

Survey: Marines a little more satisfied with base housing

BY CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

Marines gave base housing a C+ in the latest militarywide satisfaction survey — slightly higher than the other services — though respondents were least satisfied with move-in conditions and tracking of reported problems.

The Marine Corps is the latest service to release results from the Defense Department's annual housing satisfaction survey for 2020, conducted in December and January.

It's the first year for a new anonymous survey that is standardized across the services, though residents have been surveyed since housing was privatized in the 1990s.

The results come over two years after a Reuters investigation revealed mold and pest infestation, water leaks and other hazards in privatized military housing, which led to congressional hearings and testimony from military spouses.

More than one-fifth of the nearly 20,000 residents of Marine Corps privatized base housing responded to the survey, reporting an overall satisfaction score of 78 on a scale of 100, the service said in a statement published Monday.

"The responses provided great insight and supported my obligation to ensure that Marines, families and civilians' voices are heard," said Maj. Gen. Ted Banta, head of Marine Corps Installations Command, in the statement.

"The survey responses will be used to shape housing and housing services."

Earlier this year, the Air Force said its privatized housing scored an overall satisfaction rate of 77.1, with about 30% of tenants responding. The service did not say the total number of surveys that were sent out.

The Navy reported an overall satisfaction score of 77 from about 9,700 respondents, a response rate of over a quarter of residents. The Army scored a 75.4 from about 25,500 respondents, a response rate of 29%.

The firm Robert D. Niehaus Inc. conducted the survey on behalf of the Marine Corps. CEL & Associates Inc. conducted the poll on behalf of the other services.

The tenant canvas results are categorized by installation and help tell military and privatized housing company officials what areas need improvement. They were also broken down by property, service and overall satisfaction scores.

Service scores reached 80.8 for the Marine Corps, while satisfaction with properties was scored at 77.8. The highest-rated privatized base housing in terms of service, with a score of 95, was the Mid-Atlantic Military Family Communities, which operates housing around Norfolk, Va.

Just one of the 15 Marine Corps installations scored under 70 overall, which the service considers below average. The installation was not named.

Pentagon plans to house Afghan refugees at stateside military bases

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department will house and support about 2,500 Afghans seeking refuge in the United States at stateside military bases starting with Fort Lee, Va., chief Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Monday.

The State Department made the request over the weekend that the Defense Department house 700 special immigrant visa applicants and their families at stateside bases, Kirby said.

The 2,500 refugees will not arrive in the United States all at once, he said. Some of them might not end up at Fort Lee, as the Pentagon continues to evaluate other stateside installations that could host Afghan visa applicants.

Kirby did not say when the applicants would begin arriving in the U.S., but officials have said evacuation efforts out of Afghanistan would begin late this month.

The news comes after President Joe Biden announced plans to evacuate an estimated 20,000 Afghan translators and others who helped Americans during the war in Afghanistan as the U.S. military drawdown nears completion.

Only Afghans who have completed the security-vetting portion of the visa process will be transported to the U.S., Kirby said. Most will stay at the base near Richmond, Va., for "just a few days" as they complete the final stages of their visa process.

"This initial group of SIV applicants would be able to, while at Fort Lee, safely complete the

final steps of the SIV process, such as final medical screenings and final administrative requirements," he said.

The Pentagon is still working to identify overseas locations — including U.S. installations abroad — that could host Afghan evacuees who are working through earlier stages of the visa application process.

Individuals and families will stay in available barracks rooms or family housing units at Fort Lee. Aside from housing, Kirby said the Pentagon will provide "food and water, proper sustenance, appropriate medical care ... and as much comfort as we can provide them in the short span of time that they're going to be there."

It was unclear how the initiative will be funded, though Kirby said the State Department will work with the Office of Management and Budget to cover the costs.

Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va., whose home state will host the applicants, applauded Biden's decision to "help the thousands of other Afghans and their family members who remain at risk because of their support for the U.S. mission in Afghanistan."

"Virginia has a long history of standing up for our military and those who have risked their lives for our country," Warner said in a statement Monday. "For two decades, thousands of Afghans have put their own lives and safety in danger in order to work with U.S. and allied personnel to fight [al-Qaida], the Haqqani network, [the Islamic State] and other terrorist groups."

Big steps sought to curb military sex assaults

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

The Defense Department must take bold steps to put prevention and reporting at the forefront of its fight against sexual assault and harassment or the behaviors will remain a persistent problem for the military, according to a report released Monday by the Rand Corp.

The 11 recommendations of the report focus mostly on Defense Department policies and procedures that could do more to better track instances of assault and harassment, such as allegations levied against a service member throughout his or her career and improving the quality of training troops receive, as well as the funding and personnel allocated to bases. It also recommended improving accountability of commanders who manage the allegations, while empowering them to use

appropriate punishment for low-level offenses that could escalate.

The eight authors of the report from the nonprofit, nonpartisan research institution, titled “Countering Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the U.S. Military: Lessons from RAND Research,” combed through years of the corporation’s own studies to determine the changes needed to break through the department’s stagnant efforts.

“The numbers underscore the significant challenges the [department] faces in combating these issues,” said Joie Acosta, senior behavioral and social scientist at Rand and lead author of the report. “While some improvements have been made in prevention capabilities, the reality is that the [department] doesn’t have the organizational infrastructure in place to close the chasm between

where they are and where they need to be.”

The report joined a growing list of findings and investigations — conducted internally and outside the military — that have found the military must do more when it comes to prevention and accountability of sexual assault and harassment. While some changes are underway, major overhauls, including those that require action from Congress, remain ongoing and up for debate.

“It seems, especially with everything that has been brought up over the past year, the public is finally getting somewhat of an insight into the sexual assault problem within our military, since the tragic death of Spc. Vanessa Guillen,” said Navy veteran Kaitlynn Hetrick, an associate of government affairs for the veterans group Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of Amer-

ica. “It seems as though they’ve definitely made improvements, but there is a lot to be done.”

Among the Rand authors’ key findings, they said, “Without bold action, sexual assault and sexual harassment will continue to have negative consequences for the military.”

Last month, Rand released an Army-focused report that called out specific factors that put soldiers at higher risk of becoming a victim of sexual assault and harassment, such as their job, duty station or unit assignment. Monday’s report recommended the military conduct further research on those units with unusually high- or low-documented cases of sexual assault and harassment, while also looking into new prevention approaches that target command climate and the unique risks faced by LGBTQ troops.

Afghan president slams Taliban; rockets hit Kabul

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — At least three rockets hit near the presidential palace on Tuesday shortly before Afghan President Ashraf Ghani was to give an address to mark the major Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha.

There were no injuries and the rockets landed outside the heavily fortified palace grounds, said Mirwais Stanikzai, spokesman for the interior minister.

Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack on its Amaq news channel.

Police quickly fanned out across the area. One car parked on a nearby street was destroyed; the police said it was used as launching pad for the rockets.

The palace is fortified with giant cement blast walls and barbed wire, and streets near the palace have long been closed off.

The barrage came as the United States and NATO complete their final withdrawal from Afghanistan. Many Afghans are worried whether their war-ravaged country

will fall deeper into chaos and violence as foreign forces withdraw and the Taliban gain more territory on the ground, having captured several districts and key border crossings with neighboring countries over the past weeks.

“This Eid has been named after Afghan forces to honor their sacrifices and courage, especially in the last three months,” Ghani said in his address to the nation following morning prayers for Eid al-Adha, or the “Feast of Sacrifice.”

“The Taliban have no intention and willingness for peace” Ghani said. “We have proven that we have the intention, the willingness and have sacrificed for peace.”

Afghan forces, however, have complained about being left without reinforcements and supplies, often running low on food as the Taliban advanced. In many instances, Afghan troops surrendered rather than fight. Washington’s watchdog monitoring U.S. spending in Afghanistan reported that troops are deeply demoralized and cor-

ruption is rampant. After their pullout, the U.S. and NATO are committed to spending \$4 billion annually on Afghan forces until 2024, the majority of that money coming from Washington.

Ghani said he deplored his government’s decision to release 5,000 Taliban prisoners to get peace talks started last year as a “big mistake” that only strengthened the insurgents.

Yet Ghani has released other prisoners, including several sought by warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, with whom he signed a peace deal in 2017. Among those freed at Hekmatyar’s request was Abdul Basir Salangi, who killed two U.S. military personnel in 2011 in Kabul.

Meanwhile, Abdullah Abdullah, the No. 2 official in the government, was inside the palace during the rocket attack on Tuesday, having returned on Monday from peace talks with the Taliban in Qatar. Those inside the palace, however, were far removed from where the rockets landed.

Mask mandates — and controversy — return

The Washington Post

Two months after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said vaccinated people didn't need to wear masks in most settings, a growing number of experts are warning it's time to put them back on.

First, there was Los Angeles County, where the rising menace posed by the delta variant of the coronavirus prompted health officials to reimpose a mask mandate. Then, Bay Area health officers on Friday recommended that residents of seven counties and the city of Berkeley, Calif., resume wearing masks indoors. Mask mandates are being discussed, too, in coronavirus hot spots such as Arkansas and Missouri, where cases have sharply increased in recent weeks and many residents remain unvaccinated.

"Universal masking indoors is a way of taking care of each other while we get more people vaccinated," said Barbara Ferrer, director of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, which last week

moved to reinstate an indoor mask mandate. "It really doesn't disrupt any business practices. It allows us to remain fully open — while we acknowledge that the delta variant [is] spreading like wildfire here."

And the nation's current and former surgeon generals warned the nation should brace for a broader return to mask-wearing.

"We need to prepare the public for what could be, again, a return to some of these mitigation measures," former surgeon general Jerome Adams told Indianapolis TV station WISH-TV on Sunday, highlighting a resurgence of the virus across the Midwest. Adams, an appointee of former president Donald Trump, called on the CDC to "hit the reset button" and once again recommend widespread mask-wearing as coronavirus cases spike.

But the growing calls to reinstate mask mandates — echoed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, which on Monday called for everyone over the age of 2 to wear masks,

regardless of vaccination status — renewed a cultural and health flashpoint a year and a half after the virus landed in the United States.

"We need to be reopening our state, not reimposing unnecessary restrictions," Kevin Faulconer, the Republican former San Diego mayor now running for California governor, wrote on Twitter last week.

"In a free county, people will evaluate their personal risk factors and are smart enough to ultimately make medical decisions like wearing a mask themselves," Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., said in a statement last week, introducing legislation that would ban mask mandates on planes and public transportation.

The daily average of confirmed U.S. coronavirus cases has risen in the past month, from 11,855 on June 19 to more than 34,000 on Monday, according to The Washington Post's seven-day average of coronavirus cases.

Bezos group reaches space in New Shepard rocket

Associated Press

VAN HORN, Texas — Jeff Bezos blasted into space Tuesday on his rocket company's first flight with people on board, becoming the second billionaire in just over a week to ride his own spacecraft.

The Amazon founder was accompanied by a hand-picked group: his brother, an 18-year-old from the Netherlands and an 82-year-old aviation pioneer from Texas — the youngest and oldest to ever fly in space.

"Best day ever," Bezos said after the capsule touched down on the desert floor at the end of the 10-minute flight.

Named after America's first astronaut, Blue Origin's New Shepard rocket soared

from remote West Texas on the 52nd anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing, a date chosen by Bezos for its historical significance. He held fast to it, even as Virgin Galactic's Richard Branson pushed up his own flight from New Mexico in the race for space tourist dollars and beat him to space by nine days.

Unlike Branson's piloted rocket plane, Bezos' capsule was completely automated and required no official staff on board for the up-and-down flight.

Blue Origin reached an altitude of about 66 miles, more than 10 miles higher than Branson's July 11 ride. The 60-foot booster accelerated to Mach 3 or three times the

speed of sound to get the capsule high enough, before separating and landing upright.

The passengers had several minutes of weightlessness to float around the spacious white capsule. The window-filled capsule landed under parachutes, with Bezos and his guests briefly experiencing nearly six times the force of gravity, or 6 G's, on the way back.

Sharing Bezos' dream-come-true adventure was Wally Funk, from the Dallas area, one of 13 female pilots who went through the same tests as NASA's all-male astronaut corps in the early 1960s but never made it into space.

India's coronavirus death toll could be in the millions

Associated Press

NEW DELHI — India's excess deaths during the pandemic could be a staggering 10 times the official COVID-19 toll, likely making it one of India's worst human tragedies, according to the most comprehensive research yet on the ravages of the virus in the South Asian country.

Most experts believe India's official toll of more than 414,000 dead is a vast undercount, but the government has dismissed

those concerns as exaggerated and misleading.

The report released Tuesday estimated excess deaths — the gap between those recorded and those that would have been expected — to be 3 million to 4.7 million between January 2020 and June 2021. It said an accurate figure may "prove elusive" but the true death toll "is likely to be an order of magnitude greater than the official count."

The report was published by Arvind Subramanian, the Indian government's former chief economic adviser, and two other researchers at the Center for Global Development, a nonprofit think tank based in Washington, and Harvard University.

It said the count could have missed deaths that occurred in overwhelmed hospitals or while health care was disrupted, particularly during the devastating virus surge earlier this year.

Negotiations intense on key spending bills

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden said his infrastructure and families agenda must be passed to sustain the economic momentum of his first six months in office, aiming to set the tone for a crucial week of congressional negotiations on the two bills.

But a Wednesday deadline set by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer on the bipartisan infrastructure bill was in doubt as Republicans signaled they would block a procedural vote, for now, while details are still being worked out. Senators are wrangling over how to pay for the new spending in the \$1 trillion package of highway, water system and other public works projects.

At the same time, Democrats are developing the particulars of a separate bill that would invest a stunning \$3.5 trillion nationwide across Americans' lives — with support for families, education, climate resiliency and other pri-

orities that they aim to ultimately pass with solely Democratic support. Democrats hope to show progress on that bill before lawmakers leave Washington for their recess in August.

The legislative maneuvering marks a major test of Biden's ability to deliver on a massive package of economic promises and reforms he made during his campaign. He's been putting public pressure on lawmakers with a series of speeches highlighting the strengthening economy amid the coronavirus pandemic while emphasizing the need for further investment to continue that growth and to bolster the middle class. Biden's top aides met with senators late Monday.

"What the best companies do — and what we as a country should do — is make smart, sustainable investments with appropriate financing," the president said Monday at the White House.

Calling his plans a "blue-collar

blueprint for building an American economy back," Biden said, "This is the best strategy to create millions of jobs and lift up middle class families, grow wages and keep prices affordable for the long term."

The economy has come back to life as more Americans have gotten vaccinated and Biden's earlier \$1.9 trillion relief package has coursed through the country. Employers have added an average of nearly 543,000 jobs a month since January, with Federal Reserve officials anticipating overall economic growth of roughly 7% this year that would be the highest since 1984. Yet there is also uncertainty as employers say they're struggling to find workers at the current pay levels and inflation concerns have yet to fully abate.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell decried the "spending spree" as "the last thing American families need."

McConnell and outside groups, including the conservative Americans for Prosperity, encouraged Republicans to vote against proceeding to the bipartisan package until they have more details.

"I think we need to see the bill before we decide whether or not to vote for it," McConnell told reporters at the Capitol.

The president is pushing for more than \$4 trillion in combined spending with the hopes of prolonging solid economic gains. Biden's \$3.5 trillion package focused on climate, schools and families will need support from all 50 Senate Democrats to clear a party line vote.

But the \$973 billion infrastructure deal Biden struck with a group of Republican and Democratic senators lacks a clear plan for how to pay for it, as GOP lawmakers have backed away from tax compliance enforcement by the IRS.

Twitter timeout for Greene for her coronavirus tweets

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Twitter is giving Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene a 12-hour timeout, saying some of her tweets violated the social media site's policy against misinformation regarding the coronavirus pandemic.

Twitter suspended the Republican from Georgia late Monday after President Joe Biden urged tech companies to take stronger action against bogus claims about vaccines that are "killing people." Twitter has defended its efforts to keep dangerous misinformation about COVID-19 off its site, saying it has removed thousands of tweets and challenged millions of accounts worldwide.

Greene appears to have been disciplined under the "strike" system Twitter launched in March, using a combination of artificial intelligence and ma-

chine learning to identify content about the coronavirus that is misleading enough to cause harm to people. Two or three strikes earn a 12-hour account lock, four strikes prompt a weeklong suspension and five or more strikes can get someone permanently removed from Twitter.

"We took enforcement action on the account @mtgreene for violations of the Twitter Rules, specifically the COVID-19 misleading information policy," the company said in an email.

One of Greene's latest tweets claimed that the virus "is not dangerous for non-obese people and those under 65." According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, people under 65 account for nearly 250,000 of the U.S. deaths involving COVID-19.

House minority leader taps 5 from GOP for Jan. 6 panel

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy has picked five Republicans to sit on the new select committee to investigate the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol, signaling that Republicans will participate in the investigation that they have staunchly opposed.

McCarthy said Monday that he has selected Indiana Rep. Jim Banks, who recently visited former President Donald Trump on trips to the U.S.-Mexico border and Trump's New Jersey golf club, to be the top Republican on the panel. The Republican leader also tapped Ohio Rep. Jim Jordan, Illinois Rep. Rodney Davis, North Dakota Rep. Kelly Armstrong and Texas Rep. Troy Nehls to serve on the committee.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi must approve the names before they are final, per committee

rules. An aide to Pelosi said she has received notification from McCarthy, but it is unclear when or if she will approve the GOP members. The aide was granted anonymity to discuss the Republican picks ahead of an official announcement.

The five Republican men selected by McCarthy have all backed Trump, whose supporters laid siege to the Capitol building on Jan. 6 and interrupted the certification of President Joe Biden's victory.

Banks made clear in a statement Monday that he would take a politically combative approach to his leadership on the panel, criticizing the Democrats who had set it up.

"Make no mistake, Nancy Pelosi created this committee solely to malign conservatives and to justify the Left's authoritarian agenda," Banks said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man bikes over 2,000 miles for birthday party

ND TOWNER — A California man rode his bike to North Dakota to celebrate his mother-in-law's 90th birthday.

Brian Gonsalves, who lives in the San Diego area, isn't new to long-distance bike rides. The X-ray technician rode to Georgia in 2018, a trip totaling 2,709 miles.

With his wife, Dorreen Drader-Gonsalves, providing his mobile support, he started the 2,143-mile trip from California on June 18 and made it to the International Peace Garden at the Canadian border on July 11. From there, they drove the 65 miles to Towner for Beverly Lynch's birthday party, the Minot Daily News reported.

Candle thief used bear mace on mall patrons

FL MIAMI — A Florida man stole candles from a mall store and sprayed dozens of patrons with bear mace repellent before escaping, police said.

The theft happened at a Bath and Body Works store in a mall in the Doral suburb west of Miami, investigators said. The unidentified suspect entered the store, filled a bag with candles and then started spraying people with mace.

The man believed responsible got away in a cab.

State's largest city running short on liquor

NC CHARLOTTE — Restaurants and bars in North Carolina's largest

city are scrambling to find popular brands of alcohol that have been depleted by supply chain issues and worker shortages.

During a recent meeting of the N.C. Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission, chairman Zander Guy Jr. began by addressing the liquor shortage, which is being felt statewide, The Charlotte Observer reported.

The ABC commission is in contact with suppliers to ensure products are in stock and help local ABC boards find solutions to product issues, said commission spokesman Jeff Strickland.

American returns from Nigeria with monkeypox

TX DALLAS — A Dallas resident has been hospitalized in stable condition under isolation after returning from Nigeria with the first-ever Texas case of monkeypox, health officials revealed.

In a statement, federal and state health officials said the traveler arrived at Dallas Love Field from Atlanta after an overnight flight from Nigeria.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the risk to others on the flights and in the airport is low, especially in light of COVID-19-related masking policies. Efforts are underway, however, to contact his fellow passengers.

Monkeypox is a rare viral pox-like disease from the smallpox family, only milder.

Firefighters rescue dog trapped between walls

OH CINCINNATI — A dog in Ohio who had been missing for five days is

back home after it was found trapped between two concrete walls in a nearby home's garage and freed by firefighters using a saw and a sledgehammer.

The homeowner called the Cincinnati Fire Department after hearing the dog's cries.

Firefighters discovered Gertie had fallen down a crevice and was trapped between the walls. The dog had escaped from its home and its owners had put up missing posters around the neighborhood.

A video posted on Facebook showed firefighters using the tools to create an opening in the wall to pull Gertie to safety after about 10 minutes. The dog wagged its tail after being rescued.

Airport chase ends in Coast Guard plane

FL CLEARWATER — A Florida man crashed a stolen car through an airport fence and managed to get into a Coast Guard airplane's cockpit before he was arrested, investigators said.

The suspect was identified by the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office as Herrera Hamilton Moreno, 36, who was jailed with bond set at \$24,150.

According to the sheriff's department, deputies at St. Pete-Clearwater International Airport began pursuing a vehicle driving near parked commercial airliners.

The chase continued as the vehicle headed toward the airport's Coast Guard station. The suspect got out on foot, went into a Coast Guard C-130 aircraft and made it to the cockpit, where he was arrested, the sheriff's office said.

Wildlife officials killed bear that mauled woman

MT HELENA — DNA results received confirmed a grizzly bear shot and killed by federal wildlife officers in Montana was the same one that pulled a California woman from her tent and killed her, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks officials said.

The DNA samples from the bear match a saliva sample from the scene of the attack in the western Montana town of Ovando as well as samples obtained from two chicken coops that were raided, said FWP spokesperson Greg Lemon.

The bear killed Leah Davis Lokan, 65, of Chico, Calif., at a campsite near the post office. She was participating in a much-anticipated trip along a long-distance bike route that traces the Continental Divide.

Pharmacist gave fake vaccine cards, no shots

UT SALT LAKE CITY — A Utah pharmacist was stripped of his license and fined after admitting he gave people COVID-19 vaccination cards, but not the vaccine.

In one case, surveillance video showed him taking a vial of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine from a refrigerator, recording the manufacturer's lot number on the vaccine card and giving the card to the patient — but he did not prepare a syringe or administer the vaccine.

He told investigators he had done the same with a "handful of others ... maybe five" when he believed they were apprehensive about the vaccine.

— From wire reports

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US women's soccer team shuts out noise

Associated Press

TOKYO — The U.S. women's national soccer team is in a bubble of its own making for the Tokyo Olympics, and it's not just because of coronavirus restrictions.

The World Cup champions have become adept at shutting out all the outside noise — the seemingly endless social media debates, the TV punditry and even the trash talk that comes with being the best in the world.

"I think, especially the players that have been through these major tournaments, you figure out how to stay in the best mental headspace and sometimes that's compartmentalizing, that's focusing on one thing at a time and trying not to let the noise get into what we like to call the bubble," defender Becky Sauerbrunn said. "So, like, secure the bubble, protect the bubble."

The women's Olympic soccer tournament starts on Wednesday. The United States, the top-ranked team in the world and the favorite to win, opens

against Sweden at Tokyo Stadium.

The Americans are vying for their fifth gold medal, more than any other national team. They can also become the first women to win an Olympic gold following a World Cup title.

There's reason to believe they'll do just that. The group is undefeated in 44 straight games, the second-longest unbeaten streak in team history. It's a deep squad with a formidable attack: Seventeen of the players were on the World Cup squad.

Christen Press has scored 63 goals in 149 matches with the national team, and has 42 assists. Megan Rapinoe, the unabashedly outspoken winger with purple hair, leads the team with seven goals this year.

Quietly holding down the defense is goalkeeper Alyssa Naeyer, who has six shutouts in nine starts this year.

Naeyer is perhaps the leader on the team when it comes to shutting out the noise. She eschewed all social media during the team's run in France two

years ago, and often worked on crossword puzzles before matches to chill out before games.

"Everything's all about compartmentalizing," the softspoken Naeyer said.

Of course, it will likely be a bit easier to stay focused at this tournament. Japan is in a state of emergency because of rising coronavirus cases. As a result, the athletes participating will be in their own team or individual bubbles with strict COVID-19 protocols. And no fans will be allowed.

"It's not the best setup in terms of being able to go for a walk or just get outside, go grab a coffee that sort of thing. That's not available to us," defender Kelley O'Hara said. "But at the end of the day, we've all been doing it for a month now with national team, so it's the reality of the tournament, of the situation, of the Olympics this year. You just kind of take it in stride and make do with what you can."

The United States had a pre-tournament camp in Miyazaki

before arriving in Tokyo on Friday in preparation for Sweden, the team that knocked the Americans out of the 2016 Olympics in the quarterfinals.

Australia plays New Zealand in the second match of the night at Tokyo Stadium.

Twelve women's teams are divided into three groups for the tournament, which is being played at six stadiums across the country.

There are a pair of Wednesday matches at the Sapporo Dome: Britain plays Chile and host Japan plays Canada. Additionally, China plays Brazil and Zambia plays the Netherlands at Miyagi Stadium.

As captain of the United States, Sauerbrunn is tasked with keeping her side focused.

"It's a skill that I think everyone needs to learn, especially in these major tournaments, because they're not easy," Sauerbrunn said about compartmentalizing. "There's a lot of stress, there's a lot of noise and so learning to knock that out, block that out, is really important."

Olympics finally opening, a year later and far from Tokyo

Associated Press

FUKUSHIMA, Japan — Skippy the yellow kangaroo with green paws was affixed to the first base dugout railing, watching the Australia Spirit become the first team to work out at Fukushima Azuma Baseball Stadium, seven weeks after they became the first foreign athletes to arrive at the Olympics.

Coach Laing Harrow hit grounders and flies to his women starting at 9 a.m. Tuesday, exactly 24 hours before the eighth-ranked Aussies step to the plate when host Japan, the No. 2-ranked softball team, throws the very first pitch of the very first event of the pandemic-delayed Olympics.

The Games of the 32nd Olympiad were to have started last July 22 but were pushed back by the coronavirus pandemic. Despite many in Japan questioning whether it is wise with the virus still raging in the country, the International Olympic Committee is pushing ahead.

This ballpark, located about 150 miles north of Tokyo and similar to a big league spring training camp, has only several handfuls of the 11,000 athletes who are converging on the Tokyo Games. The stadium, 42 miles northwest of the location of the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, will host the first two days of the softball tournament and the opening day of the baseball event on July 28, with the remainder at the home of the Central League's Yokohama DeNA BayStars, a big ballpark 17 miles from the capital.

In their bright yellow jerseys, the Aussies were excited to be about to get underway.

"It was disappointing for the girls, obviously, being postponed for a year," Harrow said. "Some of them would have had plans from after August 2020. And, sure, it wasn't in their plans to continue to be in the gym every day and training every day. But overall, the girls have really handled that well. And I think one thing we're very good at is being

adaptable."

The top-ranked United States, seeking to regain the gold medal it lost when it was upset by Japan 3-1 in the 2008 final in Beijing, opens against No. 9 Italy in the second game of a tripleheader that ends with No. 5 Mexico against third-ranked Canada.

Host Japan took batting practice next on a broiling day with 95-degree heat and high humidity, followed by Italy, the United States, Mexico and Canada.

A 15-woman U.S. roster includes a pair of veterans: 38-year-old left-hander Cat Osterman, the last holdover from the 2004 gold medal-winning team, and 35-year-old left-hander Monica Abbott, who joined Osterman on the 2008 team.

Outfielder Janie Reed is the wife of Los Angeles Dodgers right-hander Jake Reed, who made his big league debut July 6, had six appearances and was optioned Monday to Triple-A Oklahoma City.

Posey returns, lifts Giants past Dodgers

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Buster Posey picked up right where he left off.

The star catcher hit a two-run homer his first time up Monday night after missing two weeks with a bruised left thumb, and the San Francisco Giants defeated the Los Angeles Dodgers 7-2 in the opener of a pivotal four-game series between the NL West rivals.

"I was wondering how that first at-bat was going to go after the long layoff. In Buster's case, he is so important to this team, and having his presence behind the plate sometimes could even mitigate some potential rust at the plate," Giants manager Gabe Kapler said. "To see him come out, step up to the plate and hit a big home run for us was incredibly impressive. I thought he had great at-bats throughout the night."

With the win, San Francisco expanded its lead to two games over the defending World Series champion Dodgers. The Giants have been in first place since May 31.

Posey and Wilmer Flores hit back-to-back homers in the first inning to give the team a 3-0 lead. Los Angeles countered in the bottom half with solo shots by Max Muncy and Justin Turner.

It remained 3-2 until the seventh, when San Francisco broke it open with four runs. Thairo Estrada — taking over at shortstop after All-Star Brandon Crawford was placed on the injured list due to a strained oblique — had the key hit with a two-run double.

The Giants' bullpen also came up huge by allowing one hit and one walk in six innings after Kevin Gausman pitched a season-low three innings. The All-Star right-hander —

second in the majors with a 1.84 ERA — was activated from the Family Medical Emergency list after he missed the weekend series in St. Louis after his wife Taylor was hospitalized due to pregnancy complications. "They really picked me up right there. To come in and shut down that lineup, especially the way they were swinging it, was impressive," Gausman said about the San Francisco bullpen. "That was the reason why we won the game."

Jarlin García (2-2), the second of five Giants relievers, got the win. San Francisco's bullpen retired 11 straight Dodgers batters until AJ Pollock led off the ninth with a single.

"When you get to the 'pen' you've got to kind of go for the jugular and those guys kept us at bay tonight," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said.

Renfroe's slam leads 6 HRs, Red Sox rout Blue Jays

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Hunter Renfroe hit a grand slam, Kiké Hernández drove in three runs with two homers and the Boston Red Sox snapped a two-game losing streak with a 13-4 win over the Toronto Blue Jays on Monday night.

Rookie Jarren Duran hit his first major league homer, Dylan Santana and Rafael Devers also went yard, and J.D. Martinez broke out of a slump with four hits as the Red Sox improved their AL-leading road record to 29-19.

Boston starter Nick Pivetta (8-4) allowed four runs on 11 hits and two walks while recording four strikeouts in 6 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings.

The Blue Jays used eight pitchers and had their five-game winning streak halted.

Toronto starter Ross Stripling gave up six runs on four hits and two walks while getting only one out in his first appearance this season that didn't extend into at least the fourth inning.

Cavan Biggio homered for the Blue Jays during a four-run rally in the fourth inning. Teoscar Hernández, Randal Grichuk and Bo Bichette also drove in runs.

Mets 15, Reds 11 (11): Jeff McNeil hit a tiebreaking single in the 11th inning, Kevin Pillar added a three-run homer and New York went deep seven times in a win at Cincinnati.

Michael Conforto connected twice, including a solo shot that capped a five-run outburst in the 11th as the Mets handed the Reds their fourth straight loss to open the second half.

Orioles 6, Rays 1: Rookie right-hander Spencer Watkins gave up one run in six innings as visiting Baltimore tied a season high with its third consecutive win.

The 28-year old Watkins (2-0) scattered four hits, walked two and struck out seven.

Cardinals 8, Cubs 3: Dylan Carlson homered and drove in four runs, Jake Woodford pitched 5 $\frac{1}{3}$ strong innings in his first start of the season, and host St. Louis beat Chicago.

Woodford (2-1) struck out six and didn't allow a walk. He also pitched out of a bases-loaded, no-out jam in the fifth. John Gant pitched the final 2 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings of relief as the Cardinals ran their winning streak to three games.

Twins 3-3, White Sox 2-5:

Rookie Gavin Sheets hit a game-ending three-run homer in the bottom of the seventh, giving host Chicago a split in a doubleheader with Minnesota.

The Twins won the opener in eight innings, but the White Sox avoided a sweep when Sheets turned on a 3-1 fastball from Twins ace José Berrios and drove it deep to right for his fifth home run. Berrios (7-4) entered the seventh having allowed only two hits — solo shots by José Abreu and Yoán Moncada — before Brian Goodwin led off with a single and Berrios hit Andrew Vaughn with a pitch.

A wild pitch moved the runners up, then Sheets connected to win the game for Chicago.

Athletics 4, Angels 1: Ramón Laureano hit a three-run homer in the seventh inning as host Oakland got on the board, once Shohei Ohtani left the mound, and beat Los Angeles.

Laureano connected against Steve Cishek (0-1) after Ohtani left following six scoreless innings and eight strikeouts.

Astros 4, Indians 3: Yordan Alvarez snapped an 0-for-22 slump with a two-run homer, helping Houston beat visiting

Cleveland.

The Astros were up by 1 with one out in the fifth inning when Alvarez connected off rookie J.C. Mejía (1-5).

Tigers 14, Rangers 0: Miguel Cabrera drove in five runs, including a bases-loaded double in a four-run fifth inning, and host Detroit blanked Texas.

The Rangers have lost six straight, the last three by a combined score of 29-0.

Nationals 18, Marlins 1: Jon Lester pitched seven scoreless innings and homered, Juan Soto hit a pair of home runs and Washington routed visiting Miami.

Lester (3-4) allowed six hits while striking out seven without a walk. Lester hit his fourth career homer and added a single for his fourth career multi-hit game.

Diamondbacks 4, Pirates 2: Caleb Smith pitched 6 $\frac{2}{3}$ stellar innings, Eduardo Escobar hit a two-run homer for the second straight game and Arizona won at Pittsburgh.

Smith (3-6) gave up two runs on six hits and two walks while striking out seven. Joakim Soria pitched a scoreless ninth for his fifth save.

Bucks focus on game, not winning title

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — High atop the outside of Fiserv Forum — way above even a leaping Giannis Antetokounmpo's reach — blares the Bucks' postseason motto.

"HISTORY IN THE MAKING" it reads, a sign and a situation that's now impossible to ignore.

And yet, that's exactly what the Bucks are trying to do.

They can indeed make history Tuesday night as Milwaukee's first NBA champion since 1971. But the Bucks have to resist thinking about what happens if they beat the Phoenix Suns in Game 6.

"It's hard, because you work

so hard to be in that moment, which is tomorrow," Antetokounmpo said Monday. "It's hard not to get ahead of yourself. But this is the time that you've got to be the most disciplined."

Milwaukee has won the last three games to set up a potential party 50 years in the making.

Around 17,000 fans are expected inside the arena and the Bucks announced Monday that the Deer District has been expanded to allow up to 65,000 fans to stand shoulder-to-shoulder outside. Barricades line the sidewalks around the arena and restaurants within walking distance were contemplating how to get employees into and back

home from work through the anticipated crowds.

It's a scene that couldn't have happened for much of this season that has been played during the coronavirus pandemic. The team only began permitting a limited number of fans at games in February, nearly two months after the season began. Even when postseason play started in May, capacity was capped at 9,100, a little above 50%.

Whatever the number is Tuesday, it will sound a whole lot louder if Milwaukee is lifting the Larry O'Brien Trophy.

"But we got to focus, we got to do our job," Antetokounmpo said. "Then they can do their

job celebrating at the end. But we got to do our job first."

The Suns are excited, too.

That's how Chris Paul said they feel, despite blowing a 2-0 lead and facing elimination for the first time in this postseason.

"Something that Coach and everybody has been saying: If you went to the beginning of the season and said we had a chance to be where we are right now, would you take it? Absolutely," Paul said. "And we get a chance to determine the outcome. It's not like the game is going to be simulated or somebody else's got to play. We get a chance. We control our own destiny. So I think that's the exciting part about it."

Short-handed US basketball roster makes trek to Tokyo

Associated Press

The U.S. Olympic men's basketball team has been together for two weeks. There have been six practices. The team played four exhibitions. A pair of roster changes have already been required and the Americans have no idea when three other players will join the team.

That's probably not the formula for Olympic success, but ready or not, Tokyo awaits.

"It's a little bit different," U.S. coach Gregg Popovich said.

No, it's a lot different. Unprecedented, really, just like almost everything else about these Tokyo Olympics that start on Friday. The U.S. — the three-time defending men's basketball gold medalist — left Las Vegas on Monday for the trip to Japan, where it'll commence final preparations for the start of the Tokyo Games.

The plan is to have four more practices in Japan before opening Olympic play against France on July 25. The Americans have 12 names on the roster; only nine will be with the team for the trip to Japan because the other three — Khristian

Middleton, Jrue Holiday and Devin Booker — are still playing in the NBA Finals.

"I think all of us are better for the adversity we go through, because you either handle it or you don't," Popovich said. "You figure it out. And these guys have had to do that. They've kept their heads up. There might be a disappointment here or there, or an event that takes place, but they move on. And that's what life's all about. So, this is no different."

The adversity has come in bunches for the Americans. During their two-week stay in Las Vegas:

■ Bradley Beal was forced to leave the team for virus-related reasons and Kevin Love backed out because of an injury.

■ Jerami Grant was briefly in the health and safety protocols related to the virus and missed a few days.

■ Keldon Johnson was promoted from the Select Team (the players brought to Las Vegas so they could practice against the Olympians) to replace Beal, and JaVale McGee was added to the roster to re-

place Love. McGee was with the team for Sunday's exhibition finale against Spain but did not play, meaning his first action with this team will be during actual Olympic competition.

■ Oh, and the Americans lost to Nigeria and Australia, had to cancel the rematch against the Australians, and for a brief while had only six of the 12 Olympic team members available in camp.

"We still won't have those other three, but at this point, that's not going to change," Popovich said. "We just have to persevere and find ways to keep them in shape even though we're not going to be able to execute too much very well. So, we're going to have to figure out common denominators for this exact group. Less is more, so to speak. Inventing the wheel would be the worst thing we can do for this group."

Middleton, Holiday and Booker were expected to play Tuesday night in Game 6 of the NBA Finals. If Milwaukee wins that game — the Bucks, with Middleton and Holiday, lead Booker and the Phoenix Suns 3-2 in that series — they would

win the NBA title. That would also mean the trio could be in Japan by the weekend, giving time to join the Americans for at least one practice in advance of the game against France.

If Phoenix forces Game 7, it would be Thursday night, the day before the opening ceremony in Tokyo, three days before the U.S.-France game. A grueling playoff run is daunting enough on players; a grueling playoff run followed by a flight halfway around the world is not the recipe for fresh legs, so it's anyone's guess how effective Middleton, Holiday and Booker will be when they get to Japan.

Popovich doesn't know what to expect.

"I have no idea. You know, I'm not trying to be glib. I'm just totally transparent," Popovich said. "We've thought about, 'Are they going to have jet lag? Is it going to be like two days later after they land and they'll be OK?' ... In some ways, it might depend on if everybody else is healthy. If they're not, they've got to play. So, we've gone over lots of scenarios. We haven't figured it out yet, that's for sure."