

# STARS AND STRIPES®

Tuesday, June 16, 2020

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## N. Korea blows up office near South border

BY KIM GAMEL  
AND YOO KYONG CHANG  
*Stars and Stripes*

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea blew up a joint liaison office near the border with South Korea on Tuesday in one of the most provocative acts by the communist state since nuclear talks with the United States collapsed last year.

Seoul warned that it would “strongly respond” to further provocations, marking a sharp escalation of tensions triggered by the dispatch of anti-regime leaflets by activists.

In an unusually fast report on state-run media, North Korea confirmed that it had demolished the liaison office with a “terrific explosion” to punish the South for the propaganda leaflets that were floated across the border earlier this month.

Smoke rose from the area, which is on the North Korean

side of the Demilitarized Zone, photos by South Korea’s Yonhap News Agency showed.

No South Koreans were in the facility, which closed in late January due to coronavirus concerns, according to the Unification Ministry in Seoul.

The government convened a national security council meeting and warned that it will “strongly respond if North Korea takes any action that worsens the situation.”

“The destruction of the joint liaison office is a betrayal of everybody who hoped for the development of inter-Korean relations and the establishment of peace on the Korean Peninsula,” the NSC’s deputy director, Kim You-geun, told reporters.

Established in Kaesong after a series of inter-Korean summits in 2018, the liaison office was a centerpiece of South Ko-

rean President Moon Jae-in’s efforts to improve relations with the North.

“This is a highly symbolic and threatening message to South Korea designed to unnerve Seoul and coerce the Moon administration into defending North Korean interests,” Jean Lee, a Korea expert at the Washington, D.C.-based Wilson Center said.

On Saturday, Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, warned that the South would soon witness a “tragic scene of the useless North-South joint liaison office completely collapsed.”

The Korean Central News Agency reported that the office had been “tragically ruined” on Tuesday, days after the North had severed communication lines with the South.

It said that the move was

“corresponding to the mindset of the enraged people to surely force human scum and those, who have sheltered the scum, to pay dearly for their crimes.” The North Koreans frequently use the term “human scum” for defectors who fled to the South and often participate in operations to send messages and food across the border.

Speaking about Kim Yo Jong’s threat on Monday, a former senior South Korean negotiator said the destruction of the liaison office was mainly symbolic.

“Blowing up the liaison office is just killing what is dead already,” Chun Yung-woo said in an online forum about past efforts to persuade the North to abandon its nuclear weapons. “I think the North Koreans are trying to change [South Korea’s] policy toward North Korea through intimidation.”

## NATO chief: No set plans for US pullout from Germany

BY JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. plans to cut force levels in Germany haven’t been finalized, NATO’s top official said Tuesday ahead of high-level talks that will likely center on President Donald Trump’s push for a large troop pullout.

“The U.S. has made it clear no final decision has been made on how and when,” NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said at a news conference, adding that he discussed the matter with Trump last week by phone.

The U.S. ambassador to NATO, Kay Bailey Hutchison, also told reporters Tuesday that the drawdown plan will

take time to execute.

“I don’t think anything has been set in concrete yet,” she said.

On Monday, Trump confirmed that he intends to pull 9,500 troops from Germany, reducing American force levels in the country by nearly one-third.

The drawdown would be the largest troop reduction in Europe in nearly a decade and the first major cut since Russia’s 2014 military intervention in Ukraine.

The Wall Street Journal, which first reported Trump’s directive, initially said that a September deadline was set for the pullout. But meeting that timeline would be a daunting

task. The U.S. military would be forced to find new assignments and homes for thousands of troops and their families, even while clearing a large backlog of troops waiting to move created by coronavirus restrictions.

Trump has characterized Germany as a security free rider being protected by American forces.

But the NATO chief said he tried to convey to Trump that the U.S. presence in Europe wasn’t only about protecting Germany, but “about projecting U.S. power beyond Europe.”

“My message was the U.S. presence in Europe was good for Europe, but also good for North America and the United States,” Stoltenberg said.

Trump has repeatedly accused Germany of failing to meet its obligations to the alliance. On Monday, he said that Germany was “delinquent on their payments to NATO. They owe NATO billions and they know it ... Why should we be doing what we’re doing if they don’t pay?”

Past U.S. presidents have also complained about insufficient defense spending by many allies in Europe, but Trump has made the issue his focal point in dealing with NATO.

Although Berlin has long fallen short of an alliance benchmark that calls for allies to spend 2% of gross domestic product on their own militaries, Germany is not delinquent and owes no money to NATO.

## US: Supplier put sailors at risk with subpar steel

Associated Press

SEATTLE — For decades, the Navy's leading supplier of high-strength steel for submarines provided subpar metal because one of the company's longtime employees falsified lab results — putting sailors at greater risk in the event of collisions or other impacts, federal prosecutors said in court filings Monday.

The supplier, Kansas City-based Bradken Inc., paid \$10.9 million as part of a deferred prosecution agreement, the Justice Department said. Bradken provides steel castings that Navy contractors Electric Boat and Newport News Shipbuilding use to make submarine hulls.

Bradken in 2008 acquired a foundry in Tacoma, Wash., that produced steel castings for the Navy. According to federal prosecutors, Bradken learned in 2017 that the foundry's director of metallurgy had been falsifying the results of strength tests, indicating that the steel was strong enough to meet the Navy's requirements when in fact it was not. Prosecutors say the company initially disclosed its findings to the Navy but then wrongfully suggested that the discrepancies were not the result of fraud. That hindered the Navy's investigation into the scope of the problem as well as its efforts to remediate the risks to its sailors, prosecutors said.

"Bradken placed the Navy's sailors and its operations at risk," Seattle U.S. Attorney Brian Moran said in a news release. "Government contractors must not tolerate fraud within their organizations, and they must be fully forthcoming with the government when they discover it."

There is no allegation in the documents that any submarine parts failed, but Moran said the Navy had incurred increased costs and maintenance to ensure the subs remain seaworthy.

## USS McCain ready to carry on

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS

*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The USS John S. McCain is ready for business again, nearly three years after a fatal collision that killed 10 of its sailors and left it heavily damaged, its commander said Tuesday.

The guided-missile destroyer completed "basic phase certification" on June 2, concluding major repairs and crew training based on new procedures put in place after two deadly collisions involving U.S. warships in 2017.

"Every day as I walk onto the ship through the portside airlock, I pass the memorial plaque that is engraved with the names of the 10 sailors who lost their lives on this ship in 2017," Cmdr. Ryan Easterday told reporters during a conference call. "Frankly, everything we've done since then honors their memories and, more importantly, carries on their work."

The McCain has been sidelined since Aug. 21, 2017, when

it collided with a Liberian-flagged tanker, the Alnic MC, in the Strait of Malacca near Singapore.

The McCain collision was the second involving a 7th Fleet warship that year. On June 17, 2017, seven sailors died aboard the USS Fitzgerald when it collided with a Philippine-flagged container ship, ACX Crystal, about 80 miles southwest of Tokyo.

The Fitzgerald, under repair at a Mississippi shipyard since January 2018, left for San Diego, its new homeport, on Saturday. There, it will undergo training and certifications similar to those the McCain completed before becoming available for operations, the Navy said.

To certify as mission-ready, the McCain crew trained in 23 areas from seamanship to engineering as part of the Navy's revised training and readiness cycle, the result of a post-collision report on both collisions, Easterday said.

The report found that the crashes were "avoidable" and identified several contributing causes, including training is-

sues and poor watch-standing. At the time, ships often went to sea despite having fallen behind on required maintenance and mandatory crew training.

Easterday said that the new training cycle also incorporates "the latest innovations in training technology and standards" based on the report's recommendations.

"The John S. McCain is one of the first ships to benefit from these changes, including revised individual and unit training, updated career paths and practices and renewed focus on professional seamanship and navigation," he said.

The crew trained in classrooms, in simulators, in port and at sea, Easterday said. The destroyer left Yokosuka in October for brief at-sea testing and again in March for under-way drills.

Crewmembers "have proven that Big Bad John is absolutely ready to rejoin the fleet," he told reporters.

Easterday came aboard the McCain in December 2017 as executive officer.

## Japan suspends Aegis Ashore deployment

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE  
AND AYA ICHIHASHI

*Stars and Stripes*

Japan, citing technical problems and cost overruns, has suspended plans to field a U.S.-developed ballistic missile defense system once seen as a counterpoint to North Korea's evolving arsenal.

Japanese Minister of Defense Taro Kono announced he is freezing procurement of Aegis Ashore systems for Japan Self-Defense Force bases in Yamaguchi and Akita prefecture, during a press conference in Tokyo on Monday evening.

Kono said he had no assurances that spent rocket boosters from the system's interceptor missiles, without significant upgrades, would fall within

those bases.

"I had explained to the local residents living near the Mutsumi training base in Yamaguchi prefecture that we would make sure to land the Aegis Ashore's booster within the base," he said.

Although Japan worked with the United States, improving the missile software alone would not solve the problem, Kono added.

"Considering the costs and time involved," he said, "I have decided to pause the Aegis Ashore deployment."

Kono predicted refinements could take over 10 years and cost upward of \$1 billion. He said he had informed Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga on Friday and that Abe

"understood the situation." Kono plans to discuss the decision with Japan's National Security Council.

In the meantime, Japan's seven Aegis-equipped warships will continue to provide missile defense, something that places considerable strain on the fleet, Kono said.

"It was getting to be too much for Aegis warships to rotate as North Korea owns so many medium-range ballistic missiles and intercontinental ballistic missiles," he said. "We knew we could not rely on just Aegis warships, and that has not changed. Aegis Ashore would relieve that burden."

Officials from U.S. Forces Japan did not respond to requests seeking comment Tuesday.

# UN: Afghan conflict killed 874 children in 2019

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN

*Stars and Stripes*

KABUL, Afghanistan — The war in Afghanistan was the world's deadliest conflict for children last year, the fifth consecutive year the country has held that status, a United Nations report said.

Some 874 children were killed by the war throughout 2019. They were among the 3,410 young Afghans who suffered from "grave violations," which included maiming, abduction, sexual abuse and attacks at schools and hospitals, the report released Monday said.

The Taliban were blamed for causing over 1,238 child deaths and injuries, the largest number attributed to any single group.

Pro-government forces were blamed for

just under a third of the child deaths and injuries documented, including 248 that were attributed to international forces.

"I am extremely concerned about the increased number of children killed and maimed by all parties," U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said about Afghanistan in the annual Children in Armed Conflict report. "I remain concerned about casualties caused by government and international forces, and I urge them to review, strengthen and implement current tactical protocols to prevent [them]."

The report noted measures taken by international forces to protect Afghan civilians from combat and the decreased number of child casualties from airstrikes. Steps taken by the Afghan government to prevent child recruitment were also lauded in the report.

However, a combined 64 boys — some as young as 10 — were still recorded as being recruited by the Taliban, Afghan National Police and pro-government militias last year. The boys were used for combat support and sexual purposes, the report said.

The Taliban and pro-government forces were both blamed for sexually abusing children, which the U.N. identifies as anyone below age 18. Two boys were said to be used as "bacha bazi," a term used to describe boys used for sex acts by older men, which has a long history in the country.

Afghanistan, along with Syria, Palestine and Somalia were named the top places in the world where children had been deprived of education and health care because of attacks or closures of facilities for military use.

## Guard kills trespassing suspect at base in Alaska

*Associated Press*

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — A 30-year-old civilian was shot and killed after brandishing a knife at a duty officer after attempting to enter a building on an Alaska military base used by Navy SEALs for cold weather training, officials said Monday.

Jayson Vinberg, of Kodiak, died in the shooting late Saturday at the Naval Special Warfare Detachment Kodiak on Kodiak Island, Navy Criminal Investigative Service spokesperson Jeff Houston said.

Vinberg entered the compound and attempted to get inside a building, Houston said.

"A Naval Special Warfare service mem-

ber confronted the intruder, and events led to the service member using deadly force," Houston said.

Alaska State Troopers said a guard saw a man trespassing at the installation and tapping on the windows of a watch building with a knife.

The guard told the man to leave. The guard then left his secure building to make sure the man left, troopers said.

It was then that troopers said the man walked toward the guard with the knife and failed to obey the guard's repeated commands to stop. The duty officer shot the man, who was declared dead by responding medics, troopers said.

Houston and Lt. Matthew Stroup, a

Naval Special Warfare Command spokesman, said the service member was in good condition and receiving support from his command leadership. Stroup declined to say whether the service member was injured or hospitalized.

"There is no known threat to the community at this time," Houston said, adding NCIS will not release additional information during the investigative process.

Attempts to reach Vinberg's family were not immediately successful.

Since the fatal shooting occurred on a Navy base, NCIS is leading the investigation, working with Alaska State Troopers and the Coast Guard Investigative Service, he said.

## Australian, US firms in bid to take over shipyard

BY SETH ROBSON

*Stars and Stripes*

An Australian shipbuilder with strong ties to the Navy is favored to assume control of the Philippines' Subic Bay shipyard, where it plans to build and service United States warships.

Austal, based in Western Australia, and U.S. private equity firm Cerberus Capital Management are in the running to take over the yard from Hanjin Shipping, a South Korean firm that went bankrupt in 2016. Subic Bay was a key U.S.

base for decades before the Navy's departure in 1992.

A pair of Chinese companies signaled interest in Subic Bay last year, but media reports suggest that the Austal-Cerberus bid may be the strongest.

"It's not going to be a U.S. naval base like it was, but it would be a U.S./Australian company doing business to support both the U.S. and Philippine navies, as well as countries in the region," Austal's customer affairs and business development director, Lawrence Ryder, said in a telephone interview on

June 8.

The Sydney Morning Herald in a May 8 article noted the company's interest in Subic Bay and its hopes to build the first six of 18 offshore patrol boats for the Philippines, a project worth \$950 million.

Austal's partner in the prospective Subic deal, Cerberus, has \$42 billion in assets, including two U.S. defense firms. CEO Stephen Feinberg was considered by President Donald Trump for a top job at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, according to the

New York Times in April.

Nikkei Asian Review reported in December that Hanjin defaulted on \$1.3 billion in loans and that Austal's offer is subject to negotiations with the 340-acre shipyard's creditors. Before the yard's collapse, Hanjin invested \$2.3 billion in Subic, according to the newspaper.

Robert Empedrad, the head of the Philippine Maritime Industry Authority since March, told Nikkei in the same article that the Navy backs the Austal-Cerberus consortium and opposes any Chinese takeover.

# Court rules gay, trans workers protected

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court ruled Monday that a landmark civil rights law protects gay, lesbian and transgender people from discrimination in employment, a resounding victory for LGBT rights from a conservative court.

The court decided by a 6-3 vote that a key provision of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 known as Title VII that bars job discrimination because of sex, among other reasons, encompasses bias against people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

“An employer who fires an individual for being homosexual or transgender fires that person for traits or actions it would not have questioned in members of a different sex,” Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote for the court. “Sex plays a necessary and undisguisable role in the decision, exactly what Title VII forbids.”

The decision was a defeat not just for the employers, but also the Trump administration, which argued that the law’s plain wording compelled a ruling for the employers. Gorsuch, a conservative appointee of President Donald Trump, concluded the opposite, and Trump said Monday he accepted the court’s “very powerful decision.”

Gorsuch was joined in the majority by Chief Justice John

## Decision does not cover military

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The landmark Supreme Court ruling Monday that a prohibition against sex discrimination also extends to gay and transgender people does not affect service members or a Pentagon policy banning transgender troops. However, lawyers and LGBTQ advocates believe the ruling could impact current lawsuits challenging the Pentagon policy by making its ban harder to defend.

The Pentagon’s 2019 transgender policy does not allow people who have been diagnosed with gender dysphoria to enlist in the military or continue to serve as their preferred gender without a medical certification or waiver. Gender dysphoria is the medical

condition associated with individuals who do not identify with their birth sex.

In May, a transgender Navy officer was the first service member to receive a waiver to serve in their preferred gender since the policy was put in place.

The Defense Department referred questions about the Supreme Court decision and its transgender policy to the Justice Department. The DOJ “has no comment,” a spokesman said in an email.

The Supreme Court ruling will also not directly apply to the four federal lawsuits challenging the transgender policy because they are based on the Constitution’s equal protection clause and not the Civil Rights Act, according to Jennifer Levi, the Transgender Rights Project director at GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders.

Roberts and the court’s four liberal members. Justice Brett Kavanaugh, Trump’s other Supreme Court pick, dissented, along with Justices Samuel Alito and Clarence Thomas.

“The Court tries to convince readers that it is merely enforcing the terms of the statute, but that is preposterous,” Alito wrote in the dissent. “Even as understood today, the concept of discrimination because of ‘sex’ is different from discrimination because of ‘sexual orientation’ or ‘gender identity.’”

Kavanaugh wrote in a separate dissent that the court was rewriting the law to include

gender identity and sexual orientation, a job that belongs to Congress. Still, Kavanaugh said the decision represents an “important victory achieved today by gay and lesbian Americans.”

The outcome is expected to have a big impact for the estimated 8.1 million LGBT workers across the country because most states don’t protect them from workplace discrimination. An estimated 11.3 million LGBT people live in the U.S., according to the Williams Institute at the UCLA law school.

Monday’s decision is not likely to be the court’s last word

on a host of issues revolving around LGBT rights, Gorsuch noted.

Rights groups have said they will challenge the administration’s effort to roll back anti-discrimination protections for transgender people in health care. Lawsuits are pending over transgender athletes’ participation in school sporting events, and courts also are dealing with cases about sex-segregated bathrooms and locker rooms, a subject that the justices seemed concerned about during arguments in October.

## US soldier accused of biting German police officer’s leg

BY IMMANUEL JOHNSON  
AND MARCUS KLOECKNER

*Stars and Stripes*

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — It took six German police officers to haul off a cowboy boot-wearing American soldier who called them Nazis, kicked them and later bit one of them in the leg, police said.

Customers at a Nuremberg train station fast food restaurant called police Saturday and said a drunken 22-year-old was acting aggressively toward staff, German authorities said in a statement.

After being handcuffed, he loudly hurled epithets and kicked the officers with his Western boots, the police said.

“Due to the [intoxication] and the aggressive behavior, the identity of the man could not be determined on the scene,” police said.

He was later identified as a soldier with the Vilseck-based 2nd Cavalry Regiment. The regiment “is aware of an incident involving a Soldier” and the German police, Maj. John Ambelang, a spokesman for the unit said in a statement.

Due to his violent resistance, police had

to tie up the soldier’s legs and a half-dozen officers were needed to carry him away to the police station. While being searched there, the soldier bit one of the officers in the leg, causing him to bleed. The officer was taken to the local hospital and “is currently not able to work,” the German statement said.

The soldier was later turned over to military police, German authorities said. He could face assault charges under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, Ambelang said.

# Drug shown to cut virus deaths offers hope

Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG — Researchers on Tuesday announced the first drug shown to reduce deaths among severely ill coronavirus patients, offering hope even as infection rates rose in Africa and Asia, and there were worrisome upticks of contagion in countries that had largely contained the virus.

The cheap, widely available steroid, called dexamethasone, reduced deaths by 35% in patients who needed treatment with breathing machines and by 20% in those only needing supplemental oxygen, the re-

searches said in England. It did not appear to help less ill patients.

“This is an extremely welcome result,” one study leader, Peter Horby of the University of Oxford, said in a statement. “The survival benefit is clear and large in those patients who are sick enough to require oxygen treatment, so dexamethasone should now become standard of care in these patients. Dexamethasone is inexpensive, on the shelf, and can be used immediately to save lives worldwide.”

The study is a large, strict test that randomly assigned

2,104 patients to get the drug and compared them with 4,321 patients getting only usual care. The researchers said they would publish the results soon.

New, record-high infections were registered in South Africa over the weekend. The country now has more than a quarter of the cases on the 54-nation African continent with more than 73,000. Daily coronavirus deaths continued to rise in Egypt, with the health ministry reporting 97 deaths Monday, the country’s highest for a single day. Egypt has over 46,000 COVID-19 infections and 1,672 deaths, but the government has

resisted a full lockdown to try to keep the economy functioning. Authorities have shortened the nightly curfew and plan to reopen airports next month.

Israel’s steady raise in infections since restrictions were eased last month has increased fears of what a top Health Ministry official said looked like the “beginning of a wave.”

The country is reporting 200 new cases daily, a tenfold increase from a few weeks ago.

Pakistan’s steady rise in coronavirus cases have put the country in the top 15 nations globally for infections, with over 48,000.

## Trump signs executive order to revamp policing

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Following weeks of national protests since the death of George Floyd, President Donald Trump signed an executive order on policing Tuesday that would encourage better police practices and establish a database to keep track of officers with a history of excessive use-of-force complaints.

In Rose Garden remarks, Trump stressed the need for higher standards and commiserated with mourning families, even as he hailed the vast majority of officers as selfless public servants and held his law-and-order line, while criticizing Democrats.

“Reducing crime and raising standards are not opposite goals,” he said before signing the order flanked by police.

Trump and the GOP have been rushing to respond to the mass demonstrations against police brutality and racial prejudice that have raged for weeks across the country in response to the deaths of Floyd and other black Americans. It’s a sudden shift for the Republican Party — and one Democrats are watching warily — that shows how quickly the protests have changed the political conversation and pressured Washington to act.

But Trump, throughout the crisis, has continued to emphasize his support for law enforcement and even on Tuesday railed

against those who committed violence during the largely peaceful protests.

Trump’s executive order would establish a database that tracks police officers with excessive use of force complaints in their records. And it would give police departments a financial incentive to adopt best practices and encourage co-responder programs, in which social workers join police when they respond to nonviolent calls involving mental health, addiction and homeless issues.

Trump said that, under a new credentialing process, chokeholds will be banned “except if an officer’s life is at risk.” Chokeholds are already largely banned in police departments nationwide.

## Man shot at protest in NM over statue of conqueror

Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — A man was shot Monday night as protesters in New Mexico’s largest city tried to tear down a bronze statue of a Spanish conquistador outside the Albuquerque Museum, prompting the city to announce that the statue would be removed until officials determine the next steps.

The man was taken to a hospital and was listed in critical but stable condition late Monday, said Albuquerque police spokesman Gilbert Gallegos.

A confrontation erupted between protesters and a group of armed men who were trying to protect the statue of Juan de Onate before protesters wrapped a chain

around it and began tugging on it while chanting: “Tear it down.” One protester repeatedly swung a pickaxe at the base of the statue.

Moments later, a few gunshots could be heard down the street and people started yelling that someone had been shot.

Gallegos said police used tear gas and flash bangs to protect the officers who intervened and detained those involved in the shooting. He said they were disarmed and taken into custody for questioning as police worked to secure the scene. He said detectives were investigating with the help of the FBI but he did not immediately release any other information.

“The shooting tonight was a tragic, out-

rageous and unacceptable act of violence and it has no place in our city,” Mayor Tim Keller said in a statement Monday. “Our diverse community will not be deterred by acts meant to divide or silence us. Our hearts go out the victim, his family and witnesses whose lives were needlessly threatened tonight. This sculpture has now become an urgent matter of public safety.”

Democrat Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham issued a statement in which she took aim at the armed individuals, saying they were there to menace protesters. She said no matter who strikes first, there would be no room in New Mexico for any sort of escalation of what she called “reckless, violent rhetoric.”

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Bomb squad destroys item cast over jail wall

**OH** CINCINNATI — The bomb squad early Monday safely detonated a suspicious package that was thrown at the Hamilton County Justice Complex, the sheriff's office said.

Officers evacuated the complex, which is the main county jail branch, and closed surrounding streets while the hazardous devices unit examined the package that was tossed over a concrete wall near an entrance.

The bomb squad X-rayed the package and detonated it as a precaution, the sheriff's office said. No one was injured. The sheriff's office said that inmates and staff were not at risk.

## City approves \$100K loan to repair sinkhole

**IL** GRAND TOWER — Grand Tower city leaders have approved a \$100,000 emergency loan to repair a sinkhole that has been getting bigger and deeper since flooding overwhelmed the Mississippi River in the small southern Illinois city last year.

At first, the sinkhole "was just a small area," Fire Chief Dennis Wright said. But earlier this month, the road buckled and the hole grew. It now spans nearly an entire intersection and has brought the sewer system to a halt.

Wright said that he expects repair work to begin next week.

The emergency loan is only a temporary solution. Grand Tower is waiting on about \$4.5 million in flood recovery funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Those funds are intended for the repair of sinkholes and damaged streets, and to replace storm drains and water mains.

## Cristobal's driftwood to get new aquarium home

**MS** GULFPORT — Tropical Storm Cristobal left a big mess on beaches along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, but that created an opportunity for the Mississippi Aquarium.

The Gulfport facility plans to recycle driftwood left by the recent storm, WLOX-TV reported.

With permission from Harrison County Sand Beach Authority, aquarium staffers have been gathering pieces that will become part of the habitats at the aquarium still under construction in Gulfport.

The aquarium was originally scheduled to open in April, but the coronavirus pandemic put an indefinite delay on those plans.

## Wildlife officials kill bear that entered home

**CO** COLORADO SPRINGS — Colorado Parks and Wildlife said a bear that had been previously relocated was killed after entering a home while the owner was inside.

Wildlife officers were called to a home in Colorado Springs around 10:30 a.m. Sunday and found a male bear inside the home on the resident's couch, KUSA-TV reports that.

The woman was cooking bacon when the 150-pound animal entered the home by ripping a patio screen door, parks and wildlife officials said. The woman safely left the home through her front door when she saw the bear.

Wildlife officers previously relocated the bear from a residential neighborhood. The animal returned to look for food and wildlife officials made the decision to kill the bear.

## Police charge man after high-speed chase

**WI** LA CROSSE — Prosecutors have charged a Mindoro man in connection with a police chase that reached speeds of 120 mph.

The La Crosse Tribune reported that Frederick Clements, 22, faces charges of first-degree recklessly endangering safety and fleeing an officer, both felonies. The counts were filed Friday.

According to the criminal complaint, police in West Salem tried to stop Clements on April 20 after spotting him doing 45 mph in a 25 mph zone on a residential street in a Mitsubishi Eclipse convertible with no license plates. Instead of stopping, Clements accelerated and then ran a stop sign. The officer chasing him reached speeds of up to 113 mph before calling off the chase.

Clements turned himself in later that night, the complaint said. He told police he fled because he was close to getting his license back and didn't want an operating after suspension citation. He said that he knew he was driving recklessly and passing in a no-passing zone at 120 mph, according to the complaint.

## Bear with 3 cubs shot by poacher, later dies

**MI** BRANCH TOWNSHIP — Authorities said that a bear with three cubs was shot by a poacher in northern Michigan.

Officers from the Department of Natural Resources found the bear Thursday in a creek in Oceana County's Branch Township. The bear was struggling and was euthanized while the cubs were in a tree.

The DNR got a tip from someone who called a poach-

ing hotline. The bear had likely been shot a few days earlier.

The cubs were taken to a wildlife specialist.

## New reservoir named for Omaha tribe leader

**NE** OMAHA — A new flood mitigation reservoir in Nebraska is being named Big Elk Lake in honor of Chief Big Elk, a leader of the Omaha tribe.

Directors of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District Board announced the unanimous decision Thursday.

Rudi Mitchell, the great-great-great grandson of Chief Big Elk, said that Big Elk had a gift for bringing settlers and the Omaha tribe together in a peaceful manner.

## Man dies after crash on new motorcycle

**FL** LAKELAND — A Florida man died after crashing a motorcycle that he had owned for less than a week, authorities said.

The crash occurred Tuesday morning at the Carlton Arms of South Lakeland apartment complex, the Ledger reported.

Stephen Wheeler, 63, was pulling out of a garage and sped off across a street, hitting a raised concrete curb, the Polk County Sheriff's Office said. The motorcycle then traveled down a steep embankment and began to overturn, ejecting Wheeler from the seat, deputies said. Investigators said that Wheeler, who wasn't wearing a helmet, hit his head on a fence at the bottom of the embankment.

Rescue workers were able to take Wheeler to a nearby hospital, where he was pronounced dead Thursday, officials said.

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STARS AND STRIPES®

# White NHL players finding their voices

Associated Press

Brian Boyle is a 35-year-old grizzled veteran of 13 National Hockey League seasons who grew up outside Boston.

After seeing video of George Floyd's death, Boyle wanted to say something. The Florida Panthers forward, though, wasn't sure how and didn't want it to come off the wrong way. He wound up calling former teammate J.T. Brown to ask some questions — and listen. Brown is 29, black and the only player so far to protest racial injustice and police brutality during the national anthem of an NHL game, back in 2017.

The two talked about how Floyd's death had affected Brown.

"I was kind of at his mercy," said Boyle, who is white. "I just don't understand this pain. I've never had to live this pain."

Floyd's death in police custody has touched off an extraordinary reckoning of race and race

relations and sports has been part of it, from European soccer to the NFL. It has also made ripples in NASCAR, which like the NHL has predominately white athletes and, by most accounts, a larger fan base among whites than people of color.

NHL players have no sustained track record of speaking out on societal issues, perhaps part of the reticence that is generally found in hockey. There was no collective outrage after Akim Aliu, Devante Smith-Pelly and Wayne Simmonds joined the list of players who have publicly described their personal experience with racism in hockey.

This time, the culture of silence was nowhere to be found in a league that is more than 95% white.

Sidney Crosby, Connor McDavid and more than 100 other NHL players made statements denouncing racial inequality, acknowledging their privilege

and pledging to learn and do better. Tyler Seguin protested in Dallas, Zdeno Chara in Boston, while Patrice Bergeron, Tom Wilson and others made donations. Jonathan Toews met with activists in Chicago.

"We have to be as involved in this as black athletes," Winnipeg captain Blake Wheeler said. "It can't just be their fight."

It was the kind of response San Jose's Evander Kane hoped for when he called on white athletes to make their voices heard. Some called it "a perfect storm" — athletes, like everyone else, were at home during the coronavirus pandemic and able to focus on the graphic nature of Floyd's death in Minneapolis and the visceral reaction.

"People, I think, are listening more," said Kim Davis, the NHL's executive vice president of social impact, growth initiatives and legislative affairs. Hired in 2017, she is the high-

est-ranked African American in the league's hierarchy and reports directly to Commissioner Gary Bettman.

"While these things have been happening for a long time, I think the COVID pandemic has brought to light for many the racial pandemic," Davis said. "To be able to just be paused and to stop and witness for nine minutes, somebody's knee on someone's neck and to watch the life be taken out of them ... that's your humanity (telling) you there's something very wrong with that."

"I think that's why people are speaking out. I think that's why players are speaking out," Davis said.

Seguin marched in Dallas along with retired goaltender Marty Turco and kneeled for 8 minutes and 46 seconds, the time prosecutors say Floyd was pinned under the knee of a white police officer while his heart stopped.

## Goodell encourages NFL owners to sign Kaepernick

The Washington Post

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell told ESPN on Monday that he would "support" and "encourage" a team to sign quarterback Colin Kaepernick.

Kaepernick has not played in the NFL since the 2016 season when, as a member of the San Francisco 49ers, he began the players' movement of kneeling during the national anthem to protest racial inequality and police mistreatment of African Americans.

"Well, listen, if he wants to resume his career in the NFL, then obviously it's going to take a team to make that decision," Goodell said. "But I welcome that, support a club making that decision and encourage them to do that."

Goodell's interview was to be included in an ESPN special to be televised Monday night that also featured the commissioners of other pro sports leagues.

ESPN published Goodell's comments on its website beforehand.

"If his efforts are not on the field but continuing to work in this space, we welcome him to that table and to help us, guide us, help us make better decisions about the kinds of things that need to be done in the communities," Goodell said in the interview. "We have invited him in before, and we want to make sure that everybody's welcome at that table, and trying to help us deal with some very complex, difficult issues that have been around for a long time. But I hope we're at a point now where everybody's committed to making long-term, sustainable change."

Seattle Seahawks Coach Pete Carroll said last week that he had been contacted by a representative of another team regarding Kaepernick. Carroll declined to name the team but said he took it as an indication

that the team is interested in signing Kaepernick.

The NFL has taken a series of steps amid nationwide protests over the death of George Floyd while in Minneapolis police custody. The league released a video in which Goodell said the NFL was wrong not to listen earlier to its players but now will encourage their peaceful protests. That came in response to a video released by a group of prominent NFL players in reaction to Floyd's death. The players called for the league to take action.

The league bolstered its social justice initiatives by announcing a \$250 million donation over 10 years to programs to combat systemic racism. Goodell told NFL employees that the league will close its offices Friday in recognition of the Juneteenth holiday, which commemorates the end of slavery in the United States.

Some players and other ob-

servers have said the league's efforts are not sufficient unless a team signs Kaepernick. The quarterback last year settled a collusion grievance accusing the league and teams of conspiring improperly to keep him out of the sport. He worked out for a relatively small number of teams last year at an Atlanta-area high school after arrangements for a league-backed workout at the Falcons' training facility, with a larger number of teams scheduled to attend, unraveled because of disagreements between Kaepernick's representatives and the NFL.

President Donald Trump recently renewed his criticism of NFL players protesting during the anthem. Trump and some fans have characterized such protests as unpatriotic. Players have said the protests are not aimed at the flag or the military and are intended to bring attention to racial injustice.

# Gundy's OAN support upsets Hubbard

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Oklahoma State running back Chuba Hubbard and coach Mike Gundy appear to have ironed out their differences for now.

Hubbard suggested Monday he may boycott the program after Gundy was photographed wearing a T-shirt promoting the One America News Network, a far-right news channel that has been praised by President Donald Trump.

Gundy is seen in a photograph on Twitter wearing the shirt with the letters OAN. In a tweet responding to the photo, Hubbard said: "I will not stand for this. This is completely insensitive to everything going on in society, and it's unacceptable. I will not be doing anything with Oklahoma State until things CHANGE."

Hubbard gained support from past and present Oklahoma State players. The school's president and athletic director issued statements supporting

black athletes, condemning insensitive behavior and showing concern about the responses to the tweet without directly calling out Gundy.

Hubbard, who is black, has been more active on social media since George Floyd, an unarmed black man, died after a white Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee against Floyd's neck for several minutes. Hubbard has been supportive of protests that erupted around the world after Floyd's death.

Gundy and Hubbard later appeared together on a short video on Twitter. Gundy said he met with the team and will make adjustments.

"In light of today's Tweet, with the T-shirt I was wearing, I met with some players and realized it's a very sensitive issue with what's going on in today's society," he said. "So we had a great meeting and (I was) made aware of some things some players feel like that can

make our organization and our culture even better than it is here at Oklahoma State. I'm looking forward to making some changes, and it starts at the top with me, and we've got good days ahead."

Hubbard apologized for using social media to air his concern instead of going directly to Gundy.

"I'll start off by first saying I went about it the wrong way by tweeting," Hubbard said. "I'm not somebody that has to tweet something to make change. I should have went to him as a man. I'm more about action. So that was bad on my part. But from now on, we're going to focus more on bringing change, and that's the most important thing."

The tweet revealed issues that were bubbling beneath the surface. Current linebacker Amen Ogbongbemiga declared "I stand with him!" and former Cowboys running back Justice Hill, now with the Baltimore

Ravens, tweeted: "OSU Athletics and University need major change. 100% support brotha."

Hubbard's comments sent ripples all the way to the top of the university.

"I hear and respect the concerns expressed by our Black student-athletes," Oklahoma State President Burns Hargis said in a statement. "This is a time for unity of purpose to confront racial inequities and injustice. We will not tolerate insensitive behavior by anyone at Oklahoma State."

The discussion also got Oklahoma State athletic director Mike Holder's attention.

"This afternoon has been very disturbing," Holder said in a statement. "The tweets from the current and former players are of grave concern."

OAN commentator Liz Wheeler in the past has described the Black Lives Matter movement as a "farce" that speaks for "oppression" and "revenge."

## Manfred: MLB season in jeopardy after talks break down

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred says there might be no major league games this year after a breakdown in talks between teams and the players' union on how to split up money in a season delayed by the coronavirus pandemic.

The league also revealed several players on big league rosters have tested positive for COVID-19.

Two days after union head Tony Clark declared additional negotiations futile, Manfred reversed his position of last week when he said he was "100%" certain the 2020 season would start.

Deputy Commissioner Dan Halem sent a seven-page letter to players' association chief negotiator Bruce Meyer asking the union whether it will waive the threat of legal action and tell MLB to announce a spring

training report date and a regular-season schedule.

These were just the latest escalating volleys in a sport viewing disagreements over starting the season as a preliminary battle ahead of bargaining to replace the labor contract that expires on Dec. 1, 2021.

"It's just a disaster for our game, absolutely no question about it," Manfred said during an appearance on ESPN. "It shouldn't be happening, and it's important that we find a way to get past it and get the game back on the field for the benefit of our fans."

Spring training was stopped because of the pandemic on March 12, two weeks before opening day, and the sides reached an agreement March 26 on how to revise their labor deal to account for the virus.

Since then, the hostility has escalated to 1990s levels as the sides exchanged offers. MLB

claims teams can't afford to play without fans and pay the prorated salaries called for in the March deal, which included a provision for "good-faith" negotiations over the possibility of games in empty ballparks or neutral sites.

"The proliferation of COVID-19 outbreaks around the country over the last week, and the fact that we already know of several 40-man roster players and staff who have tested positive, has increased the risks associated with commencing spring training in the next few weeks," Halem wrote in his letter to Meyer, which was obtained by the AP.

Halem sent Meyer a letter with a sarcastic tone Friday accompanying MLB's latest offer, and Meyer responded with a hostile timbre Saturday as the sides memorialized positions ahead of a possible grievance before the panel chaired by

independent arbitrator Mark Irvings. Halem's letter Monday asked the union for clarifications of its positions.

"I note that both the NBA and NHL, two leagues which you repeatedly reference in your letter, do not intend to resume play until about Aug. 1, and both intend to resume play at a limited number of sites with a quarantine approach," Halem wrote. "Please let us know the association's views on quarantining players in league-approved hotels (like the NBA's Disney World model) when they are not at the ballpark if conditions worsen over the next few weeks."

Clark had issued a statement Saturday that told MLB: "It's time to get back to work. Tell us when and where." The union then said it might file a grievance seeking additional economic documents and money damages.