,” Seehofer said during a visit to the Steinbach Reservoir in west-

ern Germany, where authorities said Monday they no longer fear a dam breach. “Now really isn't the hour for this.”

The head of Germany's civil protection agency said that the country's weather service had “forecast relatively well” and that the country was well-prepared for flooding on its major rivers. But, Armin Schuster told ZDF television late Sunday, “half an hour before, it is often not possible to say what place will be hit with what quantity” of water. He said that 150 warning notices had been sent out via apps and media.

He said “we will have to investigate” where sirens sounded and where they didn't.

Rising virus cases mar UK's 'Freedom Day'

Associated Press

LONDON — Corks popped, beats boomed out and giddy revelers rushed onto dance floors when England's nightclubs reopened Monday as the country lifted most remaining coronavirus restrictions after more than a year of lockdowns, mask mandates and other pandemic-related curbs on freedom.

For clubbers and nightclub owners, the moment lived up to its media-given moniker, “Freedom Day.” But the big step out of lockdown was met with nervousness by many Britons and concern from scientists, who say the United Kingdom is entering uncharted waters by opening up when confirmed cases are not falling but soaring.

As of Monday, face masks were no longer legally required in England, work-from-

home guidance ended and, with social distancing rules shelved, no limits existed on the number of people attending theater performances or big events.

For nightclubs, it is the first time they have been allowed to open in almost 18 months, and from London to Liverpool, thousands of people danced the night away at “Freedom Day” parties starting at midnight.

But while entertainment businesses and ravers are jubilant, many others are deeply worried about the British government's decision to scrap restrictions at a time when COVID-19 cases are on a rapid upswing due to the highly infectious delta variant first identified in India. Cases topped 50,000 per day last week for the first time since Janu-

ary, although virus deaths remain comparatively low so far.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who has dialed down talk of freedom in recent weeks, urged the public to exercise “prudence and respect for other people and the risks that the disease continues to present.”

In a reminder of how volatile the situation is, the prime minister was spending “Freedom Day” in quarantine. Johnson and Treasury chief Rishi Sunak are both self-isolating for 10 days after contact with Health Secretary Sajid Javid, who tested positive for COVID-19 on Saturday.

Johnson initially said he would take daily tests instead of self-isolating — an option not offered to most people — but U-turned amid widespread public outrage.

American father, son get prison terms for role in Ghosn escape

Associated Press

TOKYO — A Tokyo court handed down prison terms for the American father and son accused of helping Nissan's former chairman, Carlos Ghosn, escape to Lebanon while awaiting trial in Japan.

Michael Taylor was sentenced Monday to two years in prison, while his son, Peter,

was sentenced to one year and eight months.

They were charged with helping a criminal in the December 2019 escape of Ghosn, who hid in a big box that was flown on a private jet via Turkey to Lebanon. Lebanon has no extradition treaty with Japan.

In handing down the sen-

tencing, Chief Judge Hideo Nirei said they had committed a serious violation of the law, as now there is next to no chance of putting Ghosn on trial.

“This case enabled Ghosn, a defendant of a serious crime, to escape overseas,” he said.

Although the defense argued the two had been merely used by Ghosn, they clearly were in-

involved, regardless of who was making the decisions, he said.

Ghosn was arrested in Japan in November 2018 on charges of underreporting his compensation and of breach of trust in using Nissan Motor Co. money for personal gain. He says he is innocent, and he left because he could not expect a fair trial in Japan.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Baseball team changes name for Korean fans

AL MONTGOMERY — A Minor League Baseball team in the South temporarily changed its name and its jerseys to celebrate the Korean community in its hometown.

For one night only, the Montgomery Biscuits became the Montgomery Kimchi, WFSA-TV reported. Wearing jerseys with Korean lettering, the team beat Mississippi's Biloxi Shuckers 9-8 in 11 innings.

The Biscuits partnered with A-KEEP, the Alabama-Korean Education and Economic Partnership, to incorporate elements of Korean culture into the game. Fans could try samples of kimchi, the traditional dish of salted and fermented vegetables.

Grocery operator fined for child labor violations

NH MANCHESTER — A grocery store operator paid over \$27,000 in fines to the U.S. Department of Labor after an investigation found that some minors employed by the business were cleaning power-driven meat mixers and grinders, and others worked in violation of federal hours restrictions.

Federal child labor laws prohibit employees under 18 from operating or cleaning the machines.

On The Vine Marketplace in Scarborough, Maine, recently paid a fine for that violation and one at its sister store in Exeter, N.H., after the department identified two minors under 16 who worked too many hours.

Environmental officials, police probe fox attacks

NY SARATOGA SPRINGS — New York environmental officers and local police are investigating fox attacks in Saratoga Springs and urging people in the area to be cautious outdoors.

Melissa Thompson-Flynn told the Times Union of Albany that she was attacked by a fox while jogging. She said the animal came up behind her and bit her leg.

She pried the fox off her leg, but it then bit her right arm. Thompson-Flynn, 51, a retired U.S. Army officer who served in Iraq, grabbed the fox by the throat with her left arm. Police arrived as she was still battling the fox and an officer killed the animal.

Thompson-Flynn has begun a series of anti-rabies shots.

At a day camp for children hosted by Skidmore College, a fox bit a camp counselor and scratched a camper. They were treated for minor injuries and began receiving anti-rabies shots, a college spokesperson said.

2 men jailed for beating porcupines to death

ME ROCKLAND — Two former Maine police officers have been sentenced for beating porcupines to death on several occasions while on duty.

Addison Cox, 28, of Warren, and Michael A. Rolerson, 31, of Searsport, were sentenced on misdemeanor charges of cruelty to animals and night hunting, according to court documents.

Both former Rockland offi-

cers pleaded guilty, the Bangor Daily News reported.

Cox was sentenced to 90 days in jail, fined \$1,000, placed on administrative release for six months and must complete 100 hours of community service. Rolerson was sentenced to 270 days in jail, fined \$1,000 and placed on probation for six months.

Endangered snakes born at zoo to help species

NE OMAHA — Four endangered indigo snakes are the newest babies at Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium, marking a first-time birth of the species at the zoo. Their births are the result of an Eastern Indigo Species Survival Plan recommendation.

The zoo said in a news release that such plans manage threatened and endangered species to ensure that they are healthy, genetically diverse and demographically varied across institutions accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

Eastern indigos are native to the southeastern United States and are considered the largest non-venomous snake in the country. Some reach up to 8 1/2 feet in length.

Once they are able to feed on their own, the snakes will be moved to a habitat visible to the public.

County decides not to rename road for Trump

NV YERINGTON — Elected officials in a rural Nevada county where voters sided solidly with Republican President Donald Trump in the 2020 election have ultimately rejected a proposal to rename

a road for him.

Lyon County commissioners cited community opposition before voting 3-2 against renaming the half-mile Old Dayton Valley Road in Dayton, an unincorporated community 23 miles south of Reno. The new name would have been Pres. Trump Way.

Commissioner Ken Gray, proponent of the measure, told the Nevada Appeal that supporters were intimidated not to come out publicly for the idea. He said the question could be brought back for a countywide vote.

Some residents opposed spending \$8,000 for physical changes including street and building signage, letterhead, business cards and public records fees.

3 decapitated ducks found in neighborhood

HI HONOLULU — Three decapitated ducks were found in the middle of a road in a Honolulu neighborhood, and residents upset by the gruesome discovery have raised about \$1,500 in reward money to find those responsible.

Beth-Ann Kozlovich told Hawaii News Now that she came upon the duck carcasses while walking her dogs in Hawaii Kai.

Kozlovich said the ducks are koloea — ducks native to Hawaii that are on the federal endangered species list.

Sgt. Chris Kim of Honolulu CrimeStoppers said it's a case of second-degree animal cruelty.

— From wire reports

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USA Gymnastics in midst of culture shift

Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — The U.S. gymnastics championships were over. The pressure — mercifully if only momentarily — gone. On the floor at Dickies Arena, Olympic hopefuls milled about aimlessly. Some talked. Some grabbed their phones. Others searched the stands for their families.

Jordan Chiles did what she usually does when there's a lull in the action. She danced. Soon, a couple joined in. Then a few more. Then a few more. Within a minute or two, nearly the entire group was doing "The Cha Cha Slide" for all the world to see.

Martha Karolyi's program, this is not.

The vibe around the top level of the sport in the United States has loosened in the five years since the highly successful yet highly divisive national team coordinator retired. The impromptu flash mob at national championships last month offered a symbolic if somewhat superficial glimpse at how the landscape is evolving.

"I feel like the trainings are actually kind of a lot more fun and not — I mean, it's still stressful, but it's not as stressful as it used to

be," said MyKayla Skinner, an alternate on the 2016 Olympic team who will be one of six American women competing in Tokyo this month.

Still, the greatest gymnast of all time wonders if the pendulum has swung too far, too fast.

Simone Biles has embraced the long-overdue push to create a more athlete-centric environment. Her concern, however, is that the sport's brave new world might make it difficult for the coaches hired to mold prodigies into champions to effectively do their jobs.

"I think the culture shift is happening, but it's almost as if the athletes almost have too much power and the coaches can't get a rein on it," Biles told The Associated Press in May. "So then it's kind of wild. It's like a horse out of the barn: You can't get it back in."

Biles, among the most outspoken critics of USA Gymnastics in the wake of the Larry Nassar sexual abuse scandal and herself a Nassar survivor, is not complaining. It's unlikely she would have returned to the sport

in late 2017 if Karolyi was still in charge. Things needed to change.

Yet the 24-year-old is also acutely aware of the pressure that follows when the perennially loaded U.S. team is on the international stage.

The Americans have produced the last four Olympic all-around gold medalists and captured every major team title since the 2011 world championships, a streak they are heavily favored to extend in Tokyo thanks in large part to Biles' unmatched brilliance.

The question is what comes next. How will one of the gold standards of the U.S. Olympic movement foster a healthy, positive climate and a competitive one at the same time?

The two are not mutually exclusive by any stretch. Biles need only point to her relationship with former coach Aimee Boorman and current coaches Laurent and Cecile Landi as proof. Yet she also knows her experience is not exactly commonplace for a sport in the middle of a reckoning.

US gymnastics alternate tests positive for COVID-19

Associated Press

TOKYO — Kara Eaker, an alternate on the United States women's gymnastics team, has tested positive for COVID-19 in an Olympic training camp in Japan.

Al Fong, the personal coach for both Eaker and fellow Olympic alternate Leanne Wong, confirmed the positive test in an email to The Associated Press on Monday. Fong said Eaker, 18, was vaccinated against the novel coronavirus two months ago.

Both Eaker and Wong have been placed in isolation.

USA Gymnastics did not identify Eaker or Wong but said in a statement that the athlete who tested positive and another alternate would be subject to additional quarantine restrictions.

"Accordingly, on Monday, the Olympic athletes moved to separate lodging accommodations and a separate training facility, as originally planned, and

will continue their preparation for the Games," the organization said in a statement. "The entire delegation continues to be vigilant and will maintain strict protocols while they are in Tokyo."

The positive test was the latest in a growing line of daily reports of athletes and others testing positive at the pandemic-delayed Olympics. Eaker is the first American to test positive.

"The health and safety of our athletes, coaches and staff is our top priority. We can confirm that an alternate on the women's artistic gymnastics team tested positive for COVID-19," the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee said in a statement. "In alignment with local rules and protocols, the athlete has been transferred to a hotel to quarantine. Out of respect for the individual's privacy, we cannot provide more information at this time."

The four alternates — Eaker,

Wong, Kayla DiCello and Emma Malabuyo — traveled to Japan with the six-woman U.S. delegation of world and Olympic champion Simone Biles, Jordan Chiles, Grace McCallum, Sunisa Lee, MyKayla Skinner and Jade Carey.

The positive test came after Eaker received what was described as a "false positive" over the weekend. Eaker took a subsequent test that was negative before testing positive again multiple times.

Biles, who is also the world champion, and the rest of the regular team have been vaccinated. Skinner, who made the team in the "plus-one spot" — meaning she can compete as an individual in Tokyo — following Olympic Trials did battle both COVID-19 and pneumonia last winter.

Alternates have been rooming with other alternates since arriving in Japan, with the competitive team rooming with fel-

low competitors. All Olympic athletes and coaches have been moved to their own rooms since the positive test, with the Olympic athletes also moving to a new hotel, as was originally planned.

The Games are set to open on Friday with a state of emergency in force in Tokyo, which means almost all venues will be without any fans as new cases rise in the capital. The women's gymnastic team begins competing on Sunday.

The U.S. officials said the test took place when the team was training just outside Tokyo in Inzai City. Team members arrived last week for the camp to great fanfare at Narita airport.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government on Monday reported 727 new cases in the capital. It is the 30th straight day that cases were higher than the previous week. The cases last Monday were 502.

Morikawa calmly wins British Open

Associated Press

In a year of firsts in the majors, Collin Morikawa might have topped them all.

His performance over four days at the British Open was unlike anything seen at Royal St. George's, even in such ideal weather for the English coast.

In his first real test of links golf, Morikawa didn't make a bogey over his final 31 holes, blowing past mistake-prone Louis Oosthuizen and never flinching as Jordan Spieth made one last charge late Sunday afternoon.

Morikawa made three straight birdies at the turn to build a four-shot lead. He made a 20-foot birdie on the 14th when Spieth had closed to within one. He saved par with a 10-foot putt on the next hole for breathing room.

He played with the confidence of a major champion, which he is from his PGA Championship title last year. He showed the experience of a veteran. That part is up for debate.

"When you make history — and I'm 24 years old — it's hard to grasp," Morikawa said.

The silver claret jug in his possession as he stood on the 18th green, Morikawa first paid tribute to Matthias Schmid of Germany, who won the silver medal as low amateur.

"It feels like literally two years ago I was an amateur," Morikawa told him.

That is entirely literal.

Two years ago, the ink was barely dry on his diploma from Cal. In the eight majors Morikawa has played since then, he has won two of them. The last player to win two professional majors in so few attempts was Bobby Jones nearly a century ago.

"It's so hard to look back at the two short years that I have been a pro and see what I've done because I want more," he said. "I enjoy these moments and I love it, and I want to teach myself to embrace it a little more."

The major season began with Hideki Matsuyama becoming the first Japanese player to win the Masters. Phil Mickelson became the first player at age 50 to win a major at the PGA Championship. No one had ever birdied the last two holes at the U.S. Open to win by one shot until Jon Rahm at Torrey Pines.

And then along came Morikawa, as pure an iron player as there is in the game today, making his own brand of history. He is the first to win two majors that he played for the first time.

Just under a year ago in his first time playing the only major restricted to pros, he won the PGA Championship at Harding Park by boldly hitting driver on the 16th hole for a 7-foot eagle. And then he won the British Open in his debut with a 4-under 66 to finish at 265.

"He's got the potential and the game, and the head, to be able to manage any kind of

bumps in the road," Spieth said.

Spieth knows all about bumps. When he won the Open at Royal Birkdale in 2017, he had three legs of the career Grand Slam at age 23. And then he didn't win again for nearly four years, having to rebuild his swing and his confidence.

He played the final 12 holes in 6 under. It looked like it might be enough, except that he needed a little help from Morikawa.

"I needed a break, and I didn't get it from him," Spieth said.

Oosthuizen provided plenty of them to Morikawa, notably the par-5 seventh hole, the easiest of the final round. With an iron from the fairway for his second shot, Oosthuizen went bunker-to-bunker and made bogey, going from a tie for the lead to two shots behind when Morikawa made birdie.

Morikawa birdied the next two holes and he was on his way.

There were cheers from 30,000-plus fans for Rahm running off four straight birdies in a late bid, for Spieth making four birdies in a six-hole stretch.

Would that have made a difference?

"Then you step into 35,000 and holding a lead down the stretch," Spieth said. "He spent a year, year-and-a-half in essentially a crowd-less environment. And it's harder. It's harder with big crowds. You feel it more. You know where you are. It's a bigger stage."

"I think that's impressive."

Under darkness, Almirola pulls off Cup shocker

Associated Press

LOUDON, N.H. — Aric Almirola carried the weight of a winless season while chasing a playoff berth that seemed implausible for a driver buried deep in the standings on a Stewart-Haas Racing program that had yet to take a checkered flag.

His confidence sagged. The pressure tightened on the No. 10 team.

With darkness falling at New Hampshire, Almirola saw his season suddenly come into focus. Almirola sprung to life late Sunday at New Hampshire Motor Speedway and pulled off the surprise victory, a vital boost for SHR, Ford and another shake-up

of the NASCAR playoff picture.

"Coming into this race, we never gave anybody a reason to pick us," Almirola said. "It feels good to be the underdog and come out of nowhere and have the race car we did."

Almirola snapped a 98-race winless streak and added New Hampshire to a rain-shortened win at Daytona in 2014 and Talladega in 2018 for his third victory in 374 races.

And he's in the playoffs.

Almirola was the latest surprise winner and played havoc with the playoff picture with only four races left before the 16-driver field is set. Austin Dillon and Tyler Reddick are among the

drivers who could use a win and clinch a berth.

The race was delayed nearly two hours by rain and NASCAR called it early due to darkness, leaving it eight laps shy of its scheduled conclusion.

New Hampshire was scheduled for 301 laps and 318.46 miles. Almirola took the checkered in 293 laps. He broke up the Team Penske party — Brad Keselowski and Ryan Blaney had a fun back-and-forth for the lead at one point — and Christopher Bell could not catch him.

Bell won the Xfinity Series race Saturday and was second. Keselowski, Joey Logano and Blaney made it a 3-4-5 finish for Team

Penske.

"I felt like I probably had a little bit better pace than him, able to get to him," Bell said. "Lapped cars were giving him a bad time. If I was able to get to him, it was going to be a heck of a race."

Almirola rested his head on the car in almost stunned disbelief that he clinched his playoff spot.

"There is no doubt we have struggled," Almirola said. "But guess what? We're going playoff racing."

Almirola, who entered 27th in the points standings, was the first driver out of the SHR pack that includes Kevin Harvick, Cole Custer and Chase Briscoe to take the checkered flag.

Nats end disturbing weekend with win

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Washington Nationals needed a win Sunday to end their losing streak.

To manager Dave Martinez, this walk-off victory had a greater meaning.

Alcides Escobar homered in the eighth inning and hit a game-ending single in the ninth Sunday as the Nationals wrapped up a disturbing weekend with an 8-7 win over the San Diego Padres.

A day after the game was suspended in the sixth inning because of a shooting outside Nationals Park, the Padres completed a 10-4 victory. Washington then came back to end a six-game losing streak.

"I think it means more to myself and the players knowing that the fans came back after yesterday," Martinez said of Sunday's crowd of 27,221. "They came to support us and it was huge. It was awesome. Our players, they feed off that and it was a good day for Nats fans and the Nationals."

Tres Barrera singled off Mark Melancon (2-2) with one out in the ninth and, after failing on a bunt attempt, Victor Robles was hit by a pitch. Escobar hit a flyball that center

fielder Trent Grisham couldn't corral near the warning track and Barrera scored.

"Melancon throws a lot of cutters and curveballs and I was actually sitting on the breaking pitch," Escobar through an interpreter. "And when he got ahead, I was just looking for a pitch in the zone that I could make solid contact with and I was fortunate to make solid contact on that pitch."

Escobar was acquired from the Royals in a July 2 trade. It was his first homer since 2018 when he was with Kansas City.

San Diego tied it at 7 in the ninth when pinch-runner Jorge Mateo stole second and third without a throw and scored on Grisham's two-out, bloop single off Brad Hand (5-2).

Escobar led off the eighth with a homer and Juan Soto's two-run drive later in the inning gave Washington a 7-6 lead.

"We just couldn't hold the lead today, and that hasn't happened very often," San Diego manager Jayce Tingler said. "We'll take our chances with the back end of our bullpen any day and today we just weren't able to hold the lead."

It was Soto's third homer since participating in the Home Run Derby at the All-Star

Game. Soto and Josh Harrison had three hits apiece for Washington.

Manny Machado, Eric Hosmer and Jackson Proffar homered for the Padres.

Nationals ace Max Scherzer allowed four runs on four hits in seven innings. He struck out eight.

Padres starter Joe Musgrove went five innings, giving up four runs on eight hits. He walked two and hit three batters.

Saturday's game was halted with the Padres leading 8-4 in the middle of the sixth inning.

"I think last night was obviously something none of us had ever experienced," longtime Nationals star Ryan Zimmerman said. "Coming to finish a game under those circumstances was a little bit weird for all us, but you have to move on and play the game. But it was definitely different."

When the shots were heard, it was not immediately clear where they were coming from. Star shortstop Fernando Tatis Jr. was one of several Padres who helped shepherd fans from the stands into the San Diego dugout for shelter in what became a chaotic scene as the crowd scrambled for safety.

Torres, Odor homer to back Taillon in Yankees' win

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Gleyber Torres and Rougned Odor homered to back another strong start from Jameson Taillon as the depleted New York Yankees beat the Boston Red Sox 9-1 on Sunday.

Playing without All-Star slugger Aaron Judge and five of his teammates who also tested positive for COVID-19 recently, the Yankees won their second straight against the rival Red Sox.

"It would have been easy for us to roll over after everything that's happened," Taillon said.

Taillon (5-4) pitched 5 1/3 scoreless innings of four-hit ball in his 100th major league start.

Ryan LaMarre added a two-run homer in the eighth and DJ LeMahieu extended his on-base streak to 30 games.

White Sox 4, Astros 0: Carlos Rodón allowed one hit through seven dominant in-

nings, Yoán Moncada and Tim Anderson hit solo homers and host Chicago topped Houston.

Mariners 7, Angels 4: Ty France hit a three-run homer, Logan Gilbert struck out a career-high nine and Seattle won at Los Angeles despite Shohei Ohtani's 34th homer of the season.

Phillies 4-7, Marlins 2-4: J.T. Realmuto followed a two-run walk-off homer in the completion of a suspended game with a 3-for-5 performance with two RBIs and host Philadelphia beat Miami in the regularly scheduled series finale.

Realmuto's two-run 10th-inning homer gave the Phillies a win in the conclusion to Saturday's suspended game.

Mets 7, Pirates 6: Michael Conforto hit a two-run homer in the ninth inning to complete a rally from six runs down and New York overcame an embarrassing gaffe by All-Star pitcher

Taijuan Walker to win at Pittsburgh.

Blue Jays 5-10, Rangers 0-0: In Buffalo, N.Y., Hyun Jin Ryu threw a three-hitter in the opener, and Steven Matz and two relievers combined for another shutout in the second game as Toronto blanked Texas in both halves of a doubleheader.

It was the first time the Blue Jays swept a doubleheader with two shutouts in team history.

Indians 4, Athletics 2: Bradley Zimmer had three hits, including a home run on All-Star Chris Bassitt's first pitch, to help Cleveland win at Oakland.

Rays 7, Braves 5: Yandy Diaz homered during a four-run rally in the seventh inning and Tampa Bay won at Atlanta.

Rockies 6, Dodgers 5 (10): Charlie Blackmon hit a solo homer in the bottom of the 10th inning, leading host Colorado over Los Angeles.

Cardinals 2, Giants 1: Harrison Bader put host St. Louis ahead with a checked-swing single off the glove of first basemen LaMonte Wade Jr. in the seventh inning in a win over San Francisco.

Diamondbacks 6, Cubs 4: Merrill Kelly threw eight solid innings, Eduardo Escobar hit a two-run homer and host Arizona avoided a three-game sweep with a win over Chicago.

Brewers 8, Reds 0: Corbin Burnes pitched sharply into the ninth inning, leading Milwaukee to a win at Cincinnati.

Tigers 7, Twins 0: Jeimer Candelario homered, drove in three runs and started two double plays as host Detroit finished a weekend sweep of Minnesota.

Orioles 5, Royals 0: Matt Harvey ended his nine-game losing skid with his best performance in years, pitching six crisp innings and sending Baltimore to a win at Kansas City.