

STARS AND STRIPES[®]

Friday, June 12, 2020

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

US troop withdrawal to continue in Iraq

The Washington Post

The United States intends to continue withdrawing troops from Iraq, it said in a statement late Thursday, after the two countries began talks on the future of their strategic relationship.

Seventeen years after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, the talks, which began Thursday, focus on a wide range of issues. Thorniest among them is the question of foreign troop presence: Iraq's parliament has urged the U.S.-led coalition to leave, and Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi is under pressure to satisfy that demand without risking security gaps that Islamic State fighters might exploit.

"The two countries recognized that in light of significant progress towards eliminating the ISIS threat, over the com-

ing months the U.S. would continue reducing forces from Iraq," both nations said in a joint communique. U.S. officials stressed that they did not seek any form of permanent military presence in Iraq, the statement said.

The United States has some 5,200 troops stationed in Iraq as part of an international coalition fighting ISIS. The militant group still poses a threat in Iraq, although one that is much reduced from that of the period between 2014 and 2017 when it was building and then fighting for a sweeping landmass it described as its "caliphate."

The U.S.-Iraqi talks cap a period in which bilateral relations have been steadily improving, after they plunged in January to their lowest ebb in years following President Donald Trump's decision to order the killing of renowned Iranian

Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani on Iraqi soil. That act sparked a firestorm of criticism in Iraq and abroad, eroding trust between the two militaries and piling pressure on the coalition to leave.

Departures began in recent months, although it remains unclear how many troops have relocated outside Iraq. In retaliation for the death of Soleimani and one of his closest Iraqi allies, militia leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, Iranian-backed militia groups have also accelerated the withdrawal of coalition troops from a handful of smaller Iraqi bases, following a campaign of rocket attacks on facilities where U.S. troops were stationed.

There was no word Friday on when or how another round of troop withdrawals might occur. "There was no discussion of a timeline," David Schenker,

assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, told reporters.

Addressing reporters in Baghdad, al-Kadhimi said the U.S.-Iraqi talks were about wresting back political autonomy, a veiled reference to the duel that Washington and Tehran have long fought over Iraq.

"We want to safeguard our sovereignty and ensure that Iraq does not become a zone for settling scores," the new prime minister said.

Thursday's talks also focused on Iraq's "enormous economic challenges": "The two sides reaffirmed the importance of the strategic relationship and their determination to take appropriate steps to enhance it in the interest of both countries and to achieve security, stability, and prosperity in the region," the joint statement said.

Board chair: Time to rename Naval Academy buildings

Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — The names of two members of the Confederacy should be removed from buildings at the U.S. Naval Academy, the chairman of the academy's Board of Visitors said Thursday.

Rep. C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger, a Maryland Democrat, said the Pentagon should consider removing Confederate names from all military bases as people across the country protest against racial inequality and police brutality.

"There has been discussion of renaming these buildings since at least 2017," Ruppersberger said in a statement. "As the new Chairman, the time for discussion is over. It's time for action.

Midshipmen who have earned the privilege to study in one of our nation's most prestigious institutions should not have to walk around campus and see buildings named for men who fought to uphold slavery and promote white supremacy."

The academy superintendent's residence is named after Franklin Buchanan, the academy's first superintendent who left to join the Confederate Navy at the start of the Civil War. The academy's Weapons and Systems Engineering division house is in Maury Hall. It's named after Matthew Fontaine Maury, who was a leader in the fields of naval meteorology and navigation. He headed the coast, harbor and river defenses for the Confederate Navy.

"This isn't about erasing history," Ruppersberger said. "We simply shouldn't lift up traitors who fought against American values like equality and tolerance."

The congressman said he would bring up the issue at the board's next meeting. The board is similar to a board of trustees at a civilian college and includes members of Congress. He also said he would offer an amendment to appropriations measures in Congress to require the academy to rename the two buildings.

"We are working hard to attract minority applicants to our service academies and all of our service branches," Ruppersberger said. "We must send a strong and unequivocal mes-

sage to all potential minority applicants that we stand united in opposing the glorification of leaders who defended slavery."

President Donald Trump on Wednesday said his administration will "not even consider" changing the name of any of the 10 Army bases that are named for Confederate Army officers. Two days earlier, Defense Secretary Mark Esper indicated he was open to a broad discussion of such changes.

Supporters of disassociating military bases from Confederate Army officers argue they represent the racism and divisiveness of the Civil War era and glorify men who fought against the United States.

Afghans to release 2,000 more prisoners

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — Afghanistan will soon complete a prisoner release that the Taliban have demanded before starting peace talks to end nearly two decades of war, the country's president said.

Some 3,000 Taliban prisoners have already been released, President Ashraf Ghani said in an online discussion with the Atlantic Council on Thursday. A peace deal signed by the U.S. and the Taliban in February calls for up to 5,000 Taliban prisoners and 1,000 government prisoners to be set free.

"My colleagues and I have made the decision to release an additional 2,000 prisoners within a short period," Ghani said. "Next week we should be able to inform the world of the next step."

It's still unclear how many government prisoners the Taliban is holding, Ghani said.

"The number keeps shifting," he told the Washington-based think tank. "We need clarity regarding the fate of those that are with them and assurance that the last person remaining with them is released."

Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen called Ghani's words a "positive step" and said once all 5,000 prisoners were released, the group would be willing to start peace talks within a week. Nearly 50 imprisoned Afghan policemen were released Thursday, bringing the total number of government prisoners released to 500, he said.

While many practical details need still need to be worked out, Thursday's developments were "all very positive," said U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad, who led the U.S. discussion with the Taliban last year.

"We are closer to the goal of [peace talks] than ever before," Khalilzad said on Twitter.

Head of Navy aviation school command, pilot killed in crash

BY CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

Two seasoned Naval aviators were killed in a civilian plane crash in Alabama this week while heading back to Pensacola, Fla., where they were both based.

Capt. Vincent Segars and Cmdr. Joshua Fuller were traveling from Jasper, Ala., when their Piper PA-32 crashed near an airfield outside Selma, local authorities said Thursday. The plane, owned by Fuller, went down just before 5 p.m. Wednesday after the pilot radioed for an emergency landing, the Selma Times-Journal reported. The Navy and Dallas County District Attorney Michael Jackson both confirmed their deaths to Stars and Stripes on Friday.

Segars, a native of Valdosta, Ga., took command of the Pensacola-based Naval Aviation Schools Command a year ago in May. The unit trains more than 12,000 Navy, Marine, Air Force, Coast Guard and international students annually in air crew, aviator, survival or commanding officer programs.

"I am overcome with grief!!!" said Baron Reinhold, a retired Navy aviator, in a Facebook post on Thursday after he said he was notified of Segars' death. "My retirement speaker, dearest friend, and the best naval officer that I've ever known ... was lost in a plane crash yesterday evening."

Before taking command in Pensacola, Segars served as the Navy's top officer and enlisted community manager. Over his

30-year career, he had flown with or served in leadership and staff roles at units in Rota, Spain; Whidbey Island, Wash.; Misawa, Japan; and Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, a Navy biography states.

Fuller, a native of Orlando, Fla., earned his gold aviator wings in 2001 and had logged more than 2,100 flight hours, the Navy said in a statement in November when he relinquished command of Naval Air Station Pensacola's Training Squadron 86.

The deaths come six months after three sailors assigned to the schools command were gunned down at NAS Pensacola on Dec. 6 by a Saudi student who authorities have said had ties to al-Qaida's Yemen branch.

Senate panel OKs boost in troop pay, numbers

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Senate Armed Services Committee on Thursday sent its version of the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act to the full Senate, approving a pay boost for troops, an increase to the military's end strength and funding a new initiative aimed at checking China's military power.

The \$740.5 billion bill, which directs how the Pentagon and some other agencies spend money on national security, was passed by the panel Thursday in a 25-2 vote. The committee's top Republican and Democrat touted it as a bipartisan policy-making effort that should set an example for other Capitol Hill work.

Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., chairman of the committee, said the bill represented equal input from Republicans and Democrats.

"There isn't too much Con-

gress does anymore on a bipartisan basis ... but we all agree that supporting our troops and defending our nation are two of our most important priorities," he said.

Sen. Jack Reed, of Rhode Island, the committee's top Democrat, said the committee's latest version of the NDAA was the product of "vigorous debate."

"We may disagree on issues, but we committed to maintaining the bipartisan integrity of the committee," he said.

Much of that debate centered around issues outside of the typical scope of the annual policy bill, Senate aides said. Those issues include some funding measures aimed at the coronavirus pandemic — including some \$44 million for vaccine and biotechnology research — and topics raised in recent days amid an ongoing national conversation on racial injustice.

The bill, for example, includes a measure that would bar the use of military funding or troops "against Americans exercising their First Amendment rights." It also would direct the founding of a three-year commission charged with determining how to change the names of Army bases named for Confederates from the Civil War.

For military troops, the proposed NDAA would provide a 3% pay raise, which the White House recommended.

The bill also supports White House efforts to grow the military force. It would expand the active-duty Army by 5,000 soldiers to a force of 485,000. The Navy would see 6,200 new sailors, bringing its force to 346,730. The Air Force would increase by 675 to 333,475 active-duty airmen.

The Marine Corps, however, would shrink by 6,200 Marines to 180,000.

Esper orders review of National Guard's role during protests

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

Defense Secretary Mark Esper on Thursday ordered an evaluation of the National Guard's role during nationwide protests following the killing by police of a black man in Minneapolis.

The after-action report will focus on a wide range of subjects, including training, equipping, organizing, manning, deployment and employment of National Guard forces, the Defense Department said in a statement Thursday.

National Guard forces were activated in more than a dozen states and the District of Columbia in the wake of protests over the death of George Floyd, an African American, in Minneapolis on May 25. He died after a police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes, a scene captured on video that went viral and sparked outrage, protests and, at times, riots and looting.

Esper tasked Secretary of

the Army Ryan McCarthy with completing the report by the end of July.

"In recent weeks, the National Guard has performed professionally and capably in support of law enforcement in cities across the United States," Esper said in the statement. "I have the greatest respect for, and am deeply proud of, our Soldiers and Airmen who served during this period to ensure that peaceful protestors could execute their First Amendment rights, and that they and others would not suffer from violence against themselves and their property."

National Guard troops joined officers from other law enforcement agencies in forcefully pushing back protesters gathered outside the White House June 1 to clear the way for President Donald Trump to walk to a nearby church for a photo op. Police used flash bangs and tossed tear gas into the crowd.

West Point grads worry of military being politicized

Stars and Stripes

In a letter published Thursday, hundreds of West Point alumni raised concerns about fellow graduates they say are politicizing the military and tarnishing the oaths they have all taken, urging the Class of 2020 to lead with character.

"This oath has no expiration date," says the letter, published on Medium.com just days before President Donald Trump is slated to speak to the current graduating class on Saturday. "Oaths are solemn, public promises with significant meaning and moral gravity. When they are broken, the nation suffers."

The post has been signed by over 350 graduates calling themselves Concerned Members of the Long Gray Line, representing nearly 50 classes from 1964 to 2017. Their service spans several presidential administrations. The group writes that its concern is about principle, not party, but it is a clear rebuke of West Point alumni serving in the Trump administration.

"We are concerned that fellow graduates serving in senior-level, public positions are failing to uphold their oath of office and their commitment to Duty, Honor, Country," it says. "Their actions threaten

the credibility of an apolitical military. We ask you to join us in working to right the wrongs and to hold each other accountable to the ideals instilled by our alma mater and affirmed by each of us at graduation."

Prominent West Point graduates serving in the Trump administration include Defense Secretary Mark Esper, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and senior advisers Brian Bulatao and Ulrich Brechbuhl — all Class of 1986.

David Urban, also a 1986 graduate, served as a senior adviser to Trump's presidential campaign, and the president nominated another 1986 classmate, Mark Green, as Army Secretary in 2017.

The concerned graduates also pointed to military leaders who have participated in "politically charged events." Their letter came as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley — not a West Point graduate — apologized for walking in uniform with Trump to a church where police had violently cleared peaceful protestors last week.

The letter rejected the proposed use of military forces against those protesting racism and police brutality throughout the U.S. after the killing of George Floyd.

N. Korea vows to build up military 2 years after talk

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea on Friday again vowed to build up its military force to counter what it perceives as U.S. threats and said there would be little reason for a personal relationship between leader Kim Jong Un and President Donald Trump if Washington persists with sanctions and pressure.

On the two-year anniversary of the leaders' first summit, North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Son Gwon said the North would never again gift Trump

with high-profile meetings and concessions he could boast as foreign policy achievements unless it gets something substantial in return.

"The question is whether there will be a need to keep holding hands shaken in Singapore, as we see that there is nothing of factual improvement to be made in the DPRK-U.S. relations simply by maintaining personal relations between our supreme leadership and the U.S. President," Ri said in a statement carried by state media, referring to North Korea by its formal name, the

Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"Never again will we provide the U.S. chief executive with another package to be used for (political) achievements without receiving any returns. Nothing is more hypocritical than an empty promise," Ri continued.

In their 2018 summit in Singapore, the first-ever meeting between active leaders of the two countries, Kim and Trump agreed to improve bilateral relations and issued a vague statement on a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula without describing

when and how it would occur.

But negotiations faltered after the United States rejected North Korean demands for broad sanctions relief in exchange for a partial surrender of the North's nuclear capabilities at Kim's second summit with Trump in Vietnam in February 2019.

Trump and Kim met for a third time last June at the inter-Korean border, but a subsequent working-level meeting broke down over what the North Koreans described as the Americans' "old stance and attitude."

Analysts test plasma for virus prevention

Associated Press

Survivors of COVID-19 are donating their blood plasma in droves in hopes it helps other patients recover from the coronavirus. And while the jury's still out, now scientists are testing if the donations might also prevent infection in the first place.

Thousands of coronavirus patients in hospitals around the world have been treated with so-called convalescent plasma — including more than 20,000 in the U.S. — with little solid evidence so far that it makes a difference. One recent study from China was unclear while another from New York offered a hint of benefit.

With more rigorous testing of plasma treatment underway, Dr. Shmuel Shoham of Johns Hopkins University is launching a nationwide study asking the next logical question: Could

giving survivors plasma right after a high-risk exposure to the virus stave off illness?

To tell, researchers at Hopkins and 15 other sites will recruit health workers, spouses of the sick and residents of nursing homes where someone just fell ill and “they’re trying to nip it in the bud,” Shoham said.

It’s a strict study: The 150 volunteers will be randomly assigned to get either plasma from COVID-19 survivors that contains coronavirus-fighting antibodies or regular plasma, like is used daily in hospitals, that was frozen prior to the pandemic. Scientists will track if there’s a difference in who gets sick.

If it works, survivor plasma could have important ramifications until a vaccine arrives — raising the prospect of possibly protecting high-risk people with temporary immune-boost-

ing infusions every so often.

“They’re a paramedic; they’re a police officer; they’re a poultry industry worker; they’re a submarine naval officer,” Shoham ticked off. “Can we blanket protect them?”

The historical evidence is sketchy, but convalescent plasma’s most famous use was during the 1918 flu pandemic, and reports suggest that recipients were less likely to die. Doctors still dust off the approach to tackle surprise outbreaks, like SARS, a cousin of COVID-19, in 2002 and the 2014 Ebola epidemic in West Africa, but even those recent uses lacked rigorous research.

Convalescent plasma seems safe to use, Dr. Michael Joyner of the Mayo Clinic reported last month. His team tracked the first 5,000 plasma recipients in a Food and Drug Administration-sponsored program and

found few serious side effects.

Does it help recovery? A clue comes from the first 39 patients treated at New York’s Mount Sinai Hospital. People who received plasma before needing a ventilator were less likely to die than non-plasma recipients, said Dr. Sean Liu, the study’s lead author.

But results of the first strictly controlled study were disappointing. Hospitals in the hard-hit Chinese city of Wuhan were comparing severely ill patients randomly assigned to receive plasma or regular care, but ran out of new patients when the virus waned. With only half of the 200 planned patients enrolled, more plasma recipients survived but researchers couldn’t tell if it was a real difference or coincidence, according to a report in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* last week.

Experts: Police ‘woefully undertrained’ in use of force

Associated Press

BURIEN, Wash. — Seattle officers hold down a protester, and one repeatedly punches him in the face. In another run-in, officers handcuff a looting suspect on the ground, one pressing a knee into his neck — the same tactic used on George Floyd.

The officers were captured on videos appearing to violate policies on how to use force just days after Floyd died at the hands of Minneapolis police, setting off nationwide protests.

With calls for police reforms across the U.S., instructors and researchers say officers lack sufficient training on how and when to use force, leaving them unprepared to handle tense situations. Better training can’t fix all the issues facing the nation’s police departments, but experts believe it would have a big impact.

“The skills are not taught well enough to be retained and now the officer is scrambling to find something that works,” said William Lewinski, executive director at Minnesota-based Force Science Institute, which provides research, training and consulting to law enforcement agencies.

Its two-year study of three large U.S. police academies says skills like using a baton or taking down an aggressive offender de-

teriorate dramatically within two weeks.

A recent Associated Press investigation found that a lack of firearms training has resulted in unintentional shootings by law enforcement. It’s the same problem with use-of-force techniques, Lewinski said.

“Police officers across the country are woefully undertrained,” said Sean Hendrickson, an instructor at Washington state’s police academy in suburban Seattle.

The AP was invited to the facility to see use-of-force training, a component of a 2012 federal agreement to reform the Seattle Police Department after officers were found to routinely use excessive force.

There’s classroom work, and cadets learn to combine skills by play-acting scenarios. In an old building decorated to look like an apartment, one officer plays the offender and others try to de-escalate tensions, take away his weapon and put him in handcuffs.

In a parking lot, officers pair off. One wears padding on their shins and the other practices swinging a baton, hitting low on the legs. They also learn to arrest someone who’s fighting back.

In Washington state, cadets must complete 720 hours of training, “but those skills start to degrade immediately,” Hendrick-

son said. Some states only require 400 to 500 hours of academy training and require 24 hours or less of training once they’re on the job. Often, follow-up training is online, not hands-on.

“There’s no profession that trains so little but expects so much,” Lewinski said.

But not all officers can be taught, he acknowledged. When it came to Derek Chauvin, the officer charged in Floyd’s death, “I’m not sure that training would have made a difference,” Lewinski said. “What he did was definitely criminal.”

Protesters are demanding reforms ranging from cutting funding to banning chokeholds. There’s been success in some states, such as California, where the governor ordered the police training program to stop teaching a neck hold that blocks blood flow to the brain.

A measure introduced this week in Congress would limit legal protections for police, create a national database of excessive-force incidents and address training.

“A profession where you have the power to kill should be a profession where you have highly trained officers that are accountable to the public,” U.S. Rep. Karen Bass, a California Democrat and chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus, told reporters.

Fears grow about patchwork election system

Associated Press

ATLANTA — The chaos that plagued Georgia's primary this week is raising concerns about a potential broader failure of the nation's patchwork election system that could undermine the November presidential contest, political leaders and elections experts say.

With less than five months to go, fears are mounting that several battleground states are not prepared to administer problem-free elections during the pandemic.

The increasingly urgent concerns are both complex and simple: long lines disproportionately affecting voters of color in places like Atlanta with a history of voter suppression; a severe shortage of poll workers scared away by coronavirus concerns; and an emerging consensus that it could take several days after polls close on Election Day to determine a winner as battleground states struggle with an explo-

sion of mail voting.

"We want a democracy in the United States we can showcase for the world, and right now it's broken and on full display," said Kristen Clarke, president and executive director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

Officials across the political spectrum have raised concerns, but there is a contrast in the level of urgency by party, and even by race.

Democrats want to send billions of dollars to overburdened state and local election systems and expand in-person early voting and universal no-excuse mail balloting. Republicans, reluctant to inject the federal government into state elections, have resisted such efforts and instead call on local elections officials, who in urban areas are often Democrats, to fix the problems themselves.

President Donald Trump is also fighting states' plans to expand voting by mail, rais-

ing repeated concerns with no evidence about voter fraud.

Civil rights activist Al Sharpton said he has lost confidence in the nation's voting system, particularly across states where federal protections that ensured minority voters weren't disenfranchised have been swept away.

"You're almost back to the Confederates against the Union," Sharpton said.

He offered a simple message to people of color and those who run elections this fall: "If you do not vote and protect the vote, then you are helping to keep the knee on our necks."

Election officials are expressing optimism as they scramble to address glaring problems. Amid continued pandemic concerns, many don't have enough poll workers to staff voting sites, the capacity to train new workers in states featuring new equipment or the ability to efficiently process the surge in mail ballots.

Trump rally on Juneteenth in Tulsa faces blowback

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Black community and political leaders are calling on President Donald Trump to at least change the date of an Oklahoma rally kick-starting his return to public campaigning, saying that holding the event on Juneteenth, the day that marks the end of slavery in America, is a "slap in the face."

Trump campaign officials discussed in advance the possible reaction to the Juneteenth date, but there are no plans to change it despite fierce blowback.

California Sen. Kamala Harris and Tulsa civic officials were among the black leaders who said it was offensive for Trump to pick that day — June 19 — and that place — Tulsa, an Oklahoma city that in 1921

was the site of a fiery and orchestrated white-on-black attack.

"This isn't just a wink to white supremacists — he's throwing them a welcome home party," Harris, a leading contender to be Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden's running mate, tweeted of Trump's rally plans.

"To choose the date, to come to Tulsa, is totally disrespectful and a slap in the face to even happen," said Sherry Gamble Smith, president of Tulsa's Black Wall Street Chamber of Commerce, an organization named after the prosperous black community that white Oklahomans burned down in the 1921 attack.

At a minimum, Gamble Smith said, the campaign should "change it to Saturday the 20th if they're going to have it."

Trump announced the rally plan Wednesday afternoon. It comes as his harsh law-and-order stance appears to fall increasingly out of sync with a growing concern over police abuse of African Americans after the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

Trump campaign officials defended the rally.

"As the party of Lincoln, Republicans are proud of the history of Juneteenth," said Katrina Pierson, senior adviser to the Trump campaign. "President Trump has built a record of success for Black Americans, including unprecedented low unemployment prior to the global pandemic, all-time high funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and criminal justice reform."

Jacksonville selected for Trump's convention speech

Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Jacksonville, Fla., has been selected to host the celebration marking President Donald Trump's acceptance of his party's nomination for reelection, the Republican National Committee chairwoman said Thursday.

Ronna McDaniel made the announcement a day after saying that Jacksonville was a front-runner to hold the event. The governor of North Carolina, the official

host of this summer's Republican National Convention, had balked at promising Trump a full-blown convention in Charlotte free from social distancing measures during the coronavirus pandemic.

"We are thrilled to celebrate this momentous occasion in the great city of Jacksonville," McDaniel said. "Not only does Florida hold a special place in President Trump's heart as his home state, but it is crucial in the path to victory in 2020. We look forward to bringing this great celebra-

tion and economic boon to the Sunshine State in just a few short months."

McDaniel said the event would be held at the VyStar Veterans Memorial Arena, which holds 15,000 people. She said more details would be released in the coming weeks.

The party's more mundane business, including discussions over the platform, will still be held in Charlotte because of contractual obligations.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police officer saves EMT choking on food

NJ BRICK TOWNSHIP — It took police officers just seconds to come to the aid of an emergency medical technician who was screening people for coronavirus when she began choking on food.

The incident, which happened Tuesday in the Brick Township Municipal Building, was captured by a 90-second surveillance video that police posted on Facebook.

The video showed EMT Katelyn Lammer beginning to choke. She motioned to police stationed behind glass at the front desk that she could not breathe.

Officers rushed to the area and the video showed Sgt. Austin Kenny performing the Heimlich maneuver on Lammer. The abdominal thrusts quickly cleared her airway.

"This is why we train," police wrote.

Traffic stop turns up \$1.9 million in cash

NE SEWARD — A sheriff's department in southeastern Nebraska seized nearly \$2 million in cash found in a pickup truck that was pulled over on suspicion of a minor traffic violation, officials there said.

Seward County Sheriff Mike Vance stopped the truck, which had Ohio plates, Wednesday morning on Interstate 80 near Seward for failing to signal a lane change, the Omaha World-Herald reported.

A search of the truck turned up \$1.9 million in cash in a duffel bag in the back of the truck, Vance said.

The driver, a 42-year-old man from Toledo, Ohio, was arrested on suspicion of currency

violations and money laundering. Local officials said federal charges are pending, the sheriff's office said.

Man pays off ticket that was issued in 1978

ME YORK — A man paid off a Maine parking ticket from Long Sands Beach — nearly 42 years after it was issued.

Gary Urgonski mailed a letter, the ticket from July 28, 1978, and a \$4 check — \$3 for the fine and a \$1 late fee — to the York Police Department, the Portsmouth Herald reported.

The letter read in part, "I hope I can now safely travel through the state of Maine without always looking in my rearview mirror."

Urgonski said he's sure he deserved the ticket and intended to pay it, but forgot about it over the years.

Police: Teen dies in river trying to save another

PA PHILADELPHIA — Two boys died after a 15-year-old jumped into the Schuylkill River to help his 14-year-old friend who had trouble swimming, police said.

A third teen called for help Wednesday.

"One of the young boys [who] jumped into the river had some difficulty swimming. The second boy jumped in to help his friend," said Police Inspector Ray Evers.

Police recovered their bodies several hours later after the youngsters went to the river to cool off from the city's heat and humidity.

Authorities have not released their names, but relatives at the scene said one of the boys was Quadir Beverly, 15, who was supposed to graduate from middle school on Thursday.

Pardons sought for low-level pot offenses

NV CARSON CITY — Nevada could become latest state with legal marijuana sales to pardon people convicted in the past of low-level marijuana possession.

Gov. Steve Sisolak said Thursday he'll ask the state Board of Pardons next week to consider unconditionally lifting non-violent criminal convictions for possession of 1 ounce (28 grams) or less of marijuana, not for purpose of sale.

The Democratic governor said in a statement that tens of thousands of people could be affected.

Loose tire and rim strikes SUV, driver dies

MA FITCHBURG — A loose tire and rim struck the windshield of a vehicle on a Massachusetts highway, killing the driver, state police said.

The 42-year-old Templeton woman was driving west on Route 2 in Fitchburg at about 1 p.m. Wednesday when her Jeep SUV was struck, police said in a statement.

She was flown to a Worcester hospital where she was pronounced dead. Her name has not been made public.

Police are still investigating whether the tire and rim detached from the axle of another vehicle or was being transported and fell from another vehicle.

Man driving farm tractor killed in crash

NE DUBOIS — A Kansas man has died in a crash on a Nebraska highway involving the man's farm tractor and a semitrailer, authorities in southeastern Nebraska

said.

The crash happened Monday on Nebraska Highway 50 south of DuBois, near the Kansas state line, the Lincoln Journal Star reported.

Investigators said Arden Bredemeier, 86, of Sabetha, Kan., was driving a farm tractor north on the highway when he tried to turn into a private drive and was hit by a southbound semitrailer. The crash closed a stretch of the highway for about two hours.

Pawnee County Attorney Jennifer Ladman said no charges are expected in the crash.

City to pay \$300K ransom after hack

AL FLORENCE — A city in northern Alabama will pay a ransom worth \$300,000 in Bitcoins in response to a hack of its computer system.

Florence City Council voted unanimously at an emergency meeting Wednesday evening to make the payment from the city's insurance fund in an effort to preserve information tied to its city workers and customers, news outlets reported.

Mayor Steve Holt said the city was contacted May 26 with information that its computer system had been compromised. The city didn't think any information had been stolen, but later learned ransomware had been deployed.

"It appears they may have been in our system since early May — over a month going through our system," Holt said.

City leaders were advised that the hacker has a reputation of not releasing stolen information after the ransom is paid, news outlets reported.

The city will seek proof from the hacker that stolen information has been deleted, WHNT-TV reported.

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STARS AND STRIPES®

PGA Tour returns with swing, silence

Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — The start was even more quiet than usual for a Thursday morning on the PGA Tour, only the silence never left over the next 12 hours as golf was back to business at the Charles Schwab Challenge.

Sung Kang made a hole-in-one on the 13th hole and didn't realize it until he was 50 yards from the green.

"I'm like, 'Wow, it's in the hole.' It wasn't really crazy. Nobody was really up there, only a few people out there just clapping a little bit," Kang said. "I still appreciated it, though."

Phil Mickelson made a birdie and instinctively pinched the brim of his cap to acknowledge

a crowd that wasn't there.

Ryan Palmer, a Colonial member who raised money for COVID-19 relief efforts during the shutdown, was chosen to hit the first official shot on the PGA Tour in three months. Those gathered around the first tee could barely hear him announced. The starter was wearing a mask, and his voice competed with the hum of a generator behind the ninth green.

Quiet as it was, Colonial came to a standstill at 8:46 a.m. when everyone on the course honored a moment of silence for the death of George Floyd and the outrage it has sparked worldwide on racial injustice.

It was a most unusual round

of golf.

But it was golf.

"I think just being out here is successful, to be honest with you, getting started," Palmer said. "I don't see anything holding us back moving forward. I think today was the biggest day, just getting this first day off. People are going to watch golf back home and be interested to watch it tomorrow, and that's a great thing."

Justin Rose and Harold Varner shared the lead at 7-under 63, with Justin Thomas among those a stroke back. Tom Lehman, a 61-year-old former champion at Colonial, got in on the act with a 65.

Conditions were ripe for good scores with no cheers.

"It kind of feels like a competitive practice round," said Rose, who won at Colonial two years ago. "But obviously, I think we all know what's on the line. We all know what we're playing for. We all know the competition this week especially, the field is incredible. Obviously, we miss the fans. They definitely provide a ton of energy and atmosphere."

Golf is the second major sport in the U.S., behind motor sports, to resume a schedule shut down by the pandemic. Among the safety measures are coronavirus tests for every player, caddie and essential personnel. Of the 487 tests at Colonial, the results were all negative.

With no fans, some sports will suffer more than others

Associated Press

When he first contemplated the prospect of a U.S. Open without fans because of the coronavirus pandemic, the U.S. Tennis Association's chief revenue officer figured there was no way it could work.

Lew Sherr eventually came around to embracing the idea of a closed-door Grand Slam tournament — if it's held at all; a decision is expected as soon as next week — because it still could make money even if millions were forfeited with zero on-site receipts from tickets, hospitality, food and beverage or merchandise sales.

"Certainly better than not playing. It still makes sense financially and as a way to keep the sport vibrant and engage fans," Sherr said. "As you get to lower-level tournaments, it becomes a much harder conversation."

Golf, which resumed Thursday in Fort Worth, Texas, also could take a real hit because of the virus and the recession.

Week-in, week-out events in tennis, where the pro tours are suspended at least until late July, do not bring in TV rights fees like the U.S. Open, which

averages \$70 million per year in the host country alone. Some of the smallest tour stops even need to buy air time.

Tennis and golf rely to a much greater degree on income generated from having people on-hand, especially for high-end tickets and hospitality. The economic framework for each tournament varies in both sports; smaller events, especially, would suffer financially if live audiences are eliminated or restricted.

One possible fallout of reduced revenue around tennis could be reduced prize money, even at a major championship such as the U.S. Open. Another: Some tournaments simply could disappear.

Here is a look at how economic structures of certain sports mean they will be affected by the pandemic:

NASCAR

Race hosts receive 65% of NASCAR's \$8.2 billion, 10-year television package; that in turn accounts for about 60-70% of track revenues. So it makes sense to move forward despite losing other revenue streams.

"Assuming that we get all of our races in ... NASCAR and its tracks will come through this OK," Dover International Speedway Inc. President and CEO Michael Tatom said. "It's not that we're going to be flying through it. It's not that we're not going to have any kind of impact. Of course we will. It will set us back. But not enough to be devastating."

Horse racing

The Kentucky Derby, according to an estimate a few years ago, makes only a little more than 10% of its revenue from broadcast rights. That's why Churchill Downs, Belmont and Santa Anita Park all recently reopened to racing, even if no fans are present: The main source of revenue, online gambling, still functions just fine. Last year's Belmont day drew \$102 million in wagers with no Triple Crown on the line — and \$91 million of that was off-track betting.

PGA Tour

Eliminating spectators means eliminating significant chunks of a tournament's

revenue. That starts with big-earning hospitality tents and pro-ams that can bring in upward of \$1 million, and includes other revenue sources like merchandise and ticket sales. Tournaments rely heavily on title sponsors — "We wouldn't be able to return" without them, Commissioner Jay Monahan said. But it's the local sponsorship that sustains each tournament. And if discretionary spending by corporations dries up, the effects could be greater in 2021.

Tennis

The U.S. Open — as of now, scheduled to begin in late August — gets about a third of its roughly \$400 million in annual revenue from various American and international TV rights deals. About a quarter is from sponsorship deals, some of which would be renegotiated if there were no on-site fans. Another 35% or so comes from tickets and hospitality, with less than 10% from food and beverage, merchandise, etc. — all of which would vanish without the hundreds of thousands who normally attend.

How will NASCAR enforce flag ban?

Associated Press

Reese Witherspoon tweeted a high-five emoji for her A-list stamp of approval that NASCAR banned the Confederate flag.

NASCAR's decision to ban the Confederate flag from its races and venues grabbed headlines and stars like Witherspoon and New Orleans Saints running back Alvin Kamara were quick to praise the stock car series for ridding itself of a symbol long associated with slavery and racism.

Kamara tweeted as the laps ticked off — he requested NASCAR send him a car so he can take a spin — and the sport sud-

denly had a slew of new, energized fans.

Now comes the tricky part.

In a matter of days, NASCAR will be faced with a daunting question: How to enforce the ban at its sprawling, rowdy tracks once fans are allowed back in and campers start setting up their RVs for race weekends? Approximately 1,000 members of the military will be allowed into Sunday's race near Miami and become the first fans at a NASCAR event since the pandemic shut down sports in March.

The enforcement question is much more likely to be an issue when the series holds races

June 20-21 at Talladega, Ala., where up to 5,000 fans are expected to be allowed in. Flags are a common sight at the superspeedway in the heart of NASCAR's Southern base.

NASCAR will work to develop protocols around enforcement, though it's not known where the ban ends. Will security be tasked with policing every Rebel flag string bikini or scrape off all the bumper stickers?

Take off that shirt, or else!

Or else, what?

"That will certainly be a challenge. We'll try to do that the right way," NASCAR executive vice president Steve

O'Donnell told SiriusXM on Thursday. "We'll get ahead of it as we are today in letting people know that, 'Hey, we're all about pride, we're all about America, fly your U.S. flag high, fly your drivers flags high and come on into the track.' But if we see something displayed at the track we're going to have to react and we will. More details to come but I'm confident we'll do that and we'll do that in a smart way."

Fellow drivers were quick to credit Bubba Wallace, NASCAR's lone black driver, for pushing NASCAR to enact the ban.

Tigers load up bats during Day 2 of baseball draft

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The Detroit Tigers took a few more big swings at rebuilding their lineup.

And, they hope, sooner rather than later.

After selecting Arizona State slugger Spencer Torkelson to open the Major League Baseball amateur draft Wednesday night, the Tigers used all five of their picks Thursday on hitters they envision joining him in Detroit.

Ohio State catcher Dillon Dingler led off the draft's second day as the No. 38 overall selection. The Tigers then took LSU outfielder Danny Cabrera 62nd overall, and Rice shortstop Trei Cruz — son of former big leaguer Jose Cruz Jr. and grandson of Jose Cruz — 11 picks later.

Detroit went back to Arizona State in the fourth round, taking Torkelson's switch-hitting teammate Gage Workman. Both were drafted by the Tigers as third basemen. So was fifth-rounder Colt Keith out of Biloxi High School in Mississippi. His selection ended Detroit's run on college position players, but the Tigers remained focused solely on hitting talent.

The Astros had to wait a while to make their first selection in this year's draft after having their first- and second-round picks stripped by Commissioner Rob Manfred as part of the team's punishment for breaking rules against using electronics to steal signs during games.

The New York Yankees were one of the teams to raise questions about wrongdoing by the Astros. Coincidentally, Houston took a pitcher from the Bronx at No. 72, hard-throwing Mount Saint Michael Academy right-hander Alex Santos.

While Detroit focused on adding offense, Miami went all pitching — already considered the strength in the upper levels of its system — with its six selections.

Minnesota right-hander Max Meyer was the No. 3 overall pick to the Marlins. They followed with Oklahoma high school lefty Daxton Fulton (No. 40), Ball State righty Kyle Nicolas (No. 61), Coastal Carolina right-hander Zach McCambley (No. 75), Vanderbilt lefty Jake Eder (No. 104) and USC righty Kyle Hurt (No. 134).

The defending World Series champion Washington Nationals took college pitchers with

four of their six overall picks, taking Oklahoma right-hander Cade Cavalli at No. 22 overall, and then going with two other righties — LSU's Cole Henry (second round), and UCLA's Holden Powell — before selecting San Jacinto College North lefty Mitchell Parker with their final pick.

Detroit had the No. 1 overall pick for the second time in three years, after taking Auburn right-hander Casey Mize in 2018. With their potential future ace already sailing through the farm system, the Tigers turned to bats this time.

Dingler, who moved from center field behind the plate two years ago, was hitting .340 with five home runs and 14 RBIs for the Buckeyes before the season was canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Cabrera is a patient hitter and outstanding defensive outfielder. He hit .345 with three doubles, two homers, 12 RBIs, 14 runs and six stolen bases for LSU this year.

In addition to his terrific baseball bloodlines, Cruz is an outstanding all-around hitter who made a smooth transition last year from second base to shortstop. This is also the third time he has been drafted, after

being taken in the 37th round last year by Washington and the 35th round by Houston in 2017.

"I'm just excited I can rep the Cruz name and rep it in the Tigers' organization," he said.

Workman complemented Torkelson as one of Arizona State's offensive forces the past few seasons. He hit .330 with eight homers and 42 RBIs last year, and started this season with three homers and 14 RBIs while batting .250.

Keith was the Mississippi high school player of the year last spring and was considered one of the draft's top two-way players. But, the Tigers envision him as an infielder with raw power and consistent contact — sticking with what ended up being their overall draft theme.

"I'm sure there were some high school guys that we didn't get to run down that we'd have loved to have seen and maybe it could have been different, for sure," Pleis said. "It just was a tough year, and it was a short draft."

Houston wrapped up the two-day event by taking University of San Diego shortstop Shay Whitcomb at No. 160.