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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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South Korea on alert after North threats

BY KIM GAMEL
AND YOO KYONG CHANG
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea held an emergency security meeting Sunday and said that its military was on alert after a series of threats from the North as rising tensions replaced hopes for peace and denuclearization.

The moves came amid growing concern that the divided peninsula faced a new crisis more than two years after President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un held an unprecedented summit in Singapore.

Kim's influential sister warned Saturday that the North would destroy an inter-Korean liaison office and unleash the army against the South due

to anger over Seoul's failure to stop activists from floating anti-regime leaflets across the border.

South Korea's national security director, Chung Eui-yong, convened a video conference with other top security officials Sunday morning to discuss the situation, which the government called "grave."

The defense ministry in Seoul said that it was closely monitoring North Korean military moves and maintaining a defensive posture "in preparation for all eventualities." It also called on the North to stick to an inter-Korean military agreement aimed at restoring peace "and the prevention of accidental clashes."

On Saturday, Kim Yo Jong, the North Korean leader's sister

who has recently been elevated in status as an official, said that "it is high time to surely break with the South Korean authorities" and promised to "soon take a next action," according to the state-run Korean Central News Agency.

"Before long, a tragic scene of the useless north-south joint liaison office completely collapsed would be seen," she said, calling the South an "enemy."

"If I drop a hint of our next plan the South Korean authorities are anxious about, the right to taking the next action against the enemy will be entrusted to the General Staff of our army," she added.

"Our army, too, will determine something for cooling down our people's resentment and surely carry it out, I be-

lieve," she said. "Rubbish must be thrown into dustbin."

Kim didn't specify a military action, and the North has not carried out previous threats, including a December promise to unveil a new "strategic weapon" that many predicted would be an intercontinental ballistic weapon.

But experts speculated that North Korea may conduct an artillery test or another action in the sea off the western coast, which would likely upset the South but stop short of provoking the United States.

Trump has been dismissive about a series of short-range missile tests in recent months, but suggested that the launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile or another nuclear test would be a red line.

US naval buildup in Pacific seen as warning to China

Associated Press

For the first time in nearly three years, three American aircraft carriers are patrolling the Indo-Pacific waters, a massive show of naval force in a region roiled by spiking tensions between the United States and China, and a sign that the Navy has bounced back from the worst days of the coronavirus outbreak.

The unusual simultaneous appearance of the three warships, accompanied by Navy cruisers, destroyers, fighter jets and other aircraft, comes as the U.S. escalates criticism of Beijing's response to the virus outbreak, its moves to impose greater control over Hong Kong and its campaign to militarize human-made islands in the South China Sea.

"There have been some indications in Chinese writings

that the United States was hit hard by COVID-19, that military preparedness was low, so perhaps there is an effort by the United States to signal China that it should not miscalculate," said Bonnie Glaser, director of the China Power Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "The Chinese will definitely portray this as an example of U.S. provocations, and as evidence that the U.S. is a source of instability in the region."

President Donald Trump, criticized for his handling of the coronavirus outbreak, has condemned China for what he sees as a failure to adequately warn the world about the COVID-19 threat. The administration has also moved to ban Chinese graduate students and researchers with links to China's army or other security services

from the U.S.

The convergence of three carrier strike groups in the region is unusual because of the limited number of carriers and the fact that they are often cycling through repair schedules, port visits, training or deployments to other parts of the world. Last week, however, Navy commanders said that they were able to take advantage of the timing, particularly during this period of great power competition with China.

The U.S. national defense strategy cites China as a top security concern, and Pentagon leaders have been working to shift more resources and military assets to the region to battle what they see is Beijing's growing economic influence and military might.

"The ability to be present in a strong way is part of the com-

petition. And as I always tell my guys here, you've got to be present to win when you're competing," said Rear Adm. Stephen Koehler, director of operations at Indo-Pacific Command. "Carriers and carrier strike groups writ large are phenomenal symbols of American naval power. I really am pretty fired up that we've got three of them at the moment."

Speaking to The Associated Press from his office in Hawaii, Koehler said that China is slowly and methodically building up military outposts in the South China Sea, putting missile and electronic warfare systems on them. The U.S. and other allies and partners in the region have beefed up operations near the human-made islands to try to blunt China's development, but none of that has appeared to work.

'Fighting Fitz' ready to rejoin Pacific Fleet

BY AARON KIDD
Stars and Stripes

The USS Fitzgerald is on its way to San Diego, where it will rejoin the Pacific Fleet after spending more than two years undergoing extensive collision repairs and equipment upgrades in Mississippi.

Seven sailors were killed when the guided-missile destroyer collided with a commercial container vessel, the Philippine-flagged ACX Crystal, off Japan's coast on June 17, 2017.

On Saturday, the warship departed the Ingalls Shipbuilding facility in Pascagoula, Miss., for its new homeport at Naval Base San Diego, a Navy statement said. It had been assigned to the 7th Fleet at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, at the time of the accident.

"Today the 'Fighting Fitz' is returning to

the Pacific Fleet as one of our nation's most capable warfighting platforms, marking a significant step in her return to warfighting readiness," Rear Adm. Eric Ver Hage, the Navy's surface ship maintenance and modernization commander, said in the statement.

The repairs and modernizations ended up costing the Navy \$523 million, USNI News reported Saturday. The work was originally expected to top out at \$368 million and take two years instead of two and a half.

In February, the Fitzgerald went to sea for a trial run and to evaluate its navigation, damage control, combat and propulsion systems. Once in San Diego, it will begin crew training and certifications required for it to officially restart patrols.

Blame for the collision fell on the commanding officer at the time, Cmdr. Bryce

Benson, and Lt. Natalie Combs, a tactical action officer, who were initially charged with negligent dereliction of duty resulting in death and negligent hazarding of a vessel. The charges were dropped last year and the two were instead censured by the Navy. Benson retired in December; a Navy panel in January ruled that Combs could do the same.

The Fitzgerald returns to sea about a week after a federal judge dismissed two lawsuits brought by survivors and sailors' families seeking more than \$287 million from the ship company that chartered the ACX Crystal.

The suits, filed in the U.S. District Court of Eastern Louisiana, said that the sailors endured mental anguish, lost wages, pain and suffering and "pre-death fright."

The plaintiffs' attorney, David Schloss, plans to appeal the decision.

Troops honor Floyd with vigil at Camp Humphreys

BY KIM GAMEL
AND MATTHEW KEELER
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — Hundreds of American troops, their loved ones and civilians waved candles and sang during a vigil on Camp Humphreys honoring George Floyd and showing solidarity with the anti-racism movement his death has inspired.

The hourlong gathering Thursday night was the brainchild of Spc. David Perkins, who secretly distributed some 2,300 flyers at dining facilities, stores, bus stops and other public areas last week before gaining support from the garrison.

It gave the military community an opportunity to commemorate Floyd, a 46-year-old black man who died on May 25 as a white Minneapolis policeman pinned him down with his knee.

"I know the unlawful killing of George Floyd has been something that's been eating away at us," Perkins told the crowd gathered on a plaza in

the base's main shopping and entertainment area. "It's been weighing heavily on every conversation, every thought."

"I don't want to see this fire fizzle out and be put on the back burner," he said. "We're not only here for George Floyd but also for families around the globe affected by unjust police and racial prejudices."

Floyd's death has also forced a reckoning in the military about how to confront racism in its own ranks after years of priding itself on diversity.

Gen. Robert Abrams, who commands U.S. Forces Korea, has expressed outrage over the killing and held a town hall-style meeting last Sunday after directing subordinate leaders to initiate dialogue with their units.

Many people wore T-shirts emblazoned with "Black Lives Matter" and "I Can't Breathe" as they listened to speeches and a fiery sermon by the hospital chaplain, Lt. Col. Isaac Opara of the 65th Medical Brigade, who also led the crowd in singing "God Bless America."

Work resumes on disputed Marine runway in Okinawa

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND AYA ICHIHASHI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The Japanese government has restarted construction on the coastal airfield in north-eastern Okinawa that will one day facilitate the relocation of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma.

Work resumed Friday on "area 2-1" and "area 2" at the Marine base Camp Schwab in Henoko, said a spokesman for the Okinawa Defense Bureau, which represents Japan's Defense Ministry on the island.

Construction was suspended April 17 when a civilian security guard tested positive for the coronavirus.

"We have asked all the contracting companies to apply the best coronavirus mitigation measures: use of alcohol sprays, wearing masks, no big meetings and such," the bureau spokesman said.

Between 1,000 and 2,000 workers enter Schwab for construction work daily. The resumption of construction an-

gered prefectural officials who are still trying to fight the relocation within Okinawa in the courts.

"It's very disappointing," Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki said during a press conference Friday, the Ryukyu Shimpo newspaper reported. Of 48 local assembly representatives, 29 are against the relocation.

That "shows that the majority of Okinawa's people are against the new base," he said.

Japan's Supreme Court in March rejected a lawsuit brought by the prefectural government to block the relocation project. Another lawsuit in a local court is pending, a prefectural spokesman said Friday. No hearing date has been scheduled due to the coronavirus.

Resuming work at the site comes after the Japanese government in May acknowledged that project completion has been pushed to at least 2030 and the overall cost has jumped to \$8.7 billion. The project had been set for completion in 2014 by bilateral agreement at a cost of \$2.2 billion.

USFJ bases ease limits on off-base travel

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — U.S. Forces Japan has moved its health protection condition from “substantial” to “moderate,” commander Lt. Gen. Kevin Schneider announced in a video posted Friday on Facebook.

The change prompted loosened coronavirus-related restrictions for U.S. service members, Defense Department civilians and their families across the country.

The moderate level, known as HPCON-Bravo, represents progress in the fight against the virus, indicating there is a risk of “increased community transmission,” according to DOD. That’s a step down from HPCON-Charlie, which USFJ has been under since March 25 and indicates “substantial risk” of the coronavirus’ spread.

Still, Schneider said the move does not mean precautions are no longer necessary; the use of face masks, regular handwashing and social distancing remain important.

“This is not a return to life as normal as it was in January and we are not finished dealing with the challenges of the virus,” he said.

Group limits were relaxed at many bases Friday, as long as attendees stay 6 feet away from each other. Up to 50 people may gather at Misawa Air Base; up to 20 at Yokota Air Base; and up to 10 at Yokosuka, which spent nearly three months under an order that barred contact between households.

Keeping the number of contacts low is important to mitigating the spread, Yokosuka commander Capt. Rich Jarrett said Thursday via Facebook Live. When someone tests positive for the virus, all those who

have been in recent contact with the patient must go into isolation.

“One of the struggles that we faced here as we were getting our feet wet with COVID-19 cases is one person had been around so many people that they were taking 30 to 40 people into quarantine with them,” he said.

Recreational shopping is also now allowed for Yokosuka and Misawa, where residents had been restricted to essential items only.

Yokosuka resident Margaux Burke, whose husband has been deployed on the USS An-tietam since February, said “all I had been wanting to do is go to a hardware store.”

Some activities remain prohibited across Japan, such as visiting off-base bars, hotels and tattoo parlors. While Misawa greenlit restaurants with less than 50% occupancy Fri-

day, off-base dining remains banned for Yokosuka personnel and families.

Most Defense Department personnel and their families are restricted from going into highly populated cities. For example, those at Yokosuka must stay within the Miura peninsula and are barred from visiting Kamakura, Yokohama and Tokyo, while Sasebo residents must remain within Nagasaki prefecture.

Naval Air Facility Atsugi personnel and families are restricted to a 3.1-mile radius of the base or their homes and those at Misawa should stay within 12.4 miles of base.

Navy-wide, personnel are also restricted at least to their prefectures, but those limits will be extended after June 19, Naval Forces Japan commander Rear Adm. Brian Fort said in a video posted to Facebook on Friday.

China, Korea, Egypt report rise in cases as curbs ease

Associated Press

BEIJING — China reported its highest daily total of new coronavirus cases in two months Sunday and infections in South Korea rose, showing how the disease can come back as curbs on business and travel are lifted.

Elsewhere, governments including Egypt, Ukraine and North Macedonia have reported their highest single-day totals of new infections since

Friday. In the United States, case numbers are rising in some states as President Donald Trump pushes to reopen businesses despite warnings by public health experts.

The world is seeing more than 100,000 newly confirmed cases every day, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

China had 57 new confirmed cases in the 24 hours through midnight Saturday, the Nation-

al Health Commission reported. That was the highest since mid-April and included 36 in the capital, Beijing, a city of 20 million people.

Beijing’s cases all were linked to its biggest wholesale food market, which was shut down Saturday, the official China News Service reported, citing the city’s disease control agency. It said 27 worked there and nine had direct or indirect exposure to it.

The Xinfadi market was closed after 50 people tested positive for the virus in the Chinese capital’s first confirmed cases in 50 days.

China, where the pandemic began in December, and other countries that suffered early on including South Korea, Italy and Spain have seen numbers of new infections decline. Brazil, India, the United States and other countries are seeing large increases.

Global protests seek change, see inequality in own cultures

Associated Press

TOKYO — Holding handmade signs that read “Black Lives Matter,” hundreds of people marched peacefully in Tokyo on Sunday, highlighting the outrage over the death of George Floyd even in a country often perceived as homogeneous and untouched by racial issues.

Mitsuaki Shidara, standing in the crowd at Yoyogi Park, where the march began, said Japan has plenty of discrimination problems, but they’re overlooked.

“We are all human first, but we are divided by nationality, gender, religion, skin color,” he said, wearing a pendant with the Japanese character for “love,” which he said was his

favorite word.

“What’s happening in the U.S. shows racism is going on, even after 400 years,” said Shidara, who works for a food maker.

Mio Kosaka, another participant, said she had been a victim of discrimination at times while growing up in Beijing and Tokyo, because her parents were Japanese and Chinese.

“Some people don’t even know there is discrimination. Awareness needs to be raised,” she added.

Protests have continued across the U.S. but also in Europe, including Belgium, Germany and Britain, as well as Australia, where people have been confronting racism and demanding change.

Many European borders open for domestic travel

Associated Press

BERLIN — Europe is taking a big step toward a new normality as many countries open borders to fellow Europeans after three months of coronavirus lockdowns — but even though Europeans love their summer vacations, it's not clear how many are ready to travel again.

Tourists from the U.S., Asia, Latin American and the Middle East will just have to wait, for now.

The European Union home affairs commissioner, Ylva Johansson, told member nations that they “should open up as soon as possible” and suggested Monday was a good date.

Many countries are doing just that, allowing travel from the EU, Britain and the rest of Europe's usually passport-free Schengen travel area, which includes non-EU countries like Switzerland.

Europe's reopening won't be a repeat of the chaotic free-for-all in March when panicked, uncoordinated border closures caused traffic jams that stretched for miles. Still, it's a

complicated, shifting patchwork of different rules. And although tourist regions are desperately counting on them, a lot of Europeans may decide to stay close to home this summer.

Germany, like France and others, is lifting remaining border checks Monday and scrapping a requirement that arrivals must prove they have a good reason to enter.

Drugmaker AstraZeneca struck a deal Saturday to supply up to 400 million doses of an experimental COVID-19 vaccine to European Union countries, the latest in a series of agreements as scientists, governments and pharmaceutical companies race to combat the virus.

AstraZeneca plans to begin delivering the vaccine to European countries by the end of this year under the agreement with the Inclusive Vaccine Alliance, formed this month by France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands.

The deal is the latest in a series of agreements to produce the vaccine.

Bases ease limits as USFJ lowers health-risk level

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — U.S. Forces Japan has moved its health protection condition from “substantial” to “moderate,” commander Lt. Gen. Kevin Schneider announced in a video posted Friday on Facebook.

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HPCON-Charlie came with heightened restrictions and shelter-in-place orders for Japan bases. For many, movement outside the home for anything other than essential business or activities such as work, grocery shopping or medical appointments was prohibited.

“I know how difficult it has been to endure shelter-in-place orders, restrictions on movement, social distancing, travel restrictions and more, but we've been highly effective in checking the spread of COVID-19 and preserving our ability to maintain a trained and ready force,” Schneider said in the video. COVID-19 is the respiratory disease caused by coronavirus.

Still, Schneider said the move does not mean precautions are no longer necessary; the use of face masks, regular handwashing and social distancing remain important.

Group limits were relaxed at many bases Friday, as long as attendees stay 6 feet away from each other.

Some activities remain prohibited across Japan, such as visiting off-base bars, hotels and tattoo parlors.

Most Defense Department personnel and their families are restricted from going into highly populated cities. For example, those at Yokosuka must stay within the Miura peninsula and are barred from visiting Kamakura, Yokohama and Tokyo, while Sasebo residents must remain within Nagasaki prefecture.

Army selects vaccine candidate; trials set for summer

McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Army scientists have a vaccine candidate that they believe has the potential to fight COVID-19 — and that may be able to protect individuals from future coronaviruses, “from season to season, for decades to come.”

The scientists at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research chose SpFN, for Spike Ferritin Nanoparticle, after testing dozens of variants of vaccine candidates in more than 1,000 mice.

“It was a real sense of relief” to discover a strong vaccine candidate, Dr. Kayvon Modjarrad, director of Walter Reed's Emerg-

ing Infectious Diseases Branch, said in an exclusive interview with McClatchy. “Our team has not taken a day off in three, four months since this all started. After we got that result I said, ‘you know, we can at least take one day off.’”

Their progress comes as cases of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, topped 2 million in the United States, and 21 states have seen an increase in positive cases in recent weeks.

SpFN differs from other vaccines under development, in that it uses a soccer-ball-shaped protein that allows scientists to harness the spikes of multiple coronavirus strains on 24 different faces of the protein.

That attracted a stronger immune system response in tests with mice than other approaches, where there was only one spike of the coronavirus inserted on a vaccine candidate.

This vaccine also has the potential to fight off future variants of the coronavirus because different versions of the virus can be put on the spikes, he said.

The vaccine, like many others under development, is being fast-tracked. Now that it has been vetted for generating an immune system response, it will move into further testing, involving monkeys, to see if the vaccine protects them against the virus.

Activists cite flaw in Ga.'s mail-in primary ballots

Associated Press

Faulty software or poorly calibrated vote-tabulation scanners used to count mailed-in ballots in last week's chaotic Georgia primary may have prevented thousands of votes from being counted, election officials and voting integrity activists said.

The issue was identified in at least four counties — DeKalb, Morgan, Clarke and Cherokee — according to officials who discovered them, including activists who have sued the state for alleged election mismanagement.

"The fact that it is in multiple counties tells me that it's probably systemic," said Richard DeMillo, a Georgia Tech computer scientist who has testified for the plaintiffs, because identical scanners and software were used to count all absentee ballots across the state. DeMillo said that the only way to know for sure is through audits.

A top Georgia voting official, voting implementation manager Gabriel Sterling, said Friday that he had seen no evidence yet of the issue and found it difficult to believe that the reports were "an active description of what is happening on the ground."

"These are activists who have an ax to grind," he said.

Nearly 1.1 million Georgians voted by mail for Tuesday's primary, which had been delayed twice due to the coronavirus pandemic.

In-person voting Tuesday was beset by cascading failures. Voters waited up to five hours to cast ballots at some polling places due to equipment problems, poll worker unfamiliarity with a new voting system and social distancing measures taken because of the virus. Many voters also showed up to vote in person because absentee ballots they requested never arrived by mail.

The scanners and ballot-marking devices used in all 159 Georgia counties Tuesday are part of a voting equipment package the state purchased for \$120 million from Dominion Voting Systems after a federal judge ordered it to scrap an outdated, untrustworthy system.

In post-election reviews Wednesday, election panels in all four counties detected unregistered votes while examining ballot images flagged by the vote-tallying scanner's software for anomalies.

In Clarke County, vote review panelist Adam Shirley estimated that at least 30 ballots out of about 300 flagged for anomalies had votes which "the system had not marked at all, that had not processed at all."

Shirley, a Democrat, recommended a review of all 15,000 absentee ballots.

SpaceX launches more satellites

Orlando (Fla.) Sentinel

ORLANDO, Fla. — An hour before sunrise Saturday, SpaceX launched yet another batch of Starlink satellites from Cape Canaveral, continuing the company's mission to build a constellation of satellites that can deliver high-speed internet to the entire planet.

The launch, which went off as scheduled at 5:21 a.m. from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station's launch complex 40, deployed 58 small satellites, loaded inside the fairing of a Falcon 9 rocket, to low-Earth orbit. The satellites deployed and began to fan out about 40 minutes after launch.

Also on board were 3 SkySat satellites, as part of the company's first rideshare mission with Planet Labs, based out of San Francisco.

SpaceX successfully landed the reusable booster, which has flown twice before, on the "Of Course I Still Love You" drone ship about eight minutes after the launch.

This was the "fastest pad turnover" SpaceX has performed since beginning the Starlink missions, SpaceX said. The last batch of satellites launched just 10 days ago also from launch complex 40.

Saturday's mission was the ninth set of satellites SpaceX has delivered and brings the number circling the Earth to 538. The Federal Communications Commission has approved SpaceX to operate nearly 12,000 of them.

It was the seventh Starlink mission this year, as part of SpaceX's aggressive schedule to set up blanket internet coverage for North America by the end of the year. SpaceX aims to have 1,500 Starlinks in low-Earth orbit by the end of 2020 and is targeting "near global coverage" by 2021.

Va. gun sales are up amid politics, protests

The (Norfolk, Va.) Virginian-Pilot

Robert Marcus has owned Bob's Gun Shop in downtown Norfolk, Va., for three decades.

He's seen firearm sales tick up plenty of times over the years, like when there's an election coming or there's some type of social unrest dominating the headlines.

But he's never seen them skyrocket as they have in recent months.

"It's incredible," Marcus said. "There are a lot of extraneous things going on now that have caused guns to become very desirable."

During the first five months of this year, FBI statistics show the number of criminal background check requests submitted for gun sales in Virginia is up 77% compared to the same time period last year. And that doesn't even include the past couple of weeks, which Marcus and others said also have been especially busy.

Purchases first began to increase late last year, when Democrats won the majority of Virginia's legislative seats and vowed to pass more restrictive gun laws, Marcus said. They continued to stay elevated in January when the General Assembly convened in Richmond.

Then in March, the coronavirus pandemic caused many to fear it would lead to civil unrest. Stimulus checks provided by the federal government also made it easier for some to fund their gun purchases.

That's when Marcus and some other local gun shop workers say sales really went through the roof. The FBI conducted 3.7 million background checks for firearm sales across the country in March, the highest total since it began publishing the data in 1998.

It's been the angry and sometimes violent protests across the country the past couple weeks that's spurred the latest surge in sales.

News of some demonstrations ending with violent clashes between police and protesters, as well as vandalism and looting, has led some to worry that police will be too overwhelmed to respond to other emergencies in a timely manner, he said.

Many recent buyers are purchasing their first gun, according to employees at four local stores. Most tend to be interested in weapons best suited for self-defense, like handguns and shotguns.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man guilty of smuggling rare cacti overseas

TX EL PASO — A man pleaded guilty in connection with a West Texas ring that smuggled rare living rock cacti, a plant that wildlife officials say is a protected species.

Harry George Bock II of El Paso pleaded guilty before a U.S. magistrate judge in Pecos to one count of mislabeling exports in a scheme to ship cacti overseas, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Texas said.

The living rock cactus is only found in the Big Bend region, federal wildlife officials said.

Five other people have already been sentenced in connection with the scheme.

The men were accused of violating the Lacey Act of 1900 that makes it a felony to sell or purchase protected wildlife and plants. It is still unknown how many plants were smuggled.

Ambulance crashes into toll booth, injures four

OK NEWCASTLE — Four people were injured when an ambulance crashed into a toll booth on an Oklahoma turnpike, and investigators were trying to determine whether the driver fell asleep at the wheel, Oklahoma Highway Patrol spokesperson Sarah Stewart said.

The Jackson County Emergency Medical Services ambulance crashed into the toll booth near Newcastle, about 20 miles southwest of Oklahoma City, Stewart said.

A patient and two paramedics who were inside the ambulance were flown by helicopter to an Oklahoma City hospital following the crash, according to Stewart. But only the patient and one paramedic, the driver,

were admitted, while the second paramedic was treated and released.

A worker in the toll booth was taken by another ambulance to a hospital where she was treated and released, Stewart added.

Annual Cowboy Poetry festival canceled for '21

NV ELKO — The annual National Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Nevada is joining other music and art festivals around the nation canceling in-person events due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Western Folklife Center executive Kristen Windbigler told the Elko Daily Free Press that organizers hope to provide online podcast and video shows instead of the six-day annual festival in late January 2021.

Board members decided they could not commit to contracts for the event, and that canceling at the last minute could have been more financially devastating to the organization and its future.

The festival has been held in Elko since 1985.

Ruling: Charging kiosks can't award money

WI MADISON — A unanimous Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled that cellphone-charging kiosks that allow users to win or lose money by playing a video game are illegal gambling machines.

Quick Charge Kiosk, owned by Jeremy Hahn, operates the kiosks, known as "Pow'r Up" machines, in convenience stores and gas stations throughout the state.

Soon after the kiosks debuted, the Wisconsin attorney general said in 2015 that they were illegal gambling machines and several were seized. Quick

Charge sued, arguing that the machines were allowed under state law.

"Free play option or not, Quick Charge's argument does not overcome the reality that its kiosks can be used as gambling machines," Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Brian Hagedorn wrote. "Simply because a kiosk has uses other than illegal gambling does not negate that reality."

Gospel radio announcer killed outside her home

MD BALTIMORE — A longtime Gospel radio announcer was fatally shot outside her home in a case Baltimore police call a "senseless" and "tragic murder."

Tyra Womack was pronounced dead by medical personnel after police responded to a call about the shooting at her home in the Lauraville neighborhood of the city, news outlets reported.

Womack, who also went by Tyra Phillips professionally, was an announcer on WEAA-FM's "Gospel Grace" program for more than 30 years, and provided information on the church community during the weekly broadcast.

The "senseless" shooting that killed her seems to have followed a neighborhood dispute, according to a statement from Baltimore Police spokeswoman Detective Nicole Monroe.

Bluegrass museum to reopen after pandemic

KY OWENSBORO — The Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame & Museum in Owensboro will reopen to the public this month after being closed for almost three months during the coronavirus pandemic.

The museum's exhibits feature documentary-style films,

artifacts and images. Virtual tours can be accessed online.

Some adjustments have been made for health purposes. Details are posted online and in the building, Executive Director Chris Joslin said in a news release.

Police make arrest in 1999 cold case

AL MOBILE — A more than two-decades old cold case was closed in Alabama with the arrest of a 42-year-old man.

Mobile Police said officers arrested Jamelle Thomas of Mobile on a charge of murder for the December 1999 death of Marcel Chandler, 24, who was found shot to death inside his crashed car.

Police did not release details of what led them to Thomas as a suspect.

City agrees to restore Depression-era theater

NJ JERSEY CITY — A majestic, Depression-era theater in Jersey City moved one step closer to being restored.

The city announced that it reached an agreement with a historic preservation group to solicit bids for a promoter and venue operator to resurrect Loew's Theatre in Journal Square.

The announcement ends a yearslong dispute between the city and Friends of the Loew's over the future of the theater.

The theater was built in the late 1920s.

It eventually became a movie theater and was boarded up in the 1980s. Friends of the Loew's has put on smaller shows there since the 1990s.

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Players tell MLB to order return

Associated Press

Baseball players told Major League Baseball additional talks to start the season during the coronavirus pandemic are pointless and said owners should order a return to work, which likely would spark lengthy litigation and a renewal of the sport's labor wars.

The union's action Saturday night in the bitter dispute over pay could lead to a season of about 50 games rather than the 82 initially proposed by MLB. The Major League Baseball Players Association could respond by filing a grievance that would be heard by arbitrator Mark Irving, arguing players are owed hundreds of millions of dollars in damages due to a shorter season. "It unfortunately appears that further dialogue with the league would be futile," union head Tony Clark said in a statement. "It's time to get back to work. Tell us when and where."

MLB responded with a statement accusing the union of not negotiating in good faith and cited the March agreement that called for prorated salaries but did not obligate teams to play in empty ballparks.

"The MLBPA's position that players are entitled to virtually all the revenue from a 2020 season played without fans is not fair to the thousands of other baseball employees that clubs and our office are sup-

porting financially during this very difficult 2020 season," the commissioner's office said in a statement. "We will evaluate the union's refusal to adhere to the terms of the March agreement, and after consulting with ownership, determine the best course to bring baseball back to our fans."

While the NBA, NHL and MLS have figured out deals to return in this summer of the coronavirus, baseball has descended into the fractious labor strife that led to eight work stoppages from 1972-95. The union has seethed following a collective bargaining agreement in late 2016 that led to relatively flat salaries for five straight years, an unsuccessful grievance accusing the Chicago Cubs of manipulating third baseman Kris Bryant's service time to delay his eligibility for free agency and a grievance accusing teams of improperly using revenue sharing proceeds, a process the union calls "tanking."

These contentious negotiations heighten the chance of a spring training lockout after the current collective bargaining agreement expires on Dec. 1, 2021.

"Given your continued insistence on hundreds of millions of dollars of additional pay reductions, we assume these negotiations are at an end," union chief negotiator Bruce Meyer wrote

in a letter to Deputy Commissioner Dan Halem on Saturday that was obtained by The Associated Press. "If it is your intention to unilaterally impose a season, we again request that you inform us and our members of how many games you intend to play and when and where players should report. It is unfair to leave players and the fans hanging at this point, and further delay risks compromising health and safety. We demand that you inform us of your plans by close of business on Monday."

Players and MLB agreed to a deal on March 26 calling for prorated salaries, a deal that included \$170 million in salary advances and a guarantee of service time for 2020 even if no games are played.

That deal gave baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred the right to start the season provided there were no travel restrictions and games could be played before fans in regular-season ballparks. It called for "good faith" negotiations to play in empty ballparks or neutral sites.

Players insist they should not have to accept additional cuts. A unilateral decision to start play could mean the playoffs would remain at 10 teams and not expand to 16, as both sides have proposed.

"The solidarity of the players has never been more con-

centrated in years," said Scott Boras, baseball's most high-profile agent, who has three clients on the union's eight-man executive subcommittee.

MLB made three economic offers, the last Friday, and the union proposed two. The executive subcommittee held a call Saturday followed by a larger group of about 100 players, including the full executive committee and others.

The sides remain far apart on how much players should get of the \$4 billion in salaries they originally were set to earn: MLB has offered to guarantee \$1.27 billion and increase the total to \$1.45 billion if the post-season is completed. Players want \$2.25 billion and an 89-game season.

"Players want to play. It's who we are and what we do," Clark said. "Since March, the association has made it clear that our No. 1 focus is playing the fullest season possible, as soon as possible, as safely as possible. Players agreed to billions in monetary concessions as a means to that end, and in the face of repeated media leaks and misdirection, we made additional proposals to inject new revenues into the industry — proposals that would benefit the owners, players, broadcast partners, and fans alike. It's now become apparent that these efforts have fallen upon deaf ears."

Schauffele leads Colonial over host of stars

Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — The PGA Tour went three months without playing. It took three days to show fans what they were missing, even if all they could do was watch on TV.

Eight players had at least a share of the lead at some point Saturday in the Charles Schwab Challenge. When the third round at Colonial ended, 14 players were separated by three shots.

Xander Schauffele, among the growing roster of young stars in golf, finished off his six-birdie round with a 12-footer on the last

hole for a 4-under 66.

The six players one shot behind included Jordan Spieth, whose short game helped him navigate some early trouble and nerves. He had the lead until he went without making a birdie on the back nine. Still, his 68 gave him his best 54-hole position since Colonial a year ago as he tries to end three years without winning.

Also one shot behind was Justin Thomas (66) and U.S. Open champion Gary Woodland, who quickly got into the mix with birdies on his last two holes for a 66.

Rory McIlroy (69) and Justin Rose (68) were among those three shots behind. Pat-

rick Reed, who had to birdie three of his last six holes Friday to make the cut with one shot to spare, shot 63 and was three back.

"I don't have like a huge effect on the crowd I'd say, so not having fans isn't the craziest thing to me," Schauffele said. "It just does feel like I'm playing at home with some of my buddies. It's quiet. You make three birdies in a row, you can kind of give yourself a pat on the back."

This wasn't entirely a TV show. A few houses in the Colonial neighborhood put up their own hospitality tents to see limited golf.

Mayfield says he'll kneel during anthem

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Cleveland Browns quarterback Baker Mayfield plans to kneel during the national anthem this upcoming season to support protests of social injustice, police brutality and racism.

In answering a post from a fan on his Instagram account Saturday that pleaded with him not to kneel, Mayfield responded: "Pull your head out. I absolutely am."

Mayfield has been outspoken about the need for more understanding and justice in the nation following the death of George Floyd, a black man, while in police custody in Minneapolis.

"It's a pivotal time for change," Mayfield said Thursday. "What's being addressed now obviously has been going on for a long

time. So now everybody's finally coming together to address it. And doing it the right way of holding people accountable."

Mayfield wore an "I Can't Breathe" T-shirt while working out. Later, he posted another message outlining his stance on kneeling.

"Everybody so upset about my comment doesn't understand the reason behind kneeling in the first place," Mayfield wrote. "I have the utmost respect for our military, cops, and people that serve OUR country. It's about equality and everybody being treated the same because we are all human. It's been ignored for too long and that is my fault as well for not becoming more educated and staying silent."

"If I lose fans, that's OK. I've always spoken my mind. And that's from the heart."

On Friday, Houston Texans coach Bill O'Brien said he would kneel with his players if they chose to do so during the anthem.

Earlier this week, while not going as far as O'Brien, new Browns coach Kevin Stefanski made it clear he would back his players in any peaceful demonstrations.

"My position is I want to make sure I support our players," Stefanski said. "First things first, I want to make sure I sit down with them and talk. ... I can just promise you this, we will spend as much time as needed to make sure that we are all on the same page and we are a united front from a player, staff, you name it (standpoint)."

Stefanski attended a peaceful protest last weekend and has encouraged his players to "get in the arena."

NHL players not rushing back for voluntary skates

Associated Press

John Tavares took his sticks home from the rink in Toronto to tape them up so he wouldn't waste his limited time there.

Across the border, Andrew Copp is waiting things out in the U.S. before returning to Winnipeg for the start of mandatory training camps because of Canada's 14-day quarantine regulation because of the coronavirus pandemic.

NHL players could start participating in voluntary small-group workouts, and teams began opening their training facilities last Monday. Players learned Thursday training camps can open July 10, pending an agreement on returning to play later this summer. Now, the players are expected to trickle back in preparation of the resumption of the season.

"We've obviously got quite a few of our guys here in town and here at the facility kind of getting on the same page, which is great," said Tavares, the Maple Leafs' captain.

The announcement of a potential start date for camps comes after the league and players signed off on a 24-team playoff format, and approved

protocol for initial workouts.

Next up will be selecting two hub cities which will play host to the games.

Of the 10 potential hubs, including three in Canada, Las Vegas is considered a strong candidate, a person familiar with the discussions told The Associated Press on Friday night. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The league and players must also agree on testing and health-and-safety protocols amid the pandemic before games can resume.

Players started skating by the handful this week in Boston, Chicago, Toronto, Pittsburgh, Columbus and Edmonton, while some teams waited to open their doors.

GMs expect players to adjust along the way.

"Every situation will be different and unique depending on what they have available to them in the areas they are at," New York Islanders GM Lou Lamoriello said. "No different than a normal training camp when some players come in two weeks ahead of time because they don't have the ice time in their area."

Busch takes eighth truck victory in his last 10 starts

Associated Press

MIAMI — Kyle Busch's slump wasn't much of one.

Busch won the NASCAR Trucks Series race at Homestead-Miami Speedway on Saturday night, his 58th career win on the circuit and his eighth victory in his last 10 trucks starts. He'd been winless in his last two outings, which — by his standards behind the wheel of a truck — constitutes a drought.

Busch hadn't gone winless in three consecutive trucks starts since 2017. He was about five seconds clear of the field when the second stage ended at Lap 60, part of a dominant night where he led 82 of the 134 laps.

"It was awesome tonight," Busch said.

There were a few challenging situations, though nothing derailed Busch for long.

Busch had to start at the back of the field, then serve a pass-through penalty on top of that, after failing pre-race inspection. But he managed to stay on the lead lap, then worked his way to the front and made it all seem easy.

The race was red-flagged for 16 minutes with 26 laps to go after Sheldon Creed crashed

into the yellow protective barrels at the entrance to pit road and caused a huge mess. Once things resumed, it didn't take long for Busch to reclaim the top spot.

Tyler Ankrum was second and Ross Chastain, who won the first stage, held off Chase Elliott for third.

Burton makes use of restart for Xfinity win

MIAMI — A late caution flag gave Harrison Burton new life, and he took advantage.

Burton took the inside line on the way to the lead in the final lap, and held on to win the Xfinity Series race Saturday at Homestead-Miami Speedway — denying, among others, Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Noah Gragson, who seemed to be in full command with seven laps remaining.

Burton, Gragson and Austin Cindric were three-wide going into that last lap, and it was Burton — the 19-year-old son of former Cup star Jeff Burton, who wound up in front in a wild finish.

Cindric was second and Gragson third, two spots ahead of Earnhardt.