

STARS AND STRIPES®

Sunday, June 7, 2020

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Protests against police brutality continue

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Massive protests against police brutality nationwide capped a week that began in chaos but ended with largely peaceful expressions that organizers hope will sustain their movement.

Saturday's marches featured few reports of problems in scenes that were more often festive than tense. Authorities were not quick to release crowd size estimates, but it was clear that tens of thousands of people — and perhaps hundreds of thousands — turned out nationally.

Wearing masks and urging fundamental change, protesters gathered in dozens of places from coast to coast. In North Carolina, mourners waited for hours to glimpse the golden coffin carrying the body of native son George Floyd, the black man whose murder at the hands of Minneapolis police has galva-

nized the expanding movement.

Collectively, it was perhaps the largest one-day mobilization since Floyd died May 25 and came as many cities lifted curfews imposed following initial spasms of arson, assaults and smash-and-grab raids on businesses. Authorities have softened restrictions as the number of arrests plummeted.

Demonstrations also reached four other continents, ending in clashes in London and Marseille, France. In the United States, Seattle police used flash bang devices and pepper spray to disperse protesters hurling rocks, bottles and what authorities said were "improvised explosives" that injured officers, just a day after city leaders temporarily banned one kind of tear gas. Around midnight in Portland, a firework was thrown over the fence at the Justice Center, injuring a Multnomah County deputy, Port-

land police Lt. Tina Jones said.

The largest U.S. demonstration appeared to be in Washington, D.C., where protesters flooded streets closed to traffic. On a hot, humid day, they gathered at the Capitol, on the National Mall and in neighborhoods. Some turned intersections into dance floors. Tents offered snacks and water.

At the White House, which was fortified with new fencing and extra security measures, chants and cheers were heard in waves. President Donald Trump, who has urged authorities to crack down on unrest, downplayed the demonstration, tweeting: "Much smaller crowd in D.C. than anticipated."

In D.C., dozens of National Guard troops from South Carolina were seen checking out of their hotel Sunday shortly before President Donald Trump tweeted that he was giving the order to withdraw them from

the nation's capital.

The troops, carrying gear and clothing, sipped coffee and smoked cigarettes as they waited for buses to take them to the airport.

Trump ordered guard troops into Washington to "dominate" the streets after some protests of Floyd's death turned violent. The city's mayor called on Trump last week to withdraw outside forces amid days of largely peaceful protests.

Elsewhere, the backdrops included some of the nation's most famous landmarks. Peaceful marchers mingled with motorists as they crossed the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. Cars had been cleared from the Brooklyn Bridge as protesters streamed into Manhattan. They walked the boulevards of Hollywood and a Nashville, Tenn., street famous for country music-themed bars and restaurants.

Judge tosses Fitzgerald lawsuits for lack of jurisdiction

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

United States courts have no jurisdiction over two cases involving the shipping company whose container vessel collided with a U.S. warship three years ago, killing seven sailors, a federal judge ruled Thursday in dismissing lawsuits brought by Navy survivors and the families of the sailors.

Two lawsuits filed in the U.S. District Court for Eastern Louisiana sought more than \$287 million from Japan-based NYK Line, which chartered the ACX Crystal, the ship that collided with the guided-missile destroyer USS Fitzgerald off the coast of Japan on June 17,

2017.

U.S. District Judge Lance Africk in New Orleans granted NYK Line's motion to dismiss, filed in March. The company "cannot be deemed 'at home' in every country in which it operates," according to Africk's ruling. NYK Line maintains less than 6% of its employees and generates less than 10% of its revenue in the U.S., he wrote.

NYK Line has a large global network which spans 60 regions and countries, including the U.S. It employs about 35,000 people, has a fleet of 710 ships and has consolidated revenue of about \$17.1 billion, according to its website.

NYK Line's lawyers in their

motions argued that Tokyo is the company's principal place of business.

"The U.S. has never served as a surrogate home for NYK Line," they wrote.

The plaintiffs' attorney, David Schloss, had argued that the U.S. court was an appropriate venue because NYK "has substantial, systematic and continuous contacts with the United States as a whole," according to court documents.

Seven sailors were killed and dozens were injured in the crash about 60 nautical miles southwest of Yokosuka, where the guided-missile destroyer was based at the time. Official reports have not assigned li-

ability for the crash to either ship.

The lawsuits claimed that the sailors also endured mental anguish, lost wages, pain and suffering and "pre-death fright."

Schloss plans to appeal the decision and said that his clients were "disappointed by the judge's decision" in an email to Stars and Stripes on Friday.

"It simply cannot be the case that the United States has no interest in providing a forum for the seven families who lost their loved ones and the more than 40 Fitzgerald sailors who suffer debilitating physical and psychological injuries, all in the name of serving their country," Schloss said.

NYC curfew lifts early following peaceful rallies

Associated Press

NEW YORK — New York City lifted the curfew spurred by protests against police brutality ahead of schedule Sunday after a peaceful night, free of the clashes or ransacking of stores that rocked the city days earlier.

“I want to thank everybody who has expressed their views peacefully,” Mayor Bill de Blasio said Sunday morning. “I made the decision to end the curfew. And honestly, I hope it’s the last time we will ever need a curfew in New York City.”

While the curfew was lifted, the mayor said a decision hadn’t been made yet on whether to lift a ban on vehicles in Manhattan south of 96th Street after 8 p.m.

The 8 p.m. citywide curfew, New York’s first in decades, had been set to remain in effect through at least Sunday, with officials planning to lift it at the same time the city enters the first phase of reopening after nearly three months

of shutdowns because of the coronavirus.

The move followed New York City police pulling back on enforcing the curfew Saturday as thousands took to the streets for another day of marches and rallies sparked by the May 25 death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police.

More than two hours after the curfew had passed Saturday night, groups of demonstrators continued to march in Manhattan and Brooklyn, while police monitored them but took a hands-off approach.

The end of the curfew comes as New York City prepares to begin reopening some businesses Monday, including manufacturing and construction companies, wholesalers and retailers.

Retailers won’t be allowed to have customers inside for another couple of weeks, but can let people pick up merchandise on the sidewalk or have it delivered.

World rallies show, ‘it’s a global issue’

Associated Press

LONDON — Thousands of people took to the streets of European cities Sunday to show their support for the Black Lives Matter movement, with protesters in the English port of Bristol venting their anger at the country’s colonial history by toppling a statue of a 17th-century slave trader.

Demonstrators attached ropes to the statue of Edward Colston before pulling it down to cheers and roars of approval from the crowd.

Images on social media show protesters appearing to kneel on Colston’s neck, recalling the death of George Floyd in Minnesota on May 25 that has sparked worldwide protests against racism and police violence. Floyd, a black man, died after a white Minneapolis police officer pressed a knee on his neck even after he pleaded for air while lying handcuffed on the ground.

In London, thousands of people congregated around the U.S. Embassy for the second day running, making clear their message wasn’t just aimed at America.

“Everyone knows that this represents more than just George Floyd, more than just America, but racism all around the world,” said Darcy Bourne,

a London-based student.

In Hong Kong, about 20 people staged a rally in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement on Sunday outside the U.S. Consulate in the semi-autonomous Chinese city.

“It’s a global issue,” said Quinland Anderson, a 28-year-old British citizen living in Hong Kong. “We have to remind ourselves despite all we see going on in the U.S. and in the other parts of the world, black lives do indeed matter.”

Organizers called off the Hong Kong rally late Saturday because of the city’s coronavirus restrictions. Those that still showed up gathered in groups of eight to follow size limits on public gatherings.

A rally in Rome’s sprawling People’s Square was noisy but peaceful, with the majority of protesters wearing masks to protect against coronavirus. Participants listened to speeches and held up handmade placards saying “Black Lives Matter” and “It’s a White Problem.”

In Spain, several thousand protesters gathered on the streets of Barcelona and at the U.S. Embassy in Madrid.

Many in Madrid carried homemade signs reading “Black Lives Matter,” “Human rights for all” and “Silence is pro-racist.”

Marines prohibit public displays of Confederate flag

Stars and Stripes

The Marine Corps has banned most public displays of a controversial Confederate symbol, including on clothing, mugs and bumper stickers, at its installations worldwide.

“The Confederate battle flag has all too often been co-opted by violent extremist and racist groups whose divisive beliefs have no place in our Corps,” the service’s official Twitter account tweeted Friday.

The move, announced in a Marine ad-

ministrative message that day, said that commanders “must exercise best judgment and discretion” when inspecting work spaces and public areas to find and remove depictions of the stars and bars.

They are not, however, allowed to inspect barracks rooms or other living quarters, private vehicles, assigned desk drawers, cabinets, lockers or backpacks.

The directive comes amid global outrage over the May 25 police killing of George Floyd, an African American man

in Minneapolis.

Massive protests have spurred some government officials in several states to remove their Confederate monuments, including a statue of Gen. Robert E. Lee in Richmond, Va.

The Marine directive does not apply to the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Virginia or other displays that “address the Civil War from a neutral, historical or educational perspective,” the message said.

Pandemic makes for lonely D-Day event

Associated Press

COLLEVILLE-SUR-MER, France — At daybreak on Saturday, Charles Shay stood lonesome without any fellow veteran on the very same beach where he waded ashore 76 years ago, part of one of the most epic battles in military history that came to be known as D-Day and turned the tide of World War II.

Compared to last year, when many tens of thousands came to the northern French beaches of Normandy to cheer the dwindling number of veterans and celebrate three-quarters of a century of liberation from Nazi oppression, the coronavirus lockdown turned this year's remembrance into one of the eeriest ever.

"I am very sad now," said Shay, who was a 19-year-old U.S. Army medic when he landed on Omaha Beach under horrific machine-gun fire and shells. "Because of the virus, nobody can be here. I would like to see more of us here," he told The Associated Press.

Normally, 95-year-old Shay would be meeting other survivors of the 1944 battle and celebrating with locals and dignitaries alike, all not far from his home close to the beaches that defined his life.

"This year, I am one of the very few that is probably here," he said, adding that other U.S. veterans could not fly in because

of the pandemic.

When a full moon disappeared over land and the sun rose on the other side over the English Channel, there was no customary rumble of columns of vintage jeep and trucks to be heard, roads still so deserted here sat alongside them.

Still the French would not let this day slip by unnoticed, such is their attachment to some 160,000 soldiers from the United States, Britain, Canada and other countries who spilled their blood to free foreign beaches and fight on to finally defeat Nazism almost one year later.

"It's a June 6 unlike any other," said Philippe Laillier, the mayor of Saint-Laurent-Sur-Mer, who staged a small remembrance around the Omaha Beach monument. "But still we had to do something. We had to mark it."

The moment the sun broke over the ocean, the Omaha Beach theme from the film "Saving Private Ryan" blared across the sand for a few dozen locals and visitors dressed in vintage clothing.

The pandemic has wreaked havoc across the world, infecting 6.6 million people, killing over 391,000 and devastating economies. It poses a particular threat to the elderly — like the surviving D-Day veterans who are in their late 90s or older.

It has also affected the younger generations who turn out every year to mark

the occasion. Most have been barred from traveling to the windswept coasts of Normandy.

The lack of a big international crowd was palpable.

In the afternoon, a flyover of French fighter jets leaving a trail of the national colors was reminiscent of the one President Donald Trump and his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron watched from Colleville last year. This time, though, only a sparse crowd craned necks upward.

At the American cemetery on a bluff overseeing Omaha Beach, Shay went to pay his respects to over 9,000 servicemen, and again was the lone U.S. veteran at an intimate ceremony.

President Harry Truman's quote, "America will never forget their sacrifices," is etched into the cemetery's Orientation Pavilion.

With Americans unable to come over to Normandy this year, the French proved to be trustworthy alternates in fulfilling Truman's vow.

Ivan Thierry, 62, a local fisherman who catches sea bass around the wrecks that still litter the seabed nearby, was holding an American flag in tribute even before dawn.

"There is not nobody here. Even if we are only a dozen, we are here to commemorate," he said.

Germans caught off guard by Trump's troop plan

Bloomberg News

President Donald Trump's directive to pull 9,500 troops from Germany hits home hard for friends of America like Edgar Knobloch, whose Bavarian town has been home to U.S. service members for seven decades.

Like Chancellor Angela Merkel, the mayor of Grafenwoehr was caught off guard. It's the latest sign of the U.S.'s deterioration of ties with a loyal ally, one that not only hosts most of its troops in Europe but also has seen them fuel the local economy.

This medieval town, with a tiny population dwarfed by the size of the American military presence, shows just what a shadow the U.S. has cast over Europe after World War II and what its retreat symbolizes in the eyes of locals and international observers. Another troop cut would signal a further break with a legacy of two generations.

Located near the former East German border, Grafenwoehr is a place where over-

seas U.S. military infrastructure and community bonds survived the end of the Cold War. Locals celebrate Thanksgiving and enjoy spare ribs. Every year, they turn out by the thousands for the German-American Folk Festival to share beer, bratwurst and country music with the roughly 11,000 U.S. troops based at NATO's biggest training area in Europe.

"They're completely integrated here," Knobloch, 55, said in an interview. "Restaurants are bilingual. There are mixed marriages, mixed families. You often hear from the older members of the community: 'The Americans liberated us.'"

There hasn't been much nostalgia between Trump and Merkel, who have clashed repeatedly over trade and Germany's slow timetable for meeting the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's defense spending target. Last month, Merkel snubbed Trump on his plan to hold an in-person Group of Seven summit in June, which he'd like Russian President Vladimir Putin to attend.

While Trump has taken aim at Germany's economic might, Merkel — the longest-

serving G-7 leader after 15 years in power — has stared him down across a broad front, from defending the rules-based global economy to policy disputes such as defense spending. A physicist by training, Merkel also contrasted with Trump in her science-based approach to reopening Germany from its coronavirus lockdown.

Lawmakers and government officials in Berlin criticized Trump's troop decision, which would cut U.S. forces in Germany by slightly more than a quarter, as a snub.

"These plans demonstrate once again that the Trump administration neglects a central element of leadership: the involvement of alliance partners in the decision-making process," Johann Wadephul, deputy head of Merkel's parliamentary caucus, said in an emailed statement.

Trump's decision and the way it was communicated hint at how much Germany's relations have cooled with a U.S. president who has publicly questioned NATO's value. By mid-day Saturday, the German government had no official word from Washington on the drawdown plan.

World reaches 400,000 virus deaths as Pope urges caution

Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain — The confirmed global death toll from the COVID-19 virus reached at least 400,000 fatalities on Sunday, a day after the government of Brazil broke with standard public health protocols by ceasing to publish updates of the number of deaths and infections in the hard-hit South American country.

Worldwide, at least 6.9 million people have been infected by the virus, according to Johns Hopkins University, whose aggregated tally has become the main worldwide reference for monitoring the disease. Its running counter says the United States leads the world with nearly 110,000 confirmed virus-related deaths. Europe as a whole has recorded more than 175,000 since the virus emerged in China late last year.

Health experts, however, believe that the Johns Hopkins tally falls short of showing the true tragedy of the pandemic.

Many governments have struggled to produce statistics that can reasonably be considered as true indicators of the

pandemic given the scarcity of diagnostic tests especially in the first phase of the crisis. Authorities in Italy and Spain, with over 60,000 combined deaths, have acknowledged that their death count is larger than the story the numbers tell.

But Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro went as far as to tweet on Saturday that his country's disease totals are "not representative" of Brazil's current situation, insinuating that the numbers were actually overestimating the spread of the virus.

Critics of Bolsonaro, who has repeatedly clashed with health experts over the seriousness of the disease and has threatened to take Brazil out of the World Health Organization, said the decision was a maneuver by the hardman-style leader to hide the depths of crisis.

Brazil's last official numbers recorded over 34,000 virus-related deaths, the third-highest toll in the world behind the U.S. and Britain. It reported nearly 615,000 infections, putting it second behind the U.S.

After Bolsonaro stoked his clash with health experts,

Pope Francis cautioned people in countries emerging from lockdown to keep following authorities' rules on social distancing, hygiene and limits on movement.

"Be careful, don't cry victory, don't cry victory too soon," Francis said. "Follow the rules. They are rules that help us to avoid the virus getting ahead" again.

The Argentine-born pontiff has also expressed dismay that the virus is still claiming many lives, especially in Latin America.

Francis was clearly delighted to see several hundred people gathered below his window in St. Peter's Square on Sunday for the pope's noon blessing after Italy eased its restrictions on public gatherings.

Many countries like the U.S. and Britain insist that they can ease restrictions before having stalled their outbreaks.

In the U.S., the virus churns on underneath the unrest provoked by the death of George Floyd and increasingly directed at President Donald Trump's handling of the protests.

Army base in Stuttgart lowers health threat level

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The Army in Stuttgart eased its health threat level to condition Bravo, signaling a moderate risk of transmission and the return of garrison services, as the number of coronavirus cases continues to decline at what was once a hot spot.

Child Development Centers and gyms will open Monday at a reduced capacity to ensure social distancing, garrison commander Col. Jason Condrety said in a town hall meeting Thursday.

Food courts and other indoor dining locations also will open Monday with capacity limits and mask requirements, Condrety said. Playgrounds on post were slated to open Friday.

"In coordination with local host nation authorities, garrison commands across Europe are reviewing the health protection condition level of their installations or facilities based on the risk level in the local community," said Mark Heeter, IMCOM-Europe spokesman.

Other garrisons are working through plans to adjust the threat level status and open services as appropriate, with more expected to move to Bravo "in the days ahead," Heeter said.

In March, the Army ordered health threat levels to be elevated to the second-highest level, condition Charlie, as coronavirus cases climbed within the ranks.

Stuttgart, which is home to U.S. European and Africa commands, reported 103 confirmed cases as of early April when the Pentagon directed commands to stop reporting local base tallies.

With more reported cases than any other overseas base, the garrison in Stuttgart imposed strict social distancing measures that included restrictions on the number of days personnel could visit commissaries and post offices.

China defends virus response in new report

Associated Press

BEIJING — Senior Chinese officials released a lengthy report Sunday on the nation's response to the coronavirus pandemic, defending their government's actions and saying that China had provided information in a timely and transparent manner.

China "wasted no time" in sharing information such as the genome sequence for the new virus with the World Health Organization as well as relevant countries and regional organizations, according to the report.

An Associated Press investi-

gation found that government labs sat on releasing the genetic map of the virus for more than a week in January, delaying its identification in a third country and the sharing of information needed to develop tests, drugs and a vaccine.

National Health Commission Chairman Ma Xiaowei did not address the specific findings in the AP report, but said it "seriously goes against the facts." He added that there were many unknowns in the early stage of the outbreak and that it took time to gather evidence and figure out the characteristics of the new virus.

"The Chinese government

did not delay or cover up anything," he said. "Instead, we have immediately reported virus data and relevant information about the epidemic to the international community and made an important contribution to the prevention and control of the epidemic around the world."

He ticked off a series of government actions from a detailed timeline in the government report. The timeline says that China began updating the WHO on a regular basis on Jan. 3 and that the head of China's Center for Disease Control and Prevention briefed the head of the U.S. CDC on Jan. 4.

Tropical storm closes in on Gulf Coast

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Tropical Storm Cristobal continued its advance toward the U.S. Gulf Coast early Sunday, having spawned a tornado in Florida.

Forecasters said that it would arrive on U.S. soil late Sunday, but was not expected to grow into a hurricane.

Squalls with tropical-force winds reached the mouth of the Mississippi River by Sunday morning and conditions were expected to deteriorate, the National Hurricane Center in Miami said. Cristobal's maximum sustained winds remained at 50 mph and it was moving north at 12 mph, centered around 75 miles south-southwest of the mouth of the Mississippi River.

But the storm already made

its presence felt Saturday evening with a tornado that touched down near downtown Orlando, the National Weather Service said. The twister just missed a group of protesters at Lake Eola at around 7:30 p.m. There appeared to be no injuries, but tree limbs were knocked down and there were reports of power outages.

"Yes, it is related to the tropical storm that is well to our west," said Scott Kelly, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Melbourne, Fla. "But the tropical storm provided a lot of low-level shear and that has allowed for some tornadoes to form over Central Florida."

The Hurricane Center said that the storm could cause heavy rains from East Texas

to Florida over the weekend and into this week. A tropical storm warning was posted for the northern Gulf of Mexico coast from Intracoastal City, La., to the Alabama-Florida border. Storm surge warnings and watches were in effect in Louisiana and Mississippi, with flooding up to 5 feet expected in some places.

Forecasters said that the storm's center will move inland across Louisiana late Sunday through early Monday, and then head north across Arkansas and Missouri on Monday afternoon and into Tuesday.

In Louisiana, Gov. John Bel Edwards declared a state of emergency to prepare for the storm's possible arrival.

"Now is the time to make your plans, which should in-

clude the traditional emergency items along with masks and hand sanitizer as we continue to battle the coronavirus pandemic," Edwards said in a statement released Thursday.

Jefferson Parish, a suburb of New Orleans, called for voluntary evacuations Saturday of Jean Lafitte, Lower Lafitte, Crown Point and Barataria because of the threat of storm surge, high tides and heavy rain. Residents were urged to move vehicles, boats and campers to higher ground.

"We want to make sure residents are safe as this storm approaches, so we are taking all the necessary precautions to be fully prepared," Jean Lafitte Mayor Tim Kerner Jr. told The Times-Picayune/The New Orleans Advocate.

Large great white shark kills surfer off coast of Australia

Associated Press

SYDNEY — A 60-year-old surfer was attacked and killed by a 10-foot great white shark off the coast of northern New South Wales state on Sunday, officials said.

The man received a bite to the back of his thigh and was brought to the shore by other surfers who had fought off the shark, a surf rescue group, Surf Life Saving NSW, said in a statement. The victim, from Tugun just over the state border in Queensland, received first aid on the shore but died on the beach.

"A shark biologist assessed photographs and confirmed a white shark was responsible for the fatal attack," the state's Department of Primary Industries said.

New South Wales Ambulance Inspector Terence Savage said it was a "dreadful" situation for everyone involved.

"When you get a call to attend a shark attack, you never really know the full extent of the damage until you get on scene," he said. "They did everything they could to try and save his life, but despite their best efforts, were unable to do so."

Nearby beaches were cleared of swim-

mers and surfers and will remain closed for 24 hours.

Kingscliff resident Stuart Gonsal had just arrived at the beach ready for a surf, when he found out about the fatal attack.

"We came down and we hadn't got in the water and police were immediately hauling people in," Gonsal told Australian Broadcasting Corp. radio. "We found out there was a fatal shark attack on the south side of the rock wall. We were going to get in, we're not going to now for sure."

It was the third fatal shark attack in Australia this year.

Zuckerberg-funded scientists call on Facebook to rein in hate

Associated Press

BOSTON — Dozens of scientists doing research funded by Mark Zuckerberg said that Facebook should not be letting President Donald Trump use the social media platform to "spread both misinformation and incendiary statements."

The researchers, including 60 professors at leading United States research institutions, wrote the Facebook CEO on Saturday asking Zuckerberg to

"consider stricter policies on misinformation and incendiary language that harms people," especially during the current turmoil over racial injustice.

The letter calls the spread of "deliberate misinformation and divisive language" contrary to the researchers' goals of using technology to prevent and eradicate disease, improve childhood education and reform the criminal justice system.

Their mission "is antitheti-

cal to some of the stances that Facebook has been taking, so we're encouraging them to be more on the side of truth and on the right side of history as we've said in the letter," said Debora Marks of Harvard Medical School, one of three professors who organized it.

They said that the letter had more than 160 signatories. Shepherd said that about 10% are employees of foundations run by Zuckerberg and his

wife, Priscilla Chan.

The letter objects specifically to Zuckerberg's decision not to at least flag as a violation of Facebook's community standards Trump's post that stated "when the looting starts, the shooting starts" in response to unrest in Minneapolis over the videotaped murder of George Floyd, a black man, by a white police officer. The letter's authors called the post "a clear statement of inciting violence."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman sentenced for giving gun to teenager

MT GREAT FALLS — A north-central Montana woman was sentenced to six months in federal prison for lying on paperwork to buy a handgun that she then gave to a teenager who later pointed it at her during an argument, U.S. Attorney Kurt Alme said.

A jury convicted Susan Kaytlin Scott of Shelby in January of false statements during a firearms transaction and transfer of a handgun to a juvenile.

Scott filled out paperwork at a sporting goods store in Great Falls to buy a Taurus 9 mm handgun in November 2018 and said she would be the owner, prosecutors said. She gave it to the teen, 17, as an early birthday present, prosecutors said.

Controversial mural to be removed from school

KY LEXINGTON — University of Kentucky President Eli Capilouto said a controversial mural at the school that has been the object of protest for its depictions of black people and Native Americans is coming down.

The mural, which has remained covered since a protest and hunger strike last year, “carries with it tremendous symbolic weight,” Capilouto said.

“I want to remove that weight from the discussions we must have, so that we can act, together, as a community,” he wrote.

The 1930s fresco mural by Ann Rice O’Hanlon shows the history of Lexington in a series of scenes, including black men and women planting tobacco and a Native American man holding a tomahawk. Efforts to remove the mural have been made since at least 2006.

Multiracial campers accused of being antifa

WA FORK — Authorities said a multiracial family camping on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington state was harassed and confronted by people who accused them of being political activists with antifa and trapped them at a remote campsite in the woods.

Sgt. Shaun Minks of the Clallam County Sheriff’s Office said the family of four arrived in the town of Forks in an old converted school bus and stopped to buy camping supplies at a local store.

He said as they were leaving the store, the family was confronted by people in several vehicles who asked them if they were from antifa — short for “anti-fascists.”

Authorities said the family became concerned later when they heard gunshots and other commotion and decided to leave the campsite. However trees had been felled across a road, trapping them. Four local high school students used a chainsaw to help clear the road for the family.

Couple accused of using cattle prod on kids

SD SIOUX FALLS — A South Dakota couple is accused of giving four children illegal drugs and of zapping them with a cattle prod to get them to comply with orders.

Investigators have recommended charging Lance Long, 36, and Crystallynn Long, 40, of Sioux Falls, with aggravated assault with a dangerous weapon, abuse or cruelty to a minor and numerous other counts. The Longs were jailed on a warrant of giving a controlled drug to a minor.

Minnehaha County sheriff’s Capt. Josh Phillips said the abuse had been going on for several years. The children are related, and some are half-siblings, the Argus Leader reported.

The couple gave the children methamphetamine and marijuana and shocked them with a cattle prod “to get the children to obey commands or if they weren’t listening,” Phillips said.

Child hospitalized after suspected shark bite

DE LEWES — A boy, 12, was hospitalized after he was possibly bitten by a shark in Delaware.

The Daily Times of Salisbury, Md., reported that the incident occurred at a beach along Cape Henlopen State Park.

The incident prompted officials to close the park’s Herring Point to surfing and swimming until further notice.

The child was surfing when something bit his leg. He was rushed to a hospital and treated for puncture wounds. Experts are trying to figure out what kind of creature left the bite marks.

Reward offered to help identify dog’s killer

RI NARRAGANSETT — An animal welfare organization is offering a \$500 reward for information that leads to the arrest and conviction of the person who shot a dog in the head and left the body in a Narragansett river.

Narragansett police in a Facebook post said the black, terrier-type dog was found in the Narrow River inside what appeared to be black garbage bags.

The Rhode Island Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is offering the reward.

Slave auction block to be moved to museum

VA FREDERICKSBURG — A 176-year-old slave auction block has been removed from a Virginia city’s downtown.

The 800-pound stone was pulled from the ground at a Fredericksburg street corner after the removal was delayed for months by lawsuits and the coronavirus pandemic, The Free Lance-Star reported.

A local chapter of the NAACP called for the stone’s removal in 2017, saying it was a relic of “a time of hatred and degradation” that was allowed to be displayed at a main thoroughfare in the city.

In 2019, the City Council voted in favor of its removal and relocation to the Fredericksburg Area Museum, and a judge upheld that decision in February after two businesses near the auction block sued to stop the relocation.

Moped rider falls off bridge into marsh

NC WILMINGTON — Police in North Carolina said a moped rider was recovering in a hospital after he fell off a bridge and into a marsh.

The Wilmington Police Department said in a news release that Ian Jones, 32, was riding back and forth between lanes when his moped clipped a truck that was trying to pass him.

According to police, Jones was thrown off the moped and off the Isabel Holmes Bridge and into the marsh below. Jones was taken to a local hospital, and police said he was charged with failure to maintain lane. The news release said no charges were expected for the truck driver.

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STARS AND STRIPES®

Nunes pounds Spencer, keeps belt at UFC 250

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Amanda Nunes' impressive reign atop two UFC divisions is showing no signs of decline.

In fact, her dominance is making history.

Nunes became the first UFC fighter to defend two championship belts while actively holding the titles in both weight classes Saturday night, earning a dominant unanimous decision over featherweight contender Felicia Spencer at UFC 250.

Former bantamweight champion Cody Garbrandt also knocked out Raphael Assuncao an instant before the second-round bell in the co-main event at a fan-free gym on the UFC's corporate campus in Las Vegas.

UFC 250 was the second event held at the UFC Apex gym in the promotion's hometown since its resumption in competition amid the coronavirus pandemic. The Apex octagon is 25 feet in diameter instead of the typical 30 feet, and those close quarters resulted in several entertaining finishes, including spectacular knockouts by Garbrandt and fellow bantamweight star "Suga" Sean O'Malley.

Nunes (20-4), widely considered the greatest female fighter in mixed martial arts history, is the UFC's champion of the bantamweight and featherweight divisions. The list of two-division UFC champions is short, and no one else has defended both belts.

"Guys, no one else ever did that before!" Nunes said. "It's amazing. I knew something big was going to happen in my life. Sometimes you're surprised by how big it is."

While Nunes' dominance was tested in her last bout against bantamweight Germaine De Randamie in December, the relatively inexperienced Spencer (8-2) provided little danger to the champ, other than the remote possibility of breaking her hands in repeated collisions with Spencer's face.

Nunes battered the slower Spencer with her fearsome striking power from the start, cutting the challenger's face and later sending her mouthpiece flying away during the third round. Spencer had a nasty hematoma growing on

her forehead after the fourth round.

"I want to go to five rounds with the toughest girls, and tonight I proved it," Nunes said. "I knew Felicia was the toughest girl in this division, and I know she's going to handle it exactly how she did tonight."

Nunes comfortably defended her featherweight belt for the first time since taking it from Cris "Cyborg" Justino in December 2018. She has defended the bantamweight belt five times since 2016.

Garbrandt (12-3) had lost three straight fights before this impressive performance ended with a right cross that knocked out Assuncao in the final second of the second round.

McGregor retires for the third time in four years

Associated Press

Conor McGregor has announced his retirement for the third time in four years.

McGregor abruptly made his latest dubious declaration Sunday morning on his Twitter account, where the former two-division UFC champion also announced his retirement in 2016 and 2019.

"Hey guys I've decided to retire from fighting," McGregor wrote in a caption below a photo of him and his mother. "Thank you all for the amazing memories! What a ride it's been!"

The 31-year-old Irish superstar revitalized his combat sports career in January with an impressive first-round stoppage of Donald "Cowboy" Cerrone at UFC 246. McGregor (22-4) hadn't won a fight in a mixed martial arts cage or a boxing ring since 2016, but he remained the UFC's biggest financial draw.

UFC President Dana White has already said McGregor is next in line for a title shot at the winner of lightweight cham-

pion Khabib Nurmagomedov's bout with Justin Gaethje this summer.

The UFC's schedule is in upheaval due to the coronavirus pandemic, but McGregor was expected to get his title shot later this year, and he recently had been talking to White about taking another fight even earlier. Earlier this week, McGregor posted photos and videos of himself training for fights.

McGregor made his first Twitter retirement announcement in April 2016 during a spat with the UFC over promotion of his rematch with Nate Diaz.

McGregor famously wrote: "I have decided to retire young. Thanks for the cheese. Catch ya's later."

McGregor and Diaz fought in August 2016.

Three years later, McGregor retired again in March 2019 in what White believed was a gambit to entice the UFC to offer him an ownership stake in the company.

NBA clarifies its plans for playoff seeds tiebreakers

Associated Press

MIAMI — The NBA has told teams that playoff seeding will be based on winning percentage, and that any tiebreakers necessary after that will follow the usual procedures.

It was an issue that needed clarity because the 22 teams that will be going to the Disney complex near Orlando, Fla., for the planned resumption of the season next month will not have played the same number of games.

The NBA told teams of the plan for utilizing tiebreakers in a memo late Friday.

Based on the league plan for the restart, with games starting again in late July, Dallas will end up playing an NBA-high 75 contests. Most others will play between 72 and 74; the low total will be 71, which San Antonio and the Los Angeles Lakers will finish at if the NBA's plans for teams to play eight games at the Disney complex before the playoffs begin comes to fruition.

The NBA has not yet re-

vealed how team schedules will be adjusted once play resumes without Atlanta, Charlotte, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Golden State, Minnesota and New York taking part in the remainder of the 2019-20 season.

There are some playoff races that are particularly close and where the teams involved will end up playing a different number of games.

In the East, Brooklyn and Orlando are separated by a half-game and the Nets will end up with one less game than the Magic.

In the West, four teams — Portland, New Orleans, Sacramento and San Antonio — are all separated by a half-game in the race for ninth place and potentially a berth in a play-in series. The gap between those four teams is .010 percentage points, and the Trail Blazers will play 74 games, the Pelicans and Kings will both play 72 and the Spurs 71. Typically, NBA teams play 82 games — which wasn't possible this season because of the pandemic.

Dixon dominates in IndyCar opener

Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — IndyCar packed every bit of its delayed season-opening event into one long, hot day in Texas without any fans in the stands. Scott Dixon was the fastest for most of it at a place he knows well.

Dixon, a five-time IndyCar champion, took the checkered flag at dusk Saturday for his fourth win at the 1½-mile, high-banked oval, where drivers also practiced and qualified earlier in the day. The 39-year-old New Zealander raced to his 47th career victory and matched A.J. Foyt's record of 18 seasons with a win.

"It was such a team effort," said Dixon, third on the career wins list behind Foyt's 67 and Mario Andretti's 52. "It's just so fast. Any situation we were in, we could just go for it."

After a restart with three laps left following a caution when young teammate Felix Rosenqvist crashed while running second, Dixon sped away in the No. 9 Chip Ganassi Honda for a 4.4-second victory over Simon Pagenaud.

Defending IndyCar champion

and polesitter Josef Newgarden was third behind Pagenaud, his teammate at Team Penske.

Nearly three months after the start of the season was put on hold because of the coronavirus pandemic, IndyCar finally got on the track for what would usually be the midpoint race of its season.

The massive grandstands that can seat well more than 100,000 people were empty, and not because of extreme heat — temperatures in the mid-90s with a heat index around 100 degrees Fahrenheit throughout practice, qualifying and even much of the race. No spectators were allowed, as will also be the case for the next race on the road course at Indianapolis Motor Speedway on July 4.

"It's rotten that the fans aren't here. I wish everybody was here to celebrate," said Dixon, who extended his own record to 16 seasons in a row with a victory.

Gov. Greg Abbott rode in the pace car for the first professional sporting event in Texas since sports shut down nationwide because of the coronavirus. The only at-track spectators were people watch-

ing from condos in the building overlooking Turn 2.

Dixon had the top speed during the two-hour practice session, and qualified second. He went on to win the IndyCar title each of the three previous times he won the Texas race.

Rosenqvist had been second behind Dixon for several laps when he crashed trying to move through traffic. He got high going onto the backstretch with nine laps remaining, bringing out the final caution, and finished 20th out of 23 cars that started the race.

Dixon led 157 of the 200 laps, and had an earlier six-second lead over Newgarden wiped out by a caution for debris. Newgarden led twice for 41 laps and fourth-place finisher Zach Vech led the remaining two laps. Ed Carpenter, the series' only driver-owner, rounded out the top five.

"I feel like we won the race with how bad we were," Newgarden said. "My team fought. If there's anything, we have an incredible fighting spirit. ... We were just struggling. I was really struggling with vibrations on the tires."

Because of the extended

opening day, the race shortened to 200 laps from its usual 248 at Texas. It took only one hour and 38 minutes.

When Newgarden won the pole after being the last to take a qualifying run, there was a quick warning over the radio to the Team Penske crew to avoid celebratory high-fives.

All of the teams were already in St. Petersburg, Fla., for the scheduled season opener March 15. But they never ran on the streets of St. Pete, making the fast track at Texas the debut for the protective windscreens now over the open cockpits of the cars.

Texas became the season opener while keeping its originally scheduled date, which was supposed to be the ninth of 17 races. That would have been two weeks after the Indianapolis 500, which has been rescheduled for Aug. 23.

Drivers and team members went through health screenings when they got to the track. Many of them had already gone through similar screenings to get on chartered planes they boarded at dawn Saturday in Indianapolis.

Allmendinger's first oval victory comes at Atlanta

Associated Press

HAMPTON, Ga. — A.J. Allmendinger finally won on an oval.

He might just retire.

Taking advantage of mistakes by the three leaders, the 38-year-old Californian cruised to victory by nearly 2 seconds over pole-sitter Noah Gragson in the Xfinity Series race at Atlanta Motor Speedway on Saturday.

"Oh my god," Allmendinger said as he climbed from his No. 16 Chevrolet. "I won on an oval."

Indeed, he did.

Allmendinger, who first came to prominence in open-wheel racing, claimed a single victory during more than a decade in the top-level Cup series, and he had three previous Xfinity wins — all on road courses.

Now, he's filled in a big hole on his

resume.

"All I ever wanted to do was win on an oval," said Allmendinger, who has only a part-time job in the Xfinity Series after losing his Cup ride after the 2018 season. "I have a lot of success in so many forms of racing."

Allmendinger started 30th but quickly showed the strength of his car, spending much of the day running in the top 10.

Then, after the final caution of the day, the top three cars — Chase Briscoe, Austin Cindric and Justin Allgaier — were all caught speeding on pit road.

That pushed Allmendinger into the top spot on the restart with 34 laps to go.

He held on the rest of the way.

"I still think that even if they had started in front of us, we could've beat them on a long run," Allmendinger said. "But that clean air was definitely a big deal."

He appeared to be a rising star after capturing five victories on road and street circuits in the now-defunct Champ Car series in 2006.

Allmendinger accepted a lucrative offer from Red Bull to move into NASCAR, but never fulfilled his promise in the oval-dominated series.

His career took another setback when he was suspended in 2012 after testing positive for a banned stimulant. Allmendinger did a few races in IndyCar and worked to rebuild his reputation, finally returning to a full-time ride in the Cup Series — even claiming his first victory at Watkins Glen.

Yet he never shook his reputation as a road-course ringer.

"Heck, I might just retire," Allmendinger quipped. "I just wanted to win on a damn oval."