

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Protests shift to memorials for Floyd

Associated Press

ATLANTA — The tenor of the protests set off by the death of George Floyd at the hands of police has taken a turn from the explosive anger that has fueled the setting of fires, breaking of windows and other violence to a quiet, yet more forceful, grassroots call for more to be done to address racial injustice.

Many of the protests were more subdued for a second night as marches Thursday turned into memorials for Floyd, who was the focus of a heartfelt tribute Thursday in Minneapolis that drew family members, celebrities, politicians and civil rights advocates. At his service, strong calls were made for meaningful changes in policing and the criminal justice system.

At demonstration sites around the country, protesters said the quieter mood is the result of several factors: the new and upgraded criminal

charges against the police officers involved in Floyd's arrest; a more conciliatory approach by police who have marched with them or taken a knee to recognize their message; and the realization that the burst of rage after Floyd's death is not sustainable.

"Personally, I think you can't riot every day for almost a week," said Costa Smith, 26, who was protesting in downtown Atlanta.

Despite the shift in tone, protesters have shown no sign that they are going away and, if anything, are emboldened to stay on the streets to push for police reforms.

In New York City, Miguel Fernandes said there were "a lot more nights to go" of marching because protesters hadn't got what they wanted. And Floyd's brother Terrence appeared in Brooklyn to carry on the fight for change, declaring "power to the people, all of us."

At the first in a series of me-

morials for Floyd, The Rev. Al Sharpton urged those gathered Thursday "to stand up in George's name and say, 'Get your knee off our necks!'" Those at the Minneapolis tribute stood in silence for 8 minutes, 46 seconds.

Floyd's golden casket was covered in red roses, and an image was projected above the pulpit of a mural of Floyd painted at the street corner where he was arrested by police on suspicion of passing a counterfeit \$20 bill at a convenience store. The message on the mural: "I can breathe now."

Sharpton vowed that this will become a movement to "change the whole system of justice."

As the protests have taken root over the past week, they have become communities unto themselves.

In New York, where residents have been stuck at home for nearly three months because of the coronavirus pandemic, residents who can't go to a res-

taurant are happy to be able to go to a protest. People bring their dogs and share snacks and water bottles. They have been heartened by police who have joined them.

"It's great to be alive, it's history right now," said protester Kenyata Taylor.

In Atlanta, protester Nate Saint carried a sign that encouraged people to vote. He attributed the reduction in violence in part to the police.

"Cops are recognizing that the more passive they become, the more receptive, the more they listen, the less the protesters are going to react," he said.

A group of protesters stood near a line of police and National Guard troops. Some cursed officers. Others were seen talking to the officers. It was a different scene from last Friday when the city experienced widespread vandalism and looting following a peaceful demonstration.

## Unemployment drops yet remains high amid reopening

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. unemployment rate fell unexpectedly in May to 13.3% — still on par with what the nation witnessed during the Great Depression — as states loosened their coronavirus lockdowns and businesses began recalling workers.

The government said Friday that the economy added 2.5 million jobs last month, driving unemployment down from 14.7% in April.

The May job gain, which confounded economists' expectations of another round of severe losses, suggests that thousands of stores, restaurants, gyms and other companies reopened and rehired more quickly than many analysts had forecast.

Still, it raises a key question for busi-

nesses and unemployed workers: How fast will the rebound proceed? For hiring to continue at a solid pace, businesses will probably need to see signs that consumers are starting to resume their pre-outbreak habits of shopping and dining out.

Other evidence has also shown that the job-market meltdown triggered by the coronavirus has bottomed out. The number of people applying for unemployment benefits has declined for nine consecutive weeks. And the total number of Americans receiving such aid has essentially leveled off.

The overall job cuts have widened economic disparities: While the unemployment rate for white Americans was 12.4% May, it was 17.6% for Hispanics and 16.8% for African Americans.

Even with the surprising gain in May,

it could take months for all those who lost work in April and March to find jobs. Some economists forecast the rate could remain in double-digits through the November elections and into next year.

For weeks, economists had warned that unemployment in May could hit 20% or more.

The street protests over George Floyd's killing that led to vandalism and looting in dozens of cities did not affect Friday's figures, which were compiled in the middle of May. However, business closings related to the unrest could show up in the June report.

A few businesses are reporting signs of progress even in hard-hit industries. American Airlines, for example, said this week that it will fly 55% of its U.S. routes in July, up from just 20% in May.

# US conducts 1st Taliban strikes since cease-fire

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN  
*Stars and Stripes*

KABUL, Afghanistan — The U.S. conducted two airstrikes against the Taliban in Afghanistan this week as the insurgent group attacked Afghan security forces, a U.S. military spokesman said Friday.

The airstrikes were the first by the U.S. against the Taliban since the start of the Eid cease-fire at the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in late May, U.S. Forces—Afghanistan spokesman Col. Sonny Leggett said on Twitter.

A strike in western Farah province Thursday night targeted 25 Taliban fighters “executing a coordinated attack” on an Afghan checkpoint, Leggett said. The other strike in southern Kandahar province Friday afternoon also targeted insurgents attacking a checkpoint, he said.

Leggett said the strikes did not violate a peace deal signed between the U.S. and the Taliban in February.

The Taliban didn’t immediately com-

ment on the latest strikes but in April accused the U.S. of violating the Feb. 29 deal by conducting “brutal drone attacks and other bombings” against illegitimate targets.

U.S. officials had repeatedly called on the Taliban to curb their attacks in the nearly three months between the signing ceremony and the Eid truce.

Hopes that the three-day holiday armistice would last were short-lived. Afghanistan’s Tolo News reported Thursday that the Taliban had conducted an average of 30 attacks per day since the cease-fire ended May 27.

While the text of the deal doesn’t explicitly prohibit Taliban attacks against Afghan forces, Leggett said last month that the Taliban made a verbal agreement to reduce violence by 80%, which was not kept.

In late February, both sides observed a seven-day period of “reduction in violence,” but within a week of the peace deal being inked, the U.S. reported strikes on Taliban

forces attacking Afghan checkpoints.

Meanwhile, an initial drawdown from roughly 13,000 to 8,600 U.S. troops called for in the deal has proceeded and is scheduled to be completed by early next month.

Under the deal’s terms, the insurgents were to begin talks with the Kabul government in March, a condition for the total withdrawal of U.S. and other foreign forces. But those talks have been stymied by disagreements over a prisoner swap, rising violence and political infighting in Kabul.

While the Taliban have largely held off on attacking foreign troops since February, restraint Pentagon officials have said is likely meant to preserve the deal, it’s unclear how often U.S. aircraft have aided Afghan forces in that time.

Last month, U.S. Air Forces Central Command and the U.S.-led NATO mission in Afghanistan began withholding their separate monthly reports detailing U.S. airstrikes in the country, saying the data could hurt the peace process.

## Blue Angels receive 1st of 11 modified Super Hornets

BY JAMES BOLINGER  
*Stars and Stripes*

The world’s largest aircraft maker, reeling from evaporating demand for its planes during the coronavirus pandemic, nonetheless scored a morale-boosting lift this week.

Boeing delivered the first of a planned fleet of 11 modified F/A-18E Super Hornets to the Navy’s Blue Angels demonstration team on Wednesday, according to the company. The aircraft will undergo flight testing and evaluation at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Md., according to a press release on the company website.

“The Super Hornet is an iconic representation of excellence in naval aviation,” said Pat Walsh, a retired admiral and the vice president of U.S. Navy & Marine Corps services for Boeing, according to the release. Walsh flew with the Blue Angels from 1985 to 1987 as the left wingman and slot pilot.

The Blue Angels now fly the F/A-18 Hornet. The Super Hornet that the team is mov-

ing to has major modifications, including an oil tank for the smoke-generation system, fuel systems that enable the aircraft to fly inverted for extended periods of time, civilian-compatible navigation equipment, cameras and adjustments for the aircraft’s center of gravity.

Boeing plans to deliver the remaining Super Hornets this year.

The Super Hornet can fly at speeds up to Mach 1.6 (about 1,200 mph at sea level) and weighs 16 tons empty; each of its twin engines generates 17,000 pounds of thrust, according to a Boeing fact sheet.

The Blue Angels and their Air Force counterparts, the Thunderbirds, are recruiting tools for their respective services. The teams paired up in late April for a series of flyovers at cities across the United States hard-hit by the coronavirus. The flyovers were meant as a tribute to essential workers, first responders and health care workers in the front lines of the pandemic.

## Airman awarded Bronze Star for medical efforts in Syria

BY CHAD GARLAND  
*Stars and Stripes*

A special operations airman has been awarded a Bronze Star for his work on a battlefield surgical team during the fight against Islamic State, as the terrorists lost the last of their territory.

Over the course of a six-month deployment in early 2019, Staff Sgt. Johnathan Randall provided surgical care for 644 combat casualties, assisted in 16 damage control surgeries, 46 resuscitations and 70 advanced procedures “at the most forward point of combat operations,” the military said this week.

One moment that stood out was during a counterattack in an undisclosed location, where he and his special operations surgical team stabilized and evacuated 51 blast and gunshot wound casualties at a forward staging point, while under constant threat of small arms and mortar fire.

Randall was awarded the Bronze Star for meritorious

achievements May 20 in a small ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Fla. He described it as “humbling.”

The surgical technician is assigned to the 720th Operational Support Squadron and part of a team that falls under the 24th Special Operations Wing.

They performed surgeries in buildings and vehicles on the battlefield, the award citation said. Randall and the other team members, who couldn’t attend the ceremony due to coronavirus prevention measures, did “amazing work” in support of Operation Inherent Resolve, said Lt. Col. James Webb, Special Operations Surgical Team director of operations.

“Damage control resuscitation and surgery are challenging even in the most ideal situations, but to perform at such a high level in the most extreme environments, hours forward of the closest hospitals, is a testament to the mental and physical fortitude of him and his team,” Webb said in the statement.



# Former commandant speaks out on Floyd

By WYATT OLSON

*Stars and Stripes*

Former Marine Corps commandant Gen. Robert Neller on Thursday became the latest high-ranking retired U.S. military official to weigh in on the death of George Floyd, urging national leaders in an open letter to “speak out for justice and fairness.”

“The time for being silent has passed, at least for me,” Neller said in a post on LinkedIn.

“We know what happened in Minnesota to George Floyd was not right,” Neller said. “He deserved better. And his death like those of too many others needs to count for something. We are better than this.”

Neller’s lengthy post avoided criticism of President Donald Trump or any other top officials, unlike scathing letters this week by former Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and retired Adm. Mike Mullen, the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The 67-year-old Neller, who retired in July after four years as commandant, faced questions during his tenure about the presence of white nationalists among the Marine Corps ranks.

After service members, including Marines, participated in a march by white supremacists in Charlottesville, Va., in August 2017, Neller tweeted that the ideology at the center

of the event was contrary to the service’s core values.

In his post Thursday, Neller pondered the way forward from the protests and riots.

“Do we as white Americans just take comfort in our own view that ‘I am not a racist and I raised my children to judge people by the color of their heart and character and not the color of their skin, their religion or their sexual preference?’” he said. “I am sure that today this is not enough,” he said.

“We will hear many words about improving policing, on maintaining law and order, about being more empathetic to our fellow citizens,” he said. “Just as we have before. And I am not naïve enough to think

that these words will change something that is deeply rooted in our culture which started the day the first African slave was brought to what we know as America.”

Neller cajoled the nation’s political and cultural leaders to continue speaking out for justice and fairness.

“At the same time work to address the conditions of any group in the Country who is disadvantaged by any reason,” he said. “You cannot make everyone in the Country succeed but we must create opportunities for success not conditions for failure. Life is hard and all Americans expect to work hard ... but don’t make it harder than it is.”

## Sen. Cotton raises profile with defense of force

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Freshman Sen. Tom Cotton has risen to the ranks of potential 2024 Republican presidential contenders by making all the right enemies. By lining up behind President Donald Trump’s law-and-order recipe for controlling civic unrest, he’s making even more.

“One thing above all else will restore order to our streets: an overwhelming show of force to disperse, detain and ultimately deter lawbreakers,” the

43-year-old Arkansan wrote this week in a New York Times opinion column.

That infuriated Democrats and liberals, whom he swiped at by writing that protests rocking cities are “carnivals for the thrill-seeking rich as well as other criminal elements.”

Later Thursday, after the Times released a statement saying Cotton’s essay did not meet its standards, he accused it of “surrendering to the mindless woke mob.”

Cotton is known for tough stances on issues that thrill

Trump’s conservative supporters. He’s been a hard-liner on immigration, Iran and most recently China

A person close to him, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the lawmaker’s thinking, said Cotton would consider serving in the Cabinet for a second Trump term if he’s reelected in November, and running for president himself in 2024.

And with some protests over police killings of black men veering into violence in New York and elsewhere, Cot-

ton reprised his role as one of Trump’s chief defenders in Congress.

He disputed Defense Secretary Mark Esper’s comment that this week’s turbulence didn’t create an urgent need to use troops in cities, saying that was Trump’s call. And to former Defense Secretary Jim Mattis’ stunning assertion that Trump was dividing the country and violating the Constitution, Cotton said, “He’s wrong on this one.”

## SC guardsmen in DC hospitalized after lightning strike

By COREY DICKSTEIN

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Two South Carolina National Guard soldiers were hospitalized early Friday morning after lightning struck close to their position in Washington, D.C., where they were deployed this week in response to protests in the city, according to military and local officials.

The soldiers were trans-

ported by local emergency personnel just after midnight following the lightning strike at Lafayette Park, which is adjacent to the White House, the District of Columbia Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department said in a statement. The soldiers’ injuries were not life threatening.

Both soldiers were from the South Carolina Army National Guard, said Army Capt. Jessica Donnelly, a spokeswoman

for that state’s Guard. She said they were in stable condition Friday morning and would spend 24 hours in the hospital “for observation.”

South Carolina sent about 450 National Guard troops to Washington this week at the request of Defense Secretary Mark Esper after demonstrations in the national capital aimed at addressing police brutality and institutional racism in the United States grew

violent last weekend. In total, 10 states sent a total of 3,300 National Guard troops to Washington, where they are working with the nearly 1,300 D.C. National Guard troops under the command of Maj. Gen. William Walker.

The troops have been charged with aiding local and federal law enforcement officials responding to the protests

# Virus cases continue surging in Texas

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Reported coronavirus infections and hospitalizations continued to surge Thursday in Texas as Gov. Greg Abbott continues his phased reopening of the state's economic activity.

The Department of State Health Services said 1,649 more cases of COVID-19, the illness caused by the new coronavirus, were reported to the state Thursday. That brought the total number of reported cases to a few cases shy of 67,000.

The state reported 1,796 COVID-19 hospitalizations Thursday, a one-day increase of 309 and the third-highest Texas total of the outbreak. The 33 new COVID-19 deaths reported Thursday brought the Texas death toll for the outbreak to 1,767.

The actual number of positive cases is believed to be much higher because of testing shortages and because some people with the disease don't show symptoms.

Abbott's order for "Phase 3" of the restart Wednesday allowed retailers to accommodate 50% capacity immediately, and the same applies to bars as long as patrons are seated. Restaurants can serve groups as large as 10 and can expand to 75% total capacity starting June 12.

## Louisiana

BATON ROUGE — Nearly three months after they were closed because of the coronavirus, Louisiana's bars, spas and tattoo shops can begin restarting operations Friday, as the state continues to loosen its virus-related restrictions.

Gov. John Bel Edwards issued the latest restrictions Thursday, using the Phase 2 reopening guidance issued by the White House. The changes will allow retailers, restaurants, salons and churches to serve more customers and congregants at a time and will let other shuttered businesses reopen with limitations.

"I continue to be very proud

of the work the people of Louisiana and our health care heroes are doing to slow the spread of COVID-19 and getting us to the point where we can open more businesses and expand the occupancy of others this Friday," the Democratic governor said in a statement.

## Michigan

LANSING — State Schools Superintendent Michael Rice said the largest reduction in per-student funding under the current finance system came in 2011, at \$470. A \$1 billion cut to the school aid fund would result in \$685 less per pupil in the wake of pandemic lockdowns, he said.

"Yet the cut could be even greater and substantially greater and much more harmful," he told reporters.

Districts are facing a July 1 deadline to enact budgets for the coming academic year. The state likely will have to cut their payments without an additional federal relief bill or flexibility to use previously enacted federal aid to fill revenue holes.

## Montana

HELENA — Montana Gov. Steve Bullock announced additional pandemic relief funding for small businesses, meat processors and local governments on Thursday.

The state is adding \$25 million to a \$50 million grant fund to support small businesses recover from the economic downturn. Businesses could seek a maximum of \$10,000. The state has received applications for more than \$61 million and has paid out \$10.6 million.

Bullock also announced a \$2 million fund, with a maximum grant of \$150,000, to help local meat processors expand their processing and storage capacity and get more meat on grocery store shelves.

## North Carolina

RALEIGH — Gyms and fitness centers would get relief from North Carolina Gov. Roy

Cooper's COVID-19 executive order that keeps them closed in a bill approved unanimously on Thursday by a Senate committee.

The measure, which would allow the gyms and health clubs to reopen indoors at 50% capacity, is another effort by lawmakers to overturn Cooper's restrictions that have kept certain types of businesses shuttered during the pandemic. Social distancing for those working out on equipment and for classes, as well as extensive cleaning, also would be mandated under the legislation.

"We can take appropriate steps and still be safe in local areas and be responsible," Sen. Jim Perry, a Lenoir County Republican, said during the committee meeting.

## Nevada

RENO — Nevada's lawyers are stepping up their defense of Gov. Steve Sisolak's 50-person cap on religious gatherings in a legal battle with leaders of a rural church who say it violates their constitutional right to exercise their beliefs.

Attorney General Aaron Ford is urging a federal judge in Reno to deny an order sought by Calvary Chapel Dayton Valley to invalidate COVID-19 restrictions so up to 90 people can attend services at a time at the 200-capacity church.

A telephonic hearing is scheduled Tuesday on its new request for a temporary injunction suspending the cap after the U.S. court denied its bid last week for an emergency order striking it down as unconstitutional.

## Pennsylvania

HARRISBURG — The coronavirus has infected another 537 people and killed another 75 in Pennsylvania, the state Health Department said Thursday, even as the rate of new cases and the percentage of those testing positive continues to decline.

The agency said it has now confirmed nearly 74,000 cases and a total of 5,817 deaths be-

cause of the virus in Pennsylvania in the last three months.

On Friday, Gov. Tom Wolf's administration is expected to lift more restrictions, as it previously announced it would.

Nearly 6 million people in Philadelphia and seven other counties in hard-hit southeastern Pennsylvania are scheduled Friday to become the last in the state to shed the tightest restrictions under Wolf's stoplight-colored three-phase reopening plan. That includes the stay-at-home order that is part of the so-called "red" phase.

## Tennessee

NASHVILLE — Tennessee must give all of its 4.1 million registered voters the option to cast ballots by mail during the coronavirus pandemic, a judge ruled Thursday.

Davidson County Chancellor Ellen Hobbs Lyle ruled that the state's limits on absentee voting during the pandemic constitute "an unreasonable burden on the fundamental right to vote guaranteed by the Tennessee Constitution." The judge wrote that any eligible voter can get an absentee ballot to avoid contracting or passing on COVID-19 in the "upcoming elections during the pendency of pandemic circumstances."

## Wisconsin

MADISON — All prisoners and staff in Wisconsin's 36 adult prisons will be tested for COVID-19 under the state Department of Corrections' plan to resume more normal operations.

The new procedures include quarantining new prisoners and transfers for 14 days, the Wisconsin State Journal reported Thursday. The department resumed accepting new prisoners and accepting transfers on Monday, after a moratorium that Gov. Tony Evers issued on March 23 expired. Visits from friends and family remain suspended.

The department is also about a third of the way through its plan that started in May to test all 21,800 adult inmates.



# State-backed hackers target campaigns

Associated Press

BOSTON — Google said state-backed hackers have targeted the campaigns of both President Donald Trump and former Vice President Joe Biden, although it saw no evidence that the phishing attempts were successful.

The company confirmed the findings after the director of its Threat Analysis Group, Shane Huntley, disclosed the attempts Thursday on Twitter.

Huntley said a Chinese group known as Hurricane Panda targeted Trump campaign staffers while an Iranian outfit known as Charming Kitten had attempted to breach accounts of Biden campaign workers. Such phishing attempts typically involve forged emails with links designed to harvest passwords or infect devices with

malware.

The effort targeted personal email accounts of staffers in both campaigns, according to the company statement. A Google spokesman added that “the timeline is recent and that a couple of people were targeted on both campaigns.” He would not say how many.

Google said it sent targeted users “our standard government-backed attack warning” and referred the incidents to federal law enforcement.

Graham Brookie, director of the Atlantic Council’s Digital Forensic Research Lab, called the announcement “a major disclosure of potential cyber-enabled influence operations, just as we saw in 2016.”

His tweet referred to the Russian hacking of the Democratic National Commit-

tee and Hillary Clinton’s 2016 presidential campaign and subsequent online release of internal emails — some doctored — that U.S. investigators determined sought to assist the Trump campaign.

Neither the Biden nor the Trump campaign would not say how many staffers were targeted, when the attempts took place or whether the phishing was successful.

Both campaigns have been extremely reticent about discussing cybersecurity.

“The Trump campaign has been briefed that foreign actors unsuccessfully attempted to breach the technology of our staff,” the campaign said in a statement. “We are vigilant about cybersecurity and do not discuss any of our precautions.”

The Biden campaign did not even confirm the attempt.

## Trump seeks to scale back environmental reviews

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump signed an executive order Thursday directing agencies to look for ways to speed up building of highways and other major projects by scaling back environmental reviews, invoking special powers he has under the coronavirus emergency.

Separately on Thursday, the Environmental Protection Agency formally proposed overhauling how the agency evaluates new rules on air pol-

lutants, a move critics say will make it tougher to enact limits on dangerous and climate-changing emissions in the future.

The actions are the latest efforts from the Trump administration to emphasize reduced regulatory burdens on businesses over the environment and public health.

The executive order would direct federal agencies to pursue emergency workarounds from bedrock environmental laws, such as the National Environmental Policy Act and

the Endangered Species Act, to hasten completion of various infrastructure projects..

Trump, who has consistently sought to cut environmental reviews, said in the order that the economic lockdown and accompanying massive unemployment required the action.

“Unnecessary delays in timely agency actions will deny our citizens opportunities for jobs and economic security and will hinder our economic recovery from the national emergency, keeping millions of Americans out of work,” it states.

Trump has been issuing executive orders on a near-weekly basis during his fourth year in office.

Thursday’s order will mark his 25th of the year as he uses the pandemic to justify efforts to do away with government regulations that are designed to protect the environment and public health but are viewed by critics as costly and unnecessary.

The president has consistently portrayed the permitting process as hindering infrastructure projects in the U.S.

## Last American to collect a Civil War pension has died

The Washington Post

The check arrived every month: \$73.13.

Irene Triplett, who lived in a North Carolina nursing home, rarely talked about the source of the money. She was the final American to receive a pension from the Civil War — \$877.56 a year from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The jaw-dropping fact that someone in the year 2020 was still earning a Civil War pension was the result of two factors: First, Triplett suffered cognitive impairments, qualifying her for the lifelong pension as a helpless adult child of a veteran. Second, her father, Mose Triplett, who’d served as a private in the Confederate Army before defecting to the Union, was on his second

marriage when she was born in 1930. He was just a few weeks away from turning 84.

On Sunday, Irene Triplett died at Accordius Health, a long-term care facility in Wilkesboro, N.C., at the age of 90. A relative said she’d broken her hip a few days earlier and died of complications. She never married, and her only brother had died in 1996.

Triplett’s story is a powerful reminder that the Civil War wasn’t all that long ago, said Columbia University historian Stephanie McCurry. “Just like the Confederate monuments issue, which is blowing up right now, I think this is a reminder of the long reach of slavery, secession and the

Civil War,” she said. “It reminds you of the battle over slavery and its legitimacy in the United States.”

Many more widows and children of other long-ago soldiers are still alive. According to the VA, there are 33 surviving spouses and 18 children receiving pension benefits related to the 1898 Spanish-American War.

Triplett’s status as a Civil War pensioner began gaining attention in 2011, when the Wilkes Genealogical Society in Wilkes County, N.C., displayed her photograph on its quarterly publication and featured her in a story. The article noted she was one of only two people in the country still reaping a Civil War pension.

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Officials: Man arrested after nude foot chase

**MS** BAY ST. LOUIS — A man who allegedly stripped naked as he ran from deputies in Mississippi has been arrested on drug charges.

Hancock County sheriff's deputies saw Ryan Millet arguing with a woman, Misty Quiroz, at a gas station in Bay St. Louis on Wednesday and approached the couple, Chief Deputy Jeremy Skinner told The Sun Herald. The deputies started searching their car after Quiroz allegedly admitted to having marijuana in the vehicle.

Skinner said that's when Millet, who appeared to be under the influence of drugs, ran away and started taking off his clothes. Deputies chased him down and later used a stun gun to arrest him and bring him back to the gas station, with his clothes in hand, Skinner said.

"He was actually caught naked, so that's how he gets escorted back," he added.

## 2 dogs die in car; owner was in dog training class

**MO** HIGH RIDGE — Two dogs died in a hot car at a dog training center near St. Louis as their owner attended a lecture on how to become a paid dog trainer, the center's owner said.

Tom Rose of the Tom Rose School told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch that the deaths were the result of a "terrible accident." The owner left her car running, with the air-conditioner on high, while she was inside for the approximate 90-minute lecture on Wednesday, a day when the high temperature topped 90 degrees.

Rose said the car quit running without the owner knowing it. By the time she got outside the dogs — a Labrador

retriever and a German shepherd — were dead.

Rose said the car may have run out of gas.

## Man accused of stealing 34 guns from pawn shop

**MO** ST. LOUIS — A 19-year-old man is facing federal charges accusing him of stealing nearly three dozen semi-automatic weapons from a St. Louis County pawn shop.

The U.S. Attorney's office in St. Louis on Wednesday announced a federal complaint accusing Devante Coffie, of Valley Park, of stealing 32 handguns and two long guns at the Southside Pawn Shop in Affton on May 31. The complaint said Coffie and another person broke in through a second-story window after climbing onto the roof of a parked minivan. Once inside, they allegedly fired guns into glass enclosures to get access to the weapons.

The U.S. Attorney's office said Coffie suffered a cut on the broken window glass. Investigators monitored social media and found that Coffie was trying to sell the stolen guns, authorities said, and one video showed bandages on his hands.

## Police: Pregnant woman tried to run car off road

**NM** HOBBS — A pregnant New Mexico woman is facing charges after police say she tried knocking a car off the road while two children sat in her backseat.

The Hobbs News-Sun reports Shaniece Langley was arrested and charged with abuse of a child and criminal damage to property.

According to police, Langley, 31, was involved in a car crash in Hobbs stemming from a domestic dispute.

A driver picked up a friend

and was being followed by Langley, who tried to run them off the road, police said. Langley drove next to the vehicle and rammed into it twice before braking, according to police.

## No prison time for ex-sheriff in theft case

**ND** BISMARCK — A former sheriff won't spend any time behind bars after reaching a plea agreement with prosecutors on accusations he stole more than \$750,000 from the state government.

Johnny Zip Lawson, 43, the former Wells County sheriff, was ordered to pay full restitution during sentencing in federal court earlier this week.

Minot Daily News reported he could have been sent to prison for 10 years and fined \$250,000. Lawson was ordered to serve three years of supervised release.

Lawson and his wife, Christine Diana Lawson, were indicted for "converting for their use \$751,000 in overpayments" made from North Dakota's Department of Human Services.

## Police: Armed woman threatens neighbors

**WA** MOUNTLAKE TERRACE — Police in Washington state arrested a woman on suspicion of pointing a gun at her neighbors in what authorities classified as a hate crime.

Mountlake Terrace police arrested the woman for investigation of a hate crime and second-degree assault, The Daily Herald reported.

Police said she appeared to be having mental health issues. The 67-year-old suspect is white and the neighbors are black and Muslim.

The woman, who was not immediately identified, is accused of pointing a pistol at a 34-year-

old mother and her two daughters, both under 15, records said. Police said the woman told the family to go back to their native country because they don't belong in the U.S.

## Wildlife agency officials say gray wolf killed calf

**UT** SALT LAKE CITY — Utah has set up traps for a rare gray wolf that wildlife officials believe killed a calf in Rich County.

A trapper with the state first believed the predator was a coyote but determined it was gray wolf earlier this week after analyzing scat, tracks and other evidence, The Salt Lake Tribune reported.

The species has only been seen in Utah a handful of times since it was extirpated from the state in the 1920s.

## Police: Man faked wife's disappearance

**WV** GRANDVIEW — A woman and her husband faked her disappearance by pretending she plummeted from an overlook as part of a scheme to keep her out of having to go to prison, authorities said.

Julie Wheeler and Rodney Wheeler were arrested on multiple charges including conspiracy and giving false information to West Virginia State Police. State police said Julie Wheeler was reported missing Sunday by her husband and 17-year-old son.

The family claimed Julie Wheeler had fallen from the main overlook at the New River Gorge National River, National Park Service Ranger Leah Perkowski-Sisk said. Authorities searched for days but found her Tuesday "alive and well" hiding in a closet in her home.

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# NBA approves 22-team format for restart

Associated Press

The NBA took a major step toward getting back on the court Thursday, with the league's Board of Governors approving a 22-team format for restarting the league season next month at the Disney campus near Orlando, Fla.

The vote was 29-1, with Portland casting the dissenting vote, said a person with knowledge of the situation. The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the league did not publicly release voting details. The National Basketball Players Association has scheduled a meeting for Friday to vote on the plan.

Teams would arrive at Disney around July 7 and play an eight-game slate of games starting July 31 at the ESPN Wide World Of Sports complex. All teams will stay, practice and play at Disney and the NBA Finals — which would have started Thursday if not for the coronavirus pandemic that caused the NBA to suspend its season on March 11 — will likely stretch into October.

"The Board's approval of the restart format is a necessary step toward resuming the NBA season," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said. "While the COVID-19 pandemic presents formidable challenges, we are hopeful of finishing the season in a safe and responsible manner based on strict protocols now being finalized with public health officials and medical experts."

The eight-game slate — it's unclear if they will be classified as regular-season games — will help determine playoff seeding. From there, the league could have a play-in tournament for the final spot in the Eastern Conference and Western Confer-

ence postseason fields.

"While there is still work to be done, we applaud all the effort and collaboration that has gone into finding a safe, competitive format," Orlando Magic CEO Alex Martins said. "It has always been our feeling that sports have the ability to bring people together and we look forward to restarting the NBA season while using that platform to drive meaningful social impact at this period of time."

There are numerous other details to continue working through, including finalizing specifics of what the testing plan at Disney will entail and calculating the financial ramifications of playing fewer games.

Another person, also speaking to AP on condition of anonymity because the details of the ongoing talks have not been publicly released, said the NBPA and the NBA are working on "lengthy" medical protocols. The details will be shared with teams once those discussions are completed, which will be long before they arrive at Disney, the person said.

"The NBA is taking all the appropriate measures, and working tirelessly to provide a safe environment for our team and staff," the Dallas Mavericks said in a statement.

The 22 Disney-bound clubs would play somewhere between 71 and 75 games before the playoffs begin, down from the customary 82-game slate. The teams who didn't qualify for the restart will see their seasons end after having played somewhere between 64 and 67 games.

Roughly 15% of what would have been the full NBA regular season won't be played, which means players stand to lose around \$600 million in salary. How that process

will work is among the issues the league and union are still working to solve.

But one of the biggest hurdles is now cleared. The league is planning for the same playoff rules as usual, that being every round utilizing a best-of-seven format.

The 22-team plan includes all teams that were holding playoff spots when the season was stopped, plus all other clubs within six games of a berth.

Milwaukee, the Los Angeles Lakers, Boston and reigning NBA champion Toronto had already clinched playoff berths. Now with only eight games remaining for each team, it means that eight other clubs — Miami, Indiana, Philadelphia, the Los Angeles Clippers, Denver, Utah, Oklahoma City and Houston — have postseason spots secured, and Dallas virtually has one as well.

That leaves nine teams vying for three remaining playoff berths. In the East, Brooklyn, Orlando and Washington are in the race for two spots. In the West, Memphis, Portland, New Orleans, Sacramento, San Antonio and Phoenix will jostle for one spot.

If the gap between eighth place and ninth place in either conference is four games or less when the eight-game slate ends, those teams will play off for the No. 8 seed. The team in ninth place would have to go 2-0 in a two-game series to advance.

For Atlanta, Cleveland, New York, Golden State, Minnesota, Detroit, Chicago and Charlotte, the season is over. The Knicks will miss the playoffs for the seventh consecutive season, the third-longest current drought in the league behind Sacramento and Phoenix — who still have chances of getting into the playoffs this season.

## NHL clears way for players to return to practice rinks

Associated Press

The NHL cleared the way Thursday for players to return to practice rinks next week and firmed up its playoff format even as a ninth player tested positive for the coronavirus.

After unveiling the final details of its 24-team plan, the league said teams could reopen facilities and players could take part in limited, voluntary workouts beginning Monday. The NHL and NHL Players' Association must still iron out health and safety protocols before moving ahead with train-

ing camps and games.

Players can skate in groups of up to six at a time under "phase 2," which includes specific instructions on testing, mask-wearing and temperature checks. It's another step after the league said every playoff series will be a best-of-seven format after the initial qualifying round and teams will be reseeded throughout.

That announcement came at nearly the same time the Pittsburgh Penguins revealed one of their players had tested positive. The team said the player is

not in Pittsburgh, isolated, and has recovered from COVID-19.

Of the nine players who have tested positive, five are from the Ottawa Senators, three from the Colorado Avalanche and one from Pittsburgh. The league is expected to test players daily if games resume. The NHL is still assessing health and safety protocols for what would be 24 teams playing in two hub cities.

"We still have a lot of things to figure out, namely the safety of the players," Winnipeg Jets captain Blake Wheeler said

earlier this week. "We've got to make sure that our safety is at the top of that list."

The top four teams in the Eastern and Western Conferences will play separate round-robin tournaments to determine seeding. Re-seeding each round puts more value on the seeding tournaments between Boston, Tampa Bay, Washington and Philadelphia in the East, and St. Louis, Colorado, Vegas and Dallas in the West.

The remaining 16 teams will play best-of-five series to set the final 16.

# IndyCar finally ready to kick off season

Associated Press

The stars of IndyCar were in Florida preparing to start their season when the coronavirus pandemic slammed the brakes on those plans 48 hours before the green flag.

Almost three months later, the series is finally set to go racing.

The 2020 season will open Saturday night at Texas Motor Speedway in NBC's first primetime IndyCar race. The series follows NASCAR, which heads into this weekend having already completed nine events. Both have had to draw up safety plans. Both are racing without fans for now.

IndyCar teams based in Indianapolis will head to the airport before sunrise Saturday to begin health screenings required to board chartered flights scheduled to leave for Texas before 6 a.m. Everyone will be screened again before they enter the track and face masks will be required.

Drivers and teams outside of Indy arrived Friday and were also subjected to the same screenings. Team rosters are limited to 20 competitors and the garages will be divided — Chevrolet teams in one, Honda teams in the other.

It will be radically different from the last time everyone was together in March in St. Petersburg, Fla., soaking up the sun and enjoying the party atmosphere of the traditional season opener. An already lengthy off-season has now been stretched to more than eight months and the first event at Texas' high-speed oval will also give drivers their first test of a new windshield designed to protect the cockpit.

"I think everybody is nervous. If you're not nervous, I'd be concerned about the head that you have on your shoulders," said Graham Rahal. "You're going to probably one of the most intense tracks of the year and you're going there without testing, you're going there

without much practice, you're going there without knowing what these tires may bring for us this weekend. You're going there without knowing what exactly the aeroscreen is going to do to us on a track like that."

Unlike NASCAR, which has scrapped practice and qualifying for its rescheduled events, IndyCar will do both at Texas in the afternoon before the race that night. The field consists of 24 drivers, including three rookies making their IndyCar debut, for the 200-lap race on the high-banked, 1.5-mile oval.

The rebranded Arrow McLaren SP team will debut with rookie Oliver Askew, last year's Indy Lights champion, and Pato O'Ward, who has returned to IndyCar after a brief stint last year racing in Europe. Alex Palou will debut for Dale Coyne Racing, which in the off-season fired Sebastien Bourdais and promoted Santino Ferrucci into its lead seat. Rinus VeeKay is the third rookie making his debut, alongside oval veteran

Ed Carpenter, owner of Ed Carpenter Racing.

The last six winners at Texas are in the field dating to Ed Carpenter's victory in 2014 through two-time IndyCar champion Josef Newgarden's trip to victory lane last year.

Newgarden isn't sure veterans will have any sort of edge considering drivers have largely been sidelined since the Sept. 22 finale. Texas has never before opened an IndyCar season and instead is held well into the season and after the Indianapolis 500.

"Texas is a very difficult racetrack to race in general, whether you've been there 20 years or first time. It's a daunting track to get right," Newgarden said. "From the rookie side, it's going to be extremely difficult. This whole year is going to be tough on rookies with limited track time. I think Texas will be one of the toughest places to go to right out of the gates."

## Sports briefs

# Brees apologizes for comment about national anthem

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Drew Brees now realizes he'd fallen out of touch.

His contemporaries drove that home when they pilloried him this week for repeating a long-held conviction he'd always felt comfortable expressing.

In the wake of the police killing of George Floyd, Brees repeated his opposition to kneeling during the national anthem. And the biting backlash that followed prompted the Saints' star quarterback to issue a public apology Thursday in which he acknowledged he totally "missed the mark."

When Brees expressed his position on the anthem three years ago, he was one of many voices in a crowded conversation. But when he repeated it

Wednesday, he learned in humbling fashion how times have changed.

The intensity and frequency of protests stemming from Floyd's killing less than two weeks ago have signified that wider segments of the U.S. population view police brutality and racial injustice as matters of greater urgency.

"I recognize that I should do less talking and more listening," Brees wrote in the apology posted on social media. "When the black community is talking about their pain, we all need to listen."

## Oklahoma State hit with postseason ban

An NCAA infractions committee panel announced Friday that former Oklahoma State as-

sistant men's basketball coach Lamont Evans violated ethical-conduct rules by accepting up to \$22,000 in bribes from financial advisers.

The NCAA also levied penalties that include a one-year postseason ban for the team that takes effect next season. The ruling included three years of probation, a \$10,000 fine self-imposed by the school and a reduction in basketball scholarships.

Evans also received a 10-year show-cause order in the case tied to the federal corruption investigation into college basketball.

## Ex-Olympic minister sets Tokyo deadline

TOKYO — Next spring has been set by former Olympic

minister Toshikai Endo as a possible deadline for deciding whether the postponed Tokyo Games can go ahead.

"March next year is a time when we face major questions on whether athletes can be selected," Endo was quoted as saying by Japanese broadcaster NHK on Friday. "We have to make a judgment in various ways depending on the situation then."

Endo was speaking at a meeting of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

The Olympics are due to open on July 23, 2021, followed by the Paralympics on Aug. 24. The games had been scheduled for this year but were postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic.