

# STARS AND STRIPES®

Tuesday, June 23, 2020

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## US soldier accused of plot to attack own unit

BY WYATT OLSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

A U.S. paratrooper charged with planning a “murderous ambush” on his own unit by sending sensitive details to a satanic neo-Nazi group was serving with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, the Army’s Italy-based rapid response force.

Pvt. Ethan Melzer sent details about his overseas unit’s locations, movements and security measures to members of the extremist group Order of the Nine Angles, intending it to be passed on to jihadi terrorists, the U.S. Justice Department said in a statement Monday. Melzer, who an indictment said operated under the alias Etil Reggad, was charged with conspiring and attempting to murder U.S. nationals, conspiring and attempting to murder service members, providing and attempting to provide material support to terrorists and conspiring to murder and maim in a foreign country.

“We’re reacting to it like everyone else,” said brigade spokesman Maj. Chris Bradley on Tuesday, after he said officials notified the unit’s 3,500 paratroopers of the arrest and indictment. Since November, Melzer had been assigned to the 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment of the Vicenza-based brigade, which provides forces to U.S. European, Africa and Central commands.

Army officials arrested the infantryman May 30 at Caserma Ederle, home of U.S. Army Garrison Italy and U.S. Army Africa, Bradley said. The FBI subsequently arrested him on June 10, the DOJ said in a statement, which praised various government agencies, including the U.S. Army Africa staff judge advocate’s office and the brigade, for “outstanding efforts” in thwarting a potential

terrorist attack.

“As the indictment lays out, Ethan Melzer plotted a deadly ambush on his fellow soldiers in the service of a diabolical cocktail of ideologies laced with hate and violence,” John C. Demers, assistant attorney general for national security, said in the statement.

Melzer, 22, of Louisville, Ky., was “motivated by racism and hatred as he attempted to carry out this ultimate act of betrayal,” said Audrey Strauss, acting U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, where the indictment was filed.

FBI agents found Melzer was in possession of Islamic State propaganda that described the attack and murder of U.S. personnel, the statement said.

The soldier voluntarily told military investigators and the FBI that he had plotted an attack with the intent of killing as many of his fellow soldiers as possible, the DOJ said.

“Melzer also declared himself to be a traitor against the United States and described his conduct as tantamount to treason,” the statement said.

Melzer joined the Army in 2018, and the following year joined the Order of the Nine Angles, which has espoused violent, white supremacist, anti-Semitic and satanic beliefs, the statement said. It has expressed admiration for Adolf Hitler, Osama bin Laden and other radical Islamic jihadis. Originating in the U.K. several decades ago, the group is “the most extreme Satanist group in the world,” the London-based advocacy group Hope Not Hate said in its “State of Hate 2020” report.

The charges against Melzer carry a maximum jail sentence of 20 years.

Stars and Stripes reporters Nancy Montgomery and Chad Garland contributed to this report.

## Fauci still ‘cautiously optimistic’ vaccine could come in 2020

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The government’s top infectious disease expert told a House committee Tuesday he believes “it will be when and not if” there will be a COVID-19 vaccine and that he remains “cautiously optimistic” that some will be ready at the end of the year.

Dr. Anthony Fauci returned to Capitol Hill at a fraught moment in the nation’s pandemic response, with coronavirus cases rising in about half the states and political polarization competing for attention with public health recommendations.

Fauci testified along with the heads of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Food and Drug Administration and a top official at the Department of Health and Human Services.

Since Fauci’s last appearance at a high-profile hearing more than a month ago, the U.S. has been emerging from weeks of stay-at-home orders and business shutdowns. But it’s being done in an uneven way, with some states far less cautious than others. A trio of states with Republican governors who are bullish on reopening — Arizona, Florida and Texas — are among those seeing worrisome increases in cases.

Last week, Vice President Mike Pence published an opinion column in The Wall Street Journal saying the administration’s efforts have strengthened the nation’s ability to counter the virus and should be “a cause for celebration.” Then President Donald Trump said at his weekend rally in Tulsa that he

had asked administration officials to slow down testing, because too many positive cases are turning up. Many rallygoers did not wear masks, which was an act of defiance for some against what they have seen as government intrusion. White House officials later tried to walk back Trump’s comment on testing, suggesting it wasn’t meant to be taken literally.

Fauci has recently warned that the U.S. is still in the first wave of the pandemic and has continued to urge the American public to practice social distancing. And, in a recent ABC News interview, he said political demonstrations such as protests against racial injustice are “risky” to all involved. Asked if that applied to Trump rallies, he said it did.

Fauci continues to recognize widespread testing as critical for catching clusters of COVID-19 cases before they turn into full outbreaks in a given community. Fauci, who heads the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, was joined by CDC director Dr. Robert Redfield, FDA chief Dr. Stephen Hahn and the head of the U.S. Public Health Service, Adm. Brett Giroir.

Giroir was tapped by the White House to oversee the expansion of coronavirus testing. But he gained notoriety after a whistleblower complaint flagged him for trying to push a malaria drug touted by Trump to treat COVID-19 without conclusive scientific evidence. The FDA has since withdrawn its emergency use authorization for hydroxychloroquine.

# Troops may leave Germany for Indo-Pacific

By SETH ROBSON

*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Thousands of troops may be redeployed to the Indo-Pacific under a plan to reduce U.S. forces in Germany, according to the White House's national security adviser.

President Donald Trump announced last week his intentions of cutting troop levels in Germany from 34,500 to 25,000. He said the country, where the United States has stationed troops since 1945, has shortchanged the U.S. on trade and defense, and that he will reduce troop numbers "until they pay" more.

The move has been criticized by lawmakers in Germany and in the U.S., including members of the Republican Party.

In a commentary published Monday in The Wall Street Journal, national security adviser Robert O'Brien wrote that no official announcement has been made, details of any troop moves remain under development and that military leaders are working on different options.

"The Cold War practice of garrisoning large numbers of troops with their families on massive bases in places like Germany is now, in part, obsolete," he wrote. "While air bases and logistics hubs remain important, the Cold War-style garrisoning of troops makes less military and fiscal sense than it did in the 1970s."

Several thousand troops in Germany may be reassigned to other countries in Europe and others may return to the U.S.

Thousands more may be sent to the Indo-Pacific region, where the U.S. maintains a military presence in Japan, South Korea and Singapore, as well as rotational deployments to spots like Australia, O'Brien wrote.

"In that theater, Americans and allies face the most significant geopolitical challenge since the end of the Cold War," he wrote.

Moving more troops to Asia makes sense, said Cord Scott, a University of Maryland Global Campus Asia professor who teaches history, film and government on U.S. bases in South Korea.

"More of a direct threat would be toward players or actors here in Asia especially with what's happening, tensions now rising between India and China," he said by phone

Tuesday.

A mobile force in the Far East can respond to crises related to sea territory disputes or the Korean Peninsula, Scott added.

"The economic and military threat is in Asia," he said. "It makes sense to have more troops here in that regard."

Robert Dujarric, codirector of the Institute of Contemporary Asian Studies at Temple University in Tokyo, however, said the move is a bad idea that's part of the president's ongoing war against institutions, such as NATO, that he views as anti-American.

"Withdrawal of troops from Germany has nothing to do with helping defend Asia," Dujarric said by phone Tuesday. "Trump has a problem with NATO."

## House lawmakers want more NDAA oversight

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Lawmakers on a House readiness subcommittee want the 2021 defense bill to require the same oversight of hazards in government-owned military housing that is now necessary for base housing run by private companies, committee aides said Monday.

Last year, Congress focused on improving the conditions in military base housing operated by private companies after families described during congressional hearings and in news reports how they had lived in housing that had mold and pest infestations.

On Tuesday, the readiness subpanel of the House Armed Services Committee discussed their proposed draft for the House version of the fiscal year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act. It included

a requirement that there be a report to Congress focused on known environmental hazards in government-owned family housing, including overseas housing, "so that we can get a better look across the department on trends and issues in housing enterprise," a committee aide said Monday during a call with reporters.

The draft states that government-owned military family housing makes up a small percentage of homes, but it needs to be scrutinized the same as housing on military bases run by private companies.

The report would include a list of government homes that have lead, radon or asbestos, the mitigation plans for making certain homes are safe, and the processes and options for families to refuse to live in an overseas home that contains hazards, according to the readiness subcommittee's draft document.

## Army housing in Europe gets failing survey marks

By JOHN VANDIVER

*Stars and Stripes*

STUTTGART, Germany — Housing at Army posts in Germany and Italy is "very poor" and in need of serious improvements, the results of a survey of Army families in the United States and overseas show.

Army-owned housing in Stuttgart, Germany, and Vicenza, Italy, ranked 23rd and 24th, respectively, out of 26 sites where residents were asked to respond to questions about the quality of their accommodation and services, a summary published Monday showed.

Services provided in Stuttgart were at "crisis" level, meaning there was a "major problem" at the property and "corrective measures must be taken without delay," the summary said.

Although the report didn't specify what the problems were at any of the low-ranking sites, Stuttgart was grappling with a backlog of nearly 2,000

work orders, some dating back to 2018.

The backlog stemmed from an understaffed contractor that was unable to keep up with service requests, officials said in October as U.S. Army Garrison Stuttgart launched a surge to fix issues that included broken-down elevators and defective heating systems.

Housing in Vicenza, which is home to U.S. Army Garrison Italy and the 173rd Airborne Brigade, also scored poorly. Like their counterparts in Stuttgart, personnel in Vicenza have been vocal about dissatisfaction with Army-owned housing over the past year, complaining about everything from mold to slow responses to their requests for repairs or remediation.

The housing surveys aim to measure whether progress has been made in fixing issues indicated by residents, and gauge how families feel about the accommodation the Army provides.



# House panel's NDAA plan: 3% pay hike

By COREY DICKSTEIN

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — A key House subcommittee plans to give U.S. troops a 3% pay boost next year as the lower chamber of Congress drafts portions of its 2021 version of the bill that sets Pentagon policy and spending priorities, congressional staffers said Monday.

The personnel subpanel for the House Armed Services Committee included the pay raise in a draft of its portion of the fiscal year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act unveiled Monday, a day before the group votes on it. The proposed pay increase matches the one requested by the White House and the raise called for in the Senate Armed Services Committee's version of the NDAA, which lawmakers hope to pass by Sept. 30, the last day of fiscal

year 2020.

This week, House Armed Services Committee members began crafting their version of the 2021 NDAA in six subpanel hearings Monday and Tuesday. The committee is expected to finalize and vote on its version to be considered by the full House on July 1. The Senate Armed Services Committee sent its version of the \$740 billion bill to the full Senate on June 11. Lawmakers from both chambers later this year will hold a conference to negotiate the final version of the 2021 NDAA.

If approved, the pay raise would go into effect in January, marking the second consecutive year of an at least 3% increase for troops, who received a 3.1% boost last year. It would be the first time service members saw a back-to-back

3% pay raise in about a decade. Other provisions in the House subpanel's bill markup include measures meant to ease life for troops, protect sexual-assault victims, and help the military resolve diversity issues in its ranks.

The draft would allow the defense secretary to pay a basic needs allowance to certain low-income service members, provide 24-hour child care services at some military installations that require overnight shift work, and require the defense secretary to conduct a study on the performance of on-post schools run by Department of Defense Education Activity.

The bill would require the establishment of a new task force with military and civilian personnel to study domestic violence, which a committee aide on Monday described as

increasing recently in the civilian and military realms.

The bill would also include a so-called "safe to report" policy, which would protect sexual-assault victims from facing punishment over minor misconduct, which experts have said often stops them from pursuing cases against their abusers. The language does not define what misconduct would be included in the provision, leaving that decision to the defense secretary. In past attempts to include such measures in legislation, lawmakers have defined such infractions as things such as underage drinking or breaking curfew. The Senate Armed Services Committee did not include a "safe to report" measure in its version of the bill, drawing scrutiny from several Democratic members of the committee.

## Bolton book details Trump's Afghan War frustrations

By J.P. LAWRENCE

*Stars and Stripes*

KABUL, Afghanistan — President Donald Trump viewed a U.S. troop increase in Afghanistan as a failure and sought to withdraw from the country early in his term, former national security adviser John Bolton wrote in a book released to the public Tuesday.

Bolton's book, "The Room Where It Happened," about his 17 months as a member of Trump's Cabinet, has been criticized by Republican officials who have alleged that he is revealing classified information, and by Democratic lawmakers who have chided him for not testifying about Trump's actions before the House during last year's impeachment proceedings.

Trump sought to pull troops from Afghanistan before his second year in office, but was persuaded by then-Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and others to send more troops, Bolton said.

Trump grew to regret the troop increase, which he said went against his instincts and his campaign promises to withdraw from "endless wars," Bolton said.

The book recounts a Nov. 8, 2018, conversation in which Trump said to Mattis: "I gave you what you asked for. Unlimited authority, no holds barred. You're losing. You're getting your ass kicked. You failed."

Trump also told advisers that the Massive Ordnance Air Blast bomb, or MOAB, dropped in eastern Afghanistan in 2017 did not have the effect on the war that he desired, the book said.

U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan have dropped since 2017 to 8,600, as part of a withdrawal deal with the Taliban concluded in February.

As the U.S. worked on its peace agreement, State Department and Pentagon officials often clashed due to leaks, information hoarding and mutual distrust, Bolton said.

## Army OKs combat patches for soldiers serving in Saudi Arabia

*Stars and Stripes*

American soldiers have been cleared to wear combat patches for serving in Saudi Arabia since September's rebel attack on oil infrastructure there.

Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville approved the wearing of the shoulder sleeve insignia by soldiers who served in Saudi Arabia during the period beginning Sept. 14, 2019, when a drone and cruise missile attack hit two key Saudi oil facilities, with no set end date.

Soldiers may wear the patch if they received a combat zone tax exclusion and hostile fire or imminent danger pay while deployed to Saudi Arabia during the period, with no time-in-theater requirements, a June 18 memo from the Army's uniform policy branch said.

The patch, worn just below the U.S. flag on the right sleeve of the uniform, has been a symbol of military service since World War I, the Army said in March. It recognizes the personal sacrifice of those who have served

in combat zones, a current list of which includes Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Iraq, Jordan, Syria and Djibouti.

The attack on the Saudi oil infrastructure came amid escalating U.S.-Iran tensions after the Trump administration pulled the U.S. out of a nuclear agreement brokered by the Obama administration, and began a maximum pressure campaign to try to get Tehran to engage in new negotiations.

Yemen's Houthi rebels — who U.S. and Saudi officials say are backed by Iran — claimed responsibility for the September attacks, which halved the output of Saudi Arabia's state-owned oil company.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper described it as a "significant escalation of violence" by Iran and ordered a buildup of the U.S. presence in the Middle East to deter further aggression. Thousands of troops, air defense missile systems, radar, fighter aircraft squadrons and an air expeditionary wing were sent to Saudi Arabia.

# Dems denounce GOP police bill, demand negotiations

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Top Senate Democrats said Tuesday the Republican policing bill is “not salvageable,” as they demand negotiations on a new, more bipartisan package with more extensive law enforcement changes and accountability in response to the killing of Black Americans.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer signaled the Democrats intend to block the GOP package, which Democrats say does not go far enough to meet the moment that has galvanized the nation with massive demonstrations over police procedures.

“We don’t need to study the problem of police misconduct and violence, we need to solve it,” Schumer said on the Senate floor.

The Democratic opposition is being backed by the nation’s leading civil rights organizations and the lawyer, Benjamin Crump, representing the families of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, two African Americans whose deaths in police interactions sparked worldwide protests over racial bias in policing.

“The Black community is tired of the lip service,” Crump said in a statement.

The Republican legislation would create a national database of police use-of-force incidents, restrict police chokeholds and set up new training procedures. It is not as sweeping as a Democratic proposal, which mandates many of the changes.

The standoff does not end the debate. Democrats are trying to force Republicans to the negotiating table to build a more robust package more aligned with their own bill, set to be approved by the House later this week. The House and Senate versions would ultimately need to be the same to become law.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell is pushing ahead with the Justice Act in a test vote Wednesday, but without Democratic backing the bill is not expected to reach the 60-vote threshold needed to advance.

“We’re ready to make a law, not just make a point,” McConnell said as he opened the Senate on Tuesday. He said Americans “deserve better than a partisan stalemate.”

McConnell said, “We’ll find out whether our Democratic colleagues share our ambition or whether they chose to duck the issue and leave the country in the lurch.”

Schumer and the co-authors of the Democrats’ proposed package, Sen. Kamala Harris, D-Calif., and Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., wrote in a letter to McConnell that the Republican bill is “not salvageable and we need bipartisan talks to get to a constructive starting point.” They called the GOP effort “threadbare and lacking.”

Congress is under enormous pressure to establish new oversight and accountability of the police as demonstrations spill into cities large and small nationwide.

## Mayor: Seattle will crack down on protest zone

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Faced with growing pressure to crack down on an “occupied” protest zone following two weekend shootings, Seattle’s mayor said Monday that officials will move to wind down the blocklong span of city streets taken over two weeks ago that President Donald Trump asserted is run by “anarchists.”

Mayor Jenny Durkan said the violence was distracting from changes sought by thousands of peaceful protesters opposing racial inequity and police brutality. She said at a news conference that the city is working with the community to bring the “Capitol Hill Occupied Protest” zone, or CHOP, to an end and that police soon would move back into a precinct building they had largely abandoned in the area.

Durkan also vowed to address some of the protesters’ demands, including investing more in Black communities, reimagining policing in cooperation with community leaders, and pushing for accountability measures and statewide reform of police unions.

The mayor did not give an immediate timeline for clearing out the occupation but said “additional steps” would be examined if people don’t leave voluntarily. With scores of people camping in a park in the protest zone, Durkan said peaceful demonstrations could continue, but nighttime disorder had to stop.

A shooting Sunday night was the second in less than 48 hours at the edge of the zone, which is named for the Capitol Hill neighborhood near downtown Seattle.

It was not apparent if the shootings had anything to do with the protest — gunfire sometimes occurs in the neighborhood, especially on warm summer nights.

# Trump says he’ll soon issue order to protect monuments

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Tuesday he’ll issue an executive order to protect monuments that are coming under new scrutiny as America wrestles with racism during the unrest sparked by the police killing of George Floyd.

Trump has been clear that he opposes the removal of monuments of leaders of the Confederacy or other distasteful aspects of American history.

Commenting as he departed the White House for a trip to Arizona, Trump said, “I will

have an executive order very shortly, and all it’s really going to do is reinforce what’s already there, but in a more uniform way.”

At a time of nationwide protests over racial injustice and inequality, Trump has aligned himself squarely on the side of those who argue that the pendulum has swung too far in the direction of eliminating reminders of hated aspects of American history.

Trump had tweeted late Monday that those who tried to topple a statue of President Andrew Jackson in Lafayette

Park across the street from the White House faced 10 years in prison under the Veterans Memorial Preservation Act.

“Beware,” he tweeted.

Jackson is one of Trump’s favorite presidents.

The federal statute Trump cites subjects anyone who willfully injures or destroys, or attempts to injure or destroy, any structure, plaque, statue or other monument on public property commemorating the service of any person or persons in the armed forces of the United States to fines, up to 10 years’ imprisonment or both.



# Rising cases show coronavirus fight not over

Associated Press

BERLIN — Renewed lockdown measures in a German region where hundreds of coronavirus cases sprung up at a slaughterhouse and news that the world's top-ranked tennis player has also been infected provided a stark reminder to Europeans on Tuesday that the pandemic is far from gone.

Meanwhile, Britain, which has recorded the most coronavirus-related deaths in Europe, pressed on with its easing of the lockdown by confirming that restaurants, bars, hair salons and cinemas can reopen on July 4.

By contrast, Germany was reimposing some lockdown restrictions in North Rhine-Westphalia state after more than 1,550 people have tested positive for the virus at the Toennies slaughterhouse in Rheda-Wiedenbrueck and thousands more workers and family members were put into quarantine to try to halt the outbreak.

On Tuesday, North Rhine-Westphalia

Gov. Armin Laschet said people in Guetersloh and parts of a neighboring county will now face the same restrictions that Germany saw in March and April, including curbs on social gatherings and bar closures.

"The purpose is to calm the situation, to expand testing to establish whether or not the virus has spread beyond the employees of Toennies," Laschet said.

Laschet expressed frustration at the company's handling of the outbreak, saying that authorities had to order Toennies to release the names of its employees.

"The readiness to cooperate could have been greater," he said.

Union officials have blamed poor working and living conditions that migrant workers faced under a loosely regulated subcontractor.

Word of Novak Djokovic's infection again illustrated that there's little room for complacency in doing what's necessary to beat back the disease. The world's number one tennis player, said he and his

wife contracted the coronavirus after he played in a series of exhibition matches he organized in Serbia and Croatia with zero social distancing.

The announcement by Djokovic, who stands third in men's tennis history with 17 Grand Slam titles, has put into question the wisdom of a full-fledged return of tennis, including the U.S. Open in August.

The Serb tennis star is the fourth player to test positive for the illness after participating in the matches held in Belgrade and Zadar, Croatia.

In Britain, Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced a major rollback of lockdown measures that will let millions in England back into pubs, cinemas, churches and hair salons starting July 4. The move came amid strong pressure from businesses to ease social distancing rules.

Although gyms, pools, spas and tattoo parlors will remain shut, Johnson told lawmakers that "our long national hibernation" was coming to an end.

## Spate of shootings raises fear of a violent summer

Associated Press

CHICAGO — A spate of shootings over the past several days has law enforcement on edge, with some warning that a turbulent brew of a pandemic, racial unrest, historic surges in gun sales and a rancorous election year could make it an especially deadly summer.

Although mass shootings are down sharply this year, other non-suicidal gun deaths are on pace to exceed last year, according to incidents tracked by the Gun Violence Archive.

That increase came before the start of summer, when there is traditionally a spike during the warmer months as people venture outside more, and before Independence Day, which historically has been one of the deadliest days each year.

Gun experts have said that the statistics reflect an American public increasingly stressed by the coronavirus which has roiled the economy and kept them cooped up at home, deep divisions over justice and policing and the political divides of a presidential election year.

"There's something going on at the moment, these underlying tensions," said James Densley, professor of law enforcement and criminal justice at Metropolitan State University. "Everyone's been cooped up for so long with the pandemic, and then we had this sort of explosion of anger and grief after George Floyd's killing."

In just the past few days, more than 100 people were wounded in shootings in Chicago, including a 3-year-old boy who was killed while riding in the back seat of a car with his father. Police said the boy's father

was the intended victim.

In North Carolina, three people were killed and six were wounded early Monday when unknown gunmen opened fire during an impromptu block party in Charlotte. A birthday party in Syracuse, N.Y., over the weekend was marred by gun violence that wounded nine people.

In Minneapolis, people fled a popular nightlife and retail area as a shooter killed one man and injured 11 others early Sunday.

And for the second time in less than 48 hours, there was a shooting in Seattle's protest zone. A 17-year-old victim was shot late Sunday night in the area known as CHOP, for "Capitol Hill Occupied Protest," a day after a 19-year-old man was fatally shot and a 33-year-old man critically injured in there.

## Saudi Arabia to limit hajj due to concerns over virus

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — A Saudi official said Tuesday that the hajj pilgrimage, which usually draws up to 2.5 million Muslims from all over the world, will only see at the most a few thousand pilgrims next month due to concerns over the spread of the coronavirus.

The kingdom's Hajj Minister Muham-

mad Benten said a "small and very limited" number of people — even as low as just 1,000 from inside the kingdom — will be allowed to perform the pilgrimage to ensure social distancing and crowd control amid the global virus outbreak.

"The number, God willing, may be in the thousands. We are in the process of reviewing so it could be 1,000 or less, or a little more," Benten said in a virtual press

conference.

While the decision to drastically curb this year's hajj was largely expected, it remains unprecedented in Saudi Arabia's nearly 90-year history and effectively bars all Muslims from outside the kingdom from traveling there to performing the pilgrimage. The Saudi government waited until just five weeks before the hajj to announce its decision.

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Small boy safe after thieves ditch stolen car

**MO** ST. LOUIS — A 4-year-old boy is unharmed and back with his family following a harrowing experience early Monday, when the child was in the back seat of a car stolen at a gas station in St. Louis.

KMOV-TV reported that Di-ontre Evans was asleep around 12:30 a.m. when his father went inside a Moto Mart and left the child in his gray Pontiac G8. A group of men jumped in the car and drove off.

The car was found parked about five miles from the gas station around 4 a.m., with Di-ontre safe inside.

## Plane makes emergency landing on highway

**WA** FORKS — A small plane made an emergency landing Sunday on U.S. Highway 101 on the Olympic Peninsula, the Washington State Patrol reported.

According to early reports, the small fixed-wing experimental plane was able to land safely on the road, 8 miles north of Forks. The pilot was uninjured, and was able to maneuver the aircraft off the main roadway so that it was not blocking traffic.

It is unknown if the aircraft suffered mechanical or electrical failure at this time. WSP reported that everyone onboard was safe.

## Bridge project leads to historical finds

**ME** FARMINGTON — A team of archaeologists has unearthed artifacts from the 17th-century Abenaki village along the Sandy River.

Archaeologists from the

Maine Historic Preservation Commission are leading an effort that has been underway since the summer of 2018, when the Maine Department of Transportation deemed the bridge connecting Chesterville and Farmington Falls to be in need of replacement.

The team has been surveying the land around the Farmington Falls and Chesterville bridge on Routes 41 and 156 ever since, the Sun Journal reported.

Finding the Abenaki glass trade and shell beads was the most memorable feature of his team's dig, project archaeologist John Mosher said.

## Driver arrested after officer dragged

**SD** SIOUX FALLS — A juvenile driver is accused of dragging a Sioux Falls police officer who was investigating a reported assault.

The officer found the suspect in a vehicle at about 3 a.m. Saturday, according to police. The suspect tried to flee, but got stuck in traffic.

The officer was trying to turn off the vehicle but the suspect rolled up the driver's side window, trapping the officer's arm and dragging the officer as the vehicle moved forward, officials said.

Police eventually stopped the vehicle and arrested the suspect. Officials said that the officer was not seriously injured.

## County restarts weddings, virtually

**IL** WAUKEGAN — You can't use the coronavirus pandemic as an excuse not to get married any more — at least not in Lake County.

The 19th Judicial Circuit Court suspended marriages

and civil unions in March to protect the health of the public, but it started officiating weddings and civil unions — virtually — on Monday.

The only requirement for the general public is that at least one member of the couple getting married must be a resident of Lake County. All active-duty members of the military are also eligible.

To have a judge officiate at a virtual wedding, couples must call the county clerk's office to set up an appointment to apply for a marriage license and then visit the clerk of the local circuit court to pay \$10 in cash on the day the license is issued.

## City council bans guns on city property

**VA** ALEXANDRIA — The governing body of northern Virginia's largest city voted unanimously to ban firearms on all public property.

The Alexandria City Council passed the ordinance after a public hearing Saturday. The new law takes effect July 1 and bars firearms and ammunition from all city facilities and parks.

The city had a similar ordinance in the 1990s, but a state law passed in 2002 barred localities from regulating firearms in their facilities. That law was overturned by the General Assembly this year.

Alexandria said that it is the first city in Virginia to ban firearms under the new law.

## Fireworks likely led to destructive blaze

**NY** YONKERS — Fireworks may have started a fire that destroyed a three-story apartment building in Yonkers, injured 12 firefighters and left six families home-

less, a fire department official said Sunday.

The Journal News reported that more than 100 firefighters responded to the fire shortly after 9:30 p.m. Saturday.

The cause of the fire is under investigation, but Deputy Chief Joseph Cintrone of the Yonkers fire department said the blaze was "possibly started by fireworks and poor housekeeping outside." He said fireworks may have ignited rubbish in the backyard.

Cintrone said that no one in the building was injured in the fire, but at least a dozen firefighters suffered non-life-threatening injuries while battling it.

He called the building a total loss and said it might have to be torn down.

## State sees rise in gun background checks

**FL** ST. PETERSBURG — More Floridians are considering buying guns, according to state records that show a dramatic rise in the number of background checks it has processed since the killing of George Floyd in Minnesota.

The Tampa Bay Times reported that Florida processed 30,657 background checks in the week after Floyd's May 25 death, when a police officer pressed his knee against the Black man's neck.

The number of background checks was twice the number for the same period last year.

A week after Floyd's death, June 1, the state processed 8,597 background checks that day, more than four times higher than the first Monday in June last year.

From wire reports

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# MLB going ahead with 60-game season

Associated Press

NEW YORK—Major League Baseball plans to unilaterally issue a 60-game schedule for its shortest season since 1878 after the players' association rejected a negotiated deal of the same length, putting the sport on track for a combative return to the field amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Commissioner Rob Manfred and union head Tony Clark met last week and outlined plans that included expanding the playoffs from 10 teams to 16, widening use of the designated hitter to National League games and an experiment to start extra innings with a runner on second base. But the latest version of the deal proposed by MLB was rejected by the Major League Baseball Players Association's executive board in a 33-5 vote on Monday.

Those innovations now disappear.

"Needless to say, we are disappointed by this development," MLB said in a statement. "The framework provided an opportunity for MLB and its players to work together to confront the difficulties and challenges

presented by the pandemic. It gave our fans the chance to see an exciting new postseason format. And, it offered players significant benefits."

MLB's control owners approved going unilaterally with the 60-game schedule in ballparks without fans if the final arrangements can be put in place, a person familiar with the decision told The Associated Press. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because no announcement had been made.

MLB asked the union to respond by 5 p.m. EDT Tuesday as to whether players can report to training by July 1 and whether the players' association will agree on the operating manual of health and safety protocols. The schedule would be the shortest since the National League's third season.

Given the need for three days of virus testing and 21 days of workouts, opening day likely would be during the final week of July. MLB already has started to investigate charter flights that could bring players back from Latin America, another person told the AP, also on the condition of anonymity because no announcements were made.

The union announced its rejection, and the vote total was confirmed by a person familiar with that meeting who spoke to the AP on the condition of anonymity because the balloting was not made public. The decision likely will provoke what figures to be lengthy and costly litigation over the impact of the coronavirus on the sport, similar to the collusion cases that sent baseball spiraling to a spring training lockout in 1990 and a 7½-month strike in 1994-95 that wiped out the World Series for the first time in nine decades.

It also eliminates a \$25 million postseason players' pool, meaning players will not get paid anything above meal money during the playoffs and World Series, and the clubs' offer to forgive \$33 million in salary advanced to 769 players at the bottom of the salary scale with lower rates of pay while in the minors: \$16,500, \$30,000 or \$60,000 for each of them.

"It's absolute death for this industry to keep acting as it has been. Both sides," Cincinnati pitcher Trevor Bauer tweeted in a rare instance of a player criticizing the union. "We're driving the bus straight

off a cliff. How is this good for anyone involved? Covid 19 already presented a lose lose lose situation and we've somehow found a way to make it worse. Incredible."

Teams lose what would have been a new right to sell advertising patches on uniforms, broadcast enhancements such as having players wear microphones during games and a 2020 suspension of the luxury tax that for a 60-game season projected to save the New York Yankees \$8.5 million, Houston \$3 million, the Los Angeles Dodgers \$434,000 and the Chicago Cubs \$116,000.

Manfred loses what would have been an additional \$60 million to the commissioner's discretionary fund.

The union said in a statement that the "board reaffirmed the players' eagerness to return to work as soon and as safely as possible."

"To that end we anticipate finalizing a comprehensive set of health and safety protocols with Major League Baseball in the coming days, and we await word from the league on the resumption of spring training camps and a proposed 2020 schedule," the union said.

## Djokovic, wife test positive after tennis tournament

Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia — Novak Djokovic tested positive for the coronavirus on Tuesday after taking part in a tennis exhibition series he organized in Serbia and Croatia.

The top-ranked Serb is the fourth player to test positive for the virus after first playing in Belgrade and then again last weekend in Zadar, Croatia. His wife also tested positive.

"The moment we arrived in Belgrade we went to be tested. My result is positive, just as Jelena's, while the results of our children are negative," Djokovic said in a statement.

Djokovic has been criticized for organizing the tournament and bringing in players from

other countries amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Viktor Troicki said Tuesday that he and his pregnant wife have both been diagnosed with the virus, while Grigor Dimitrov, a three-time Grand Slam semifinalist from Bulgaria, said Sunday he tested positive. Borna Coric played Dimitrov on Saturday in Zadar and said Monday he has also tested positive.

There were no social distancing measures observed at the matches in either country and Djokovic and other players were seen hugging each other and partying in night clubs and restaurants after the matches.

"Everything we did in the past month, we did with a pure heart and sincere intentions,"

Djokovic said. "Our tournament meant to unite and share a message of solidarity and compassion throughout the region."

Djokovic, who has previously said he was against taking a vaccine for the virus even if it became mandatory to travel, was the face behind the Adria Tour, a series of exhibition events that started in the Serbian capital and then moved to Zadar.

He left Croatia after the final was canceled and was tested in Belgrade. The statement said Djokovic was showing no symptoms.

Despite the positive test, Djokovic defended the exhibition series.

"It was all born with a phil-

anthropic idea, to direct all raised funds towards people in need and it warmed my heart to see how everybody strongly responded to this," Djokovic said. "We organized the tournament at the moment when the virus has weakened, believing that the conditions for hosting the Tour had been met."

"Unfortunately, this virus is still present, and it is a new reality that we are still learning to cope and live with."

Djokovic said he will remain in self-isolation for 14 days and also apologized to anyone who became infected as a result of the series.

Organizers of the Adria Tour said the third stage of the event, scheduled to held next week in Bosnia, has been canceled.

# NASCAR backs Wallace as Blaney wins

Associated Press

TALLADEGA, Ala. — Even in victory, Ryan Blaney thought about what happened to close friend Bubba Wallace over the weekend. And what happened afterward.

Blaney held onto the lead after a restart with two laps to go Monday, earning his second straight win at Talladega Superspeedway on a day that began with NASCAR drivers throwing their support behind Wallace.

“I think it’s great that everybody really came together,” Blaney said. “I don’t want it to be remembered as a terrible day or a bad day in NASCAR.”

“I want it to be remembered as there was an incident and we all overcame it together and showed that we’re not going to take it any more.”

It was that kind of bittersweet day and weekend.

Blaney nipped Ricky Stenhouse Jr. at the finish line by .007 seconds for his fourth win and first since Talladega in October, albeit this time before

a mostly empty venue. It was a race marked by support for Wallace instead of another Big One at Talladega, though there was mayhem behind Blaney on the final lap and he also pushed Erik Jones into the wall near the finish.

“Just trying to block, block the best we could,” Blaney said. “Block the top, block the bottom ... just beating and banging to the line.”

Aric Almirola spun at the end and crossed the line almost backward.

Ford has now won nine of the last 10 Cup races at Talladega, and all three Team Penske drivers have won this season.

The racing was overshadowed by an extraordinary act of solidarity with NASCAR’s only Black driver. Dozens of drivers pushed Wallace’s car to the front of the field before Monday’s race as FBI agents tried to find out who left a noose in his garage stall over the weekend.

He was emotional after spending time in the top five before running short on fuel

and finishing 14th, slapping hands with a group of mostly African-American fans.

“I’m proud to stand where I’m at. ... This sport is changing,” Wallace said. “The deal that happened (Saturday) I wanted to show whoever it was, you are not going to take away my smile. I am going to keep on going.”

Wallace took the lead for a lap at one point, and Stenhouse said he noticed the fan reaction, along with the chants of “Bubba” at the start.

“I looked at the stands and watched all the people jump up and cheer,” he said. “That was pretty cool.”

The stock car series was left reeling and angered by the racist act that came less than two weeks after it banned the Confederate flag on its properties at Wallace’s urging. It has vowed to permanently bar the person responsible, but the investigation was in its early stages.

The 26-year-old Wallace was surrounded by all 39 other drivers in the moments before the race and they were joined

by their crews in a march down pit road as they pushed his No. 43 to the front of the line. Wallace climbed out of his car and wept.

It was a stirring move to support Wallace at a track in the heart of the South where Confederate flags have flown for decades and were seen outside the superspeedway all weekend long.

Standing alongside Wallace for the national anthem was Richard Petty, the 82-year-old Hall of Fame driver known as “The King.” Wallace drives for Petty, who issued a scathing rebuke after the noose was found that called for the “sick person” to be expelled from NASCAR forever — a move NASCAR President Steve Phelps insisted would happen should they be caught.

The race began with Martin Truex Jr. on the pole, and Tyler Reddick won the first stage, which ended in a weather caution that lasted 58-plus minutes.

## Champ Toronto first NBA team to arrive in Florida

Associated Press

MIAMI — The Toronto Raptors arrived in southwest Florida on Monday, set to begin their preparations for next month’s restart of the NBA season.

If the Raptors return to the NBA Finals, they could be in Florida for nearly four full months.

The reigning NBA champions will start training for the season restart later this week at Florida Gulf Coast University in Fort Myers, making that school their home base until they head north to the Disney complex near Orlando, Fla., around July 7. They landed in Fort Myers on Monday afternoon, then boarded buses for the team hotel.

Toronto’s arrival comes as Florida is dealing with a significant spike in positive corona-

virus test results over the past week. The Disney complex, about a 2½-hour drive from the Fort Myers area, is set to play host to both the NBA and MLS next month.

And the Orlando Pride withdrew from the upcoming National Women’s Soccer League tournament on Monday after six players and four staff members tested positive for COVID-19.

What awaits the Raptors is a different setup than what will be the case for the other 21 NBA teams that will be participating in the restart at Disney. Other teams will be working out at their home facilities, but as the NBA’s lone team from outside the U.S., the Raptors would have had some logistical difficulties in having players gather in Toronto to prepare for the trip to Disney.

Under Canadian rules, Raptors players who have been in the U.S. would have had to quarantine for 14 days upon their return to Toronto, so the team decided to hold its pre-camp workouts in the U.S. It’ll all take place with very strict rules to keep players safe, with access to workouts strictly limited to essential team personnel.

“In keeping with NBA and team safety protocols, there will be no group workouts during this phase of return to play, and strict protocols have been designed to ensure this initial level of access will take place in a safe, controlled, and healthy way,” the Raptors said in a team statement.

All group workouts and the official start of training camp for the resumed season will occur at Disney. Individual vol-

untary workouts are resuming this week, and Tuesday is the start of NBA-mandated coronavirus testing for players and essential staff of all 22 of the Disney-bound teams.

The Raptors were 46-18 when the season was halted on March 11 because of the coronavirus pandemic. When play resumes July 30, they will hold a three-game lead over Boston in the race for the No. 2 seed in the Eastern Conference playoffs.

If the Raptors were to make the NBA Finals and if that series went the full seven games, they would be playing in Florida as late as Oct. 13, according to the league’s current proposed plan for the restarted season. The league and the National Basketball Players Association are working this week to finalize remaining details.