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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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US sees surge in coronavirus cases

Associated Press

New coronavirus cases in the U.S. have surged to their highest level in two months and are now back to where they were at the peak of the outbreak.

The U.S. on Tuesday reported 34,700 new cases of the virus, according to a tally compiled by Johns Hopkins University that was published Wednesday. There have been only two previous days that the U.S. has reported more cases: April 9 and April 24, when a record 36,400 cases were logged.

New cases in the U.S. have been surging for more than a week after trending down for more than six weeks. While early hot spots like New York and New Jersey have seen cases steadily decrease, the virus has been hitting the south and west.

Several states on Tuesday set single-day records, including Arizona, California, Mississippi, Nevada and Texas.

Earlier Tuesday, Dr. Anthony Fauci told Congress that the next few weeks are critical to tamping down the surge.

Fauci, the infectious disease chief at the National Institutes of Health, told lawmakers he understands the pent-up desire to get back to normal as the U.S. begins emerging from months of stay-at-home orders and business shutdowns.

But that has “to be a gradual step-by-step process and not throwing caution to the wind,” he said.

“Plan A, don’t go in a crowd. Plan B, if you do, make sure you wear a mask,” Fauci said.

Arizona reported a new daily record of nearly 3,600 addi-

tional coronavirus infections Tuesday. Arizona emerged as a COVID-19 hot spot after Republican Gov. Doug Ducey lifted his stay-home orders in mid-May. Last week he allowed cities and counties to require masks in public places and many have done so.

Texas surpassed 5,000 new cases for a single day for the first time — just days after it eclipsed 4,000 new cases for the first time — as America’s largest pediatric hospital began taking adult patients to free up bed space in Houston. The infection rate in Texas has doubled since late May. And Nevada surpassed a record one-day increase for the fourth time in the past eight days. Other states also were experiencing worrisome surges, including Louisiana, Utah and

South Carolina.

Another worrisome trend: an increase in infections among young adults. Fauci said while COVID-19 tends to be less severe in younger people, some of them do get very sick and even die. And younger people also may be more likely to show no symptoms yet still spread the virus.

If people say, “I’m young, I’m healthy, who cares’ — you should care, not only for yourself but for the impact you might have” on sickening someone more vulnerable, Fauci said.

Cases were also surging in other parts of the world. India reported a record daily increase of nearly 16,000 new cases. Mexico, where testing rates have been low, also set a record with more than 6,200 new cases.

Lawmakers look to force release of shipbuilding plan

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON— Defense Secretary Mark Esper would have his funding restricted if he does not release the Navy’s 30-year shipbuilding plan to Congress as required by law, according to a House subcommittee’s draft of the defense funding bill.

“This is trying to reinforce that point that we need to see the 30-year shipbuilding plan so that we can see what’s projected in the out year, what the strategy is,” an aide to the House Armed Services Committee’s subpanel on seapower and projection forces said Monday during a call with reporters.

The subcommittee’s draft of the fiscal year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act would restrict 75% of Esper’s operation and maintenance funds until he submits the 30-year plan to Congress. The actual funding amount to be restricted will not

be available until a draft from Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., the chairman of House Armed Services Committee, is published next week.

The 30-year shipbuilding plan is meant to be submitted to Congress along with the proposed Defense Department budget, allowing lawmakers to see how the Navy plans to build certain vessels over time with the funding. The Navy’s goal is to reach 355 or more battle force ships by 2030. But for fiscal year 2021, the Navy is requesting less shipbuilding money in order to put it toward operations and maintenance.

Esper had been reviewing the plan to compare it to the Navy’s 2020 Integrated Force Structure Assessment, former acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly told House lawmakers in February. The assessment details the Navy’s plans for the specific makeup of its fleet, such as how many aircraft carriers, submarines and destroyers the service needs to compete against Russia and China.

In February, Esper told the House Armed Services Committee that the delay in submitting the 30-year shipbuilding plan was because he wanted to give them “the right plan, a good plan.”

The subcommittee’s draft of NDAA, which sets funding for the Defense Department, would also restrict money from being used to retire any Navy vessel until Esper releases the 2020 Integrated Force Structure Assessment.

Some House lawmakers were not happy with the Navy’s budget proposal in 2020 when service leaders tried to retire the USS Harry S. Truman halfway through the aircraft carrier’s operational life in order to reinvest the funds meant to refuel the ship’s nuclear reactor in other capabilities, such as unmanned ships.

For fiscal year 2021, which begins Oct. 1, the subcommittee’s draft calls for prohibiting the retirement of any aircraft carrier before its first refueling.

North Korea suspends plans for retaliation against Seoul

BY KIM GAMEL AND YOO KYONG CHANG
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un suspended plans for military retaliation against the South, state-run media reported Wednesday, in a de-escalation of political tensions on the eve of the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War.

A senior U.S. diplomat, meanwhile, said Washington and Seoul remain ready to engage with North Korea in hopes of rekindling nuclear talks that deadlocked last year amid disagreements over economic sanctions.

The surprise reversal by North Korea followed weeks of bellicose rhetoric by Kim's powerful sister, Kim Yo Jong. The saber-rattling was capped by a June 16 blast that devastated an inter-Korean liaison office on the North's side of the border to protest South Korean activists' efforts to float anti-regime propaganda into the communist state.

North Korea also removed loudspeakers used for blaring propaganda against the South, which the communist state had recently reinstalled along the Demilitarized Zone, the buffer zone that divides the peninsula, according to officials in Seoul.

Kim Jong Un presided over a preliminary meeting of the military commission of the ruling Workers' Party on Tuesday, according to the Korean Central News Agency.

The commission "took stock of the prevailing situation and suspended the military action plans against the South" that had been proposed by the general staff of the North Korean army, KCNA said in a brief report.

It also said the commission, which met via video conference, examined major policy decisions and documents "for further bolstering the war deterrent of the country" ahead of the fifth meeting of the party's seventh central military commission.

South Korea's defense minister reacted cautiously, urging the North to "completely withdraw" its military action plans instead of just suspending them.

Seoul has said it would respond strongly to any further provocations.

"Regardless of the North Korean moves, we will continue to maintain a firm readiness posture," Jeong Kyeong-doo told a parliamentary judiciary committee. He also confirmed reports that North Korea had removed the propaganda loudspeakers.

South Korea's Yonhap News Agency later reported that some North Korean propaganda outlets also had removed more than a dozen online stories that had denounced the South over the leafleting issue.

The spat was a stark reminder of the fragility of relations between the two Koreas 70 years after the war began with a North Korean invasion on June 25, 1950. The three-year conflict ended in an armistice instead of a peace treaty, leaving the sides technically at war.

It was unclear why the North suddenly reversed its stance and issued the first public reference to Kim Jong Un in weeks. The 36-year-old leader's prolonged absences between sporadic appearances have prompted continued speculation about possible health problems, although U.S. and South Korean officials have dismissed major concerns.

7th Fleet flagship returns to Yokosuka

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The 7th Fleet command ship USS Blue Ridge returned to its homeport here Wednesday after a five-month deployment amid the coronavirus pandemic.

After leaving Yokosuka in January, the crew made stops in Japan, South Korea and Thailand in its first month underway before port visits were canceled in response to the virus's spread.

The Blue Ridge typically makes numerous port visits during deployments, but it made very few this year due to the coronavirus pandemic. By comparison, the ship visited 11 ports in nine Indo-Pacific nations during its four-month deployment last year.

"COVID-19 has brought many challenges, but we have remained fully operational and continued to solidify our ties with our host nation of Japan and partnered allies throughout the region," Blue Ridge commander Capt. Craig Sicola said in a statement Wednesday, referring to the disease the coronavirus causes.

This year, the 50-year-old ship instead broke its days-at-sea record, tallying up 70 days in a row without a port visit, according to the Navy. The oldest operational ship in the Navy, the Blue Ridge's prior at-sea record of 64 days was set in 1972 during the Vietnam War.

Sicola said the Blue Ridge crew used the extended time at sea to "further our training, enhance our underway capabilities and increase qualifications in preparation for the next underway period," according to the statement.

US, Japanese ships drill in South China Sea

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

The littoral combat ship USS Gabrielle Giffords joined two Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force ships for training in the contentious South China Sea on Tuesday, a Navy statement said.

The Navy vessel sailed with the training ships JS Kashima and JS Shimayuki to "emphasize the importance of communications and coordination

while operating together," according to the statement.

"The opportunity to operate with our friends and allies at sea is incredibly important for our combined readiness and partnership," Expeditionary Strike Group 7 commander Rear Adm. Fred Kacher said in the statement.

The South China Sea, which Beijing views as its own but the United States and other nations consider international waters, is wrought with tension

as multiple countries — including Malaysia, the Philippines, China and Vietnam — dispute sovereignty over islands and reefs within it.

Japan has boosted its naval presence in the South China Sea in recent years. A Ministry of Defense white paper in September said Japan should "proactively and independently strengthen" its security by increasing its presence in the disputed waters this year.

Air Force extends exemption for shaving

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — Airmen and space force personnel with razor bumps no longer need to apply for a shaving waiver every year after Air Force officials extended the exemption from regular shaving for those with the painful condition.

Air Force Surgeon General Lt. Gen. Dorothy Hogg authorized five-year shaving waivers for air and space professionals diagnosed with pseudofolliculitis barbae, the Latin name for the chronic skin condition commonly known as razor bumps, which are caused by ingrown facial hairs from frequent, close shaving, the Air Force said in a statement Tuesday.

Previously, waivers had to be updated annually.

The change was made based on “feedback from the field” and is intended to provide more time for skin to heal and prevent a recurrence, Air Force officials said.

The red bumps associated with the condition, which is most common in African American men, can cause secondary infection and excessive scarring.

The longer shaving waivers remain valid regardless of a member’s deployment or duty station.

But they do not mean beards and other facial hair can be allowed to grow to any length. Rules that say facial hair cannot exceed a quarter of an inch and must be natural — meaning no patterns or words

can be shaved into it — still apply, the Air Force said. Grown-out facial hair also must not interfere with the wearing of protective equipment, such as gas masks.

The Navy last year stopped issuing permanent shaving waivers for sailors diagnosed with razor bumps after two Naval Safety Center reviews found beards interfered with the face seals of devices such as respirators.

Sailors with razor bumps may obtain a temporary shaving waiver to grow a beard for up to 60 days while undergoing treatment for the skin condition.

Air Force personnel diagnosed with razor bumps receive instruction on proper shaving methods to prevent a recurrence, the Air Force said.

Number of people treated after Kadena blaze rises

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND AYA ICHIHASHI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Approximately 100 people were “affected by smoke and/or chlorine gas” released by a fire Monday at a Kadena Air Base hazardous materials warehouse on Okinawa, according to updated figures released Wednesday evening by the 18th Wing.

The base began its cleanup Wednesday, which includes a “thorough” investigation of the cause of Monday’s blaze as well as health and environmental monitoring, the wing said in a statement Wednesday. The fire destroyed the 18th Logistics Readiness Squadron’s Hazardous Materials Pharmacy.

Four Japanese government officials from

the Okinawa Defense Bureau, which represents Japan’s Ministry of Defense on the island, visited the site Tuesday to see the recovery efforts and speak to the wing’s lead civil engineer about the blaze.

“At this time, the cause of the fire is still under investigation,” the statement said. “Emergency responders have been on the scene to ensure there are no safety risks to the base or local community and remain involved in recovery operations.”

The fire began at around 8:40 a.m. Monday at the warehouse south of Kadena’s airfield in the central part of the base, the wing said in statements earlier this week.

Thick plumes of smoke smothered areas near the fire and closed off roads as firefighters from 18th Civil Engineer Squadron Fire and Emergency Services worked to get it under control. The base evacuated

an area 500 feet upwind and 2,000 feet downwind of the site.

No mutual aid was called, Wednesday’s statement said. The roof collapsed while firefighters battled the blaze.

Firefighters poured 600,000 gallons of water on the fire, a wing public affairs official told Stars and Stripes by phone Wednesday.

The water interacted with calcium hypochlorite stored in the warehouse and released the gas, according to the statement.

Calcium hypochlorite is commonly used in commercial bleaches, cleaning solutions and disinfectants for drinking water and wastewater purification systems and swimming pools, according to the National Institutes for Health.

Other unnamed hazardous materials were also on site.

Mattis urges people to wear face coverings in PSA

BY JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

Former defense secretary and retired Marine Gen. Jim Mattis has appeared in a pandemic public service announcement urging listeners in his hometown to wear face coverings.

“I’m here to talk about that nasty little virus, COVID,” he says in a video released Monday by the central Washington city of Richland, near the Oregon border. COVID-19 is the disease caused by the coronavirus. “We got introduced to it about six months ago, and it’s clear this little bugger is not

going away on its own.”

Mattis, a blue bandana around his neck, called on his “friends and neighbors” to cover their faces in public and to heed the advice of Dr. Amy Person, a county health official, to achieve Washington Gov. Jay Inslee’s plan for reopening the state.

The video was also posted on the KXLY website, the TV station that serves nearby Spokane, Wash., and Coeur d’Alene, Idaho. Mattis is a Richland native.

He served as defense secretary under President Donald Trump from January 2017 to January 2019, after a long Marine Corps career that included command of

Marines in Afghanistan and Iraq and overseeing all American troops in the Middle East as chief of U.S. Central Command.

Mattis resigned from his defense secretary post in late December 2018 following Trump’s decision to withdraw U.S. forces from Syria. The president insisted Mattis had been fired.

In a widely publicized open letter published June 3 in the wake of civil rights protests, Mattis wrote that “Donald Trump is the first president in my lifetime who does not try to unite the American people — does not even pretend to try. Instead he tries to divide us.”

2 candidates opposed by Trump win primaries

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Voters rebuffed President Donald Trump and nominated two Republicans he opposed to House seats from North Carolina and Kentucky on Tuesday. Calls in higher-profile races in Kentucky and New York faced days of delay as swamped officials count mountains of mail-in ballots.

In western North Carolina, GOP voters picked investor Madison Cawthorn, 24, over Trump-backed real estate agent Lynda Bennett. The runoff was for the seat vacated by GOP Rep. Mark Meadows, who resigned to become Trump's chief of staff and joined his new boss in backing Bennett.

Kentucky Republican Rep. Thomas Massie, a libertarian-minded maverick who often clashes with GOP leaders, was renominated for a sixth House term. Trump savaged Massie in March as a "disaster for America" who should be ejected from the party after he forced lawmakers to return to Washington during a pandemic to vote on a

huge economic relief package.

Cawthorn, who uses a wheelchair following an accident, will meet the constitutionally mandated minimum age of 25 when the next Congress convenes. Cawthorn has said he's a Trump supporter, and Massie is strongly conservative. Still, their victories were an embarrassment to a president whose own reelection campaign has teetered recently.

As states ease voting by mail because of the coronavirus pandemic, a deluge of mail-in ballots and glacially slow counting procedures made delays inevitable. That torturous wait seemed a preview of November, when more states will embrace mail-in voting and officials warn that uncertainty over who is the next president could linger for days.

Kentucky usually has 2% of its returns come from mail ballots. This year officials expect that figure to exceed 50%, and over 400,000 mail ballots were returned by Sunday.

In the day's marquee contests, two African American candidates with campaigns energized by nationwide protests

for racial justice were challenging white Democratic establishment favorites for the party's nominations.

First-term state legislator Charles Booker was hoping a late surge would carry him past former Marine fighter pilot Amy McGrath for the Democratic Senate nomination from Kentucky. And in New York, political newcomer Jamaal Bowman was seeking to derail House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Eliot Engel's bid for a 17th term.

In Kentucky, many counties including Jefferson, the state's largest, faced piles of mail-in ballots and reported no results. The Associated Press doesn't expect to call the McGrath-Booker race until June 30, when Kentucky plans to release additional tallies.

The AP was also delaying its call in New York's Engel-Bowman race, pending additional vote tallies.

In other contests, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky easily won the Republican nomination for a seventh Senate term and will be favored

in November against McGrath or Booker.

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., won renomination, cementing her rise from obscurity to progressive icon status when she ousted Democratic Rep. Joe Crowley, on track to become speaker, from the New York City district.

In Virginia, retired Army Col. Daniel Gade won the GOP Senate nomination but seems certain to lose to Democratic Sen. Mark Warner in November. Republican Scott Taylor will face Democratic Rep. Elaine Luria in a rematch between two Navy veterans in a Virginia Beach district from which she toppled him in 2018.

Voters endured 90-minute waits in Kentucky's second-largest city, Lexington, and social media posts showed long lines in New York's Westchester County deep into the evening. Yet overall, the day's problems seemed less widespread than in recent elections in Georgia and Nevada, where some people stood in line for hours.

Afghanistan roadside bomb kills at least 6 in rickshaw

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — A roadside bombing killed at least six Afghan civilians traveling in a rickshaw in a northern province, an official said Wednesday. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.

According to the interior ministry spokesman, Tariq Arian, the bombing in Jawzjan province took place the previous evening when the rickshaw struck the roadside bomb in Mardyan district. One civilian was also wounded in the explosion.

Arian blamed Taliban insurgents for the attack. Afghanistan has seen a recent spike in violence, with most attacks claimed by the local affiliate

of Islamic State. This month, ISIS claimed responsibility for a bombing at a Kabul mosque that killed two people. Eight worshippers were wounded in that attack.

A week later, another prayer leader and three worshippers were killed in a bomb blast inside another mosque in Kabul. Eight other worshippers were wounded. The Taliban condemned the mosque attacks.

Also, the United States blamed ISIS for a horrific attack last month on a maternity hospital in the capital that killed 24 people, including two infants and several new mothers.

ISIS, which reviles Shiites as heretics, has declared war on Afghanistan's minority Shiite Muslims, but has also attacked Sunni Muslims and mosques.

Kimmel apologizes for his use of blackface in 1990s

From wire reports

Jimmy Kimmel is the latest comedian to apologize for his past use of blackface as Hollywood continues to grapple with its history of systemic racism. He issued a statement Tuesday afternoon saying it was wrong for him to wait so long to address his "embarrassing" impressions of celebrities throughout the 1990s.

"I have long been reluctant to address this, as I knew doing so would be celebrated as a victory by those who equate apologies with weakness and cheer for leaders who use prejudice to divide us," he wrote. "That delay was a mistake. There is nothing more important to me than your respect, and I apologize to those who were genu-

inely hurt or offended by the makeup I wore or the words I spoke."

In the mid-1990s, Kimmel did a recurring impersonation of NBA player Karl Malone on the Los Angeles-area radio station KROQ. He brought it to television along with other celebrity impressions via "The Man Show," the Comedy Central series he co-hosted with Adam Carolla from 1999 to 2003. They enlisted makeup artists to make him look more like Malone.

"I believe that I have evolved and matured over the last twenty-plus years, and I hope that is evident to anyone who watches my show," Kimmel wrote.

Senate Dems reject GOP policing measure

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A Republican policing bill hit a roadblock Wednesday as Senate Democrats voted against it as inadequate, leaving the parties to decide whether to negotiate a compromise or walk away despite continued public outcry over the killings of Black Americans.

The impasse threatens to turn the nationwide protests over the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and others into another moment that galvanizes the nation but leaves lawmakers unable to act. Common ground, however, is not out of reach.

But the legislation is stalled, for now, with Democrats refusing to agree to open debate as they push for greater changes in police tactics and

accountability.

“If you don’t think we’re right, make it better, don’t walk away,” implored Sen. Tim Scott, of South Carolina, the only Black Republican senator and the author of the GOP bill.

Yet the outlook is deeply uncertain with Congress unable to swiftly respond even as the public demands policing changes. Much as lawmakers have failed to act during times of crisis on gun control or immigration changes there’s a familiar standoff despite broad support. An Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll shows almost all Americans support some degree of criminal justice changes.

The GOP’s Justice Act is seen by Republicans and Democrats as a starting point in the broader debate over how best

to change policing practices, as demonstrations in cities large and small focus on law enforcement and racial injustice. It would create a national database of police use-of-force incidents, restrict police chokeholds and set up new training procedures and commissions meant to study race and law enforcement.

The package from Republicans is not as sweeping as a Democratic proposal, which mandates many of the changes and would hold police liable to damages in lawsuits. There are similarities on some issues, lawmakers say, but also vast differences.

Civil rights leaders and the Congressional Black Caucus urged a no vote on the GOP bill. Law enforcement and business groups including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce have

urged both parties to find common ground.

Ahead of Wednesday’s vote, Trump tweeted his support for the GOP bill. He said it would be “great for both people of color and police.” Trump tweeted, “Hope to sign it into law ASAP!”

The vote was 55-45, failing to reach the 60-vote threshold needed to advance. Two Democrats, Alabama Sen. Doug Jones and West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, along with Sen. Angus King of Maine, an independent who caucuses with Democrats, voted with Republicans to open the debate.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell criticized Democrats as engaging in “political nonsense.” Still, he vowed to try again, hoping to pass legislation before a July 4 holiday recess.

Crowds mourn Brooks at storied church in Atlanta

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Scores of mourners Tuesday paid their final respects to Rayshard Brooks at the Atlanta church where the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. used to preach, taking part in a funeral filled with historical echoes and a tragic sense that Black America has been through this all too many times before.

“Rayshard Brooks is the latest high-profile casualty in the struggle for justice and a battle for the soul of America. This is about him, but it is so much bigger than him,” the Rev. Raphael Warnock, senior pastor at Ebenezer Baptist Church, told the crowd, less than two weeks after the Black man was shot twice in the back by a white Atlanta police officer following a struggle in a fast-food parking lot.

Warnock recited a long list of names of Black people who died at the hands of police in recent years, including Eric Garner,

Michael Brown, Philando Castile and George Floyd, lamenting: “Sadly, we’ve gotten too much practice at this.”

Brooks’ widow, Tomika Miller, dressed in white, sat surrounded by family and friends. Former state lawmaker Stacey Abrams and Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, both of whom have been mentioned as potential running mates for Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden, were among the mourners.

Most people dressed all in white, while some wore T-shirts with Brooks’ picture. Nearly everyone wore masks to protect against the coronavirus.

“We are here because individuals continue to hide behind badges and trainings and policies and procedures rather than regarding the humanity of others in general and Black lives specifically,” the Rev. Bernice King, the civil rights leader’s daughter, told the crowd at the funeral.

Student gathering gives Trump a more vocal crowd

Associated Press

PHOENIX — It wasn’t quite one of his signature big-stadium rallies.

But President Donald Trump drew something closer to the jam-packed audience of political supporters he’s been craving as hundreds of young conservatives filled a Phoenix megachurch Tuesday to hear his call for them to get behind his reelection effort.

The crowded Dream City Church for the gathering of Students for Trump offered a starkly different feel compared to Trump’s weekend rally in Tulsa, Okla., his first of the coronavirus era, which drew sparser attendance.

Trump hailed the “patriotic young Americans who stand up tall for America and refuse to kneel to the radical left.

“You are the courageous warriors standing in the way of what they want to do and their goals,” he told the boisterous crowd. “They hate our history.

They hate our values, and they hate everything we prize as Americans.”

Trump was looking to regain campaign momentum after Tulsa, which was supposed to be a sign of the nation’s reopening and a show of political force. Instead, it generated thousands of empty seats and swirling questions about the president’s campaign leadership and his case for another four years in office.

The low turnout sharpened the focus on Trump’s visit to Arizona, which doubles as both a 2020 battleground state and a surging coronavirus hot spot.

With the Phoenix event, which was organized by Turning Point Action, a group chaired by Trump ally Charlie Kirk, the president hoped to turn attention — at least momentarily — away from surging coronavirus infections in huge swaths of the South and West, his slumping poll numbers and a virus-ravaged economy.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Dead iguana found in pizza joint's freezer

FL WEST PALM BEACH — File it under pizza toppings only offered in Florida. State inspectors found an 80-pound iguana stashed in the freezer at a local pizza joint.

Pizza Mambo in West Palm Beach was forced to close for a day last week following the inspection by the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation.

An employee told the South Florida Sun Sentinel that the reptile was given as a personal gift to the owner. It was stored in a separate freezer away from the restaurant's food and was immediately trashed after they were informed it was a violation.

Sword missing from Revolutionary War statue

VT BENNINGTON — A bronze sword is missing from the statue of a commander who helped win the Battle of Bennington during the Revolutionary War.

The administrator at the state-owned Bennington Battle Monument said a passerby told her the sword was missing from the statue of New Hampshire Gen. John Stark, the Bennington Banner reported.

Vermont State Historic Preservation Officer Laura Trieschmann said there was nothing to indicate the sword was taken as a form of protest against historical figures similar to what has been happening across the country.

Man wins \$4M lottery scratch game, again

MI SOUTH ROCKWOOD — For the second time, a southeastern Michigan man has won a \$4 million lottery

game, officials said.

Mark Clark, of South Rockwood, scratched a ticket with a coin that was given to him by his late father about 10 years ago. They often fished together after Clark won a different \$4 million instant game in 2017.

"You don't think you'll win millions once, and you definitely never think it would happen twice," Clark, 50, said.

Clark chose a lump sum of about \$2.5 million instead of taking \$4 million in payments over time.

Human scalp discovered in campground

MO JOPLIN — Authorities are investigating after a human scalp was discovered in a Joplin campground.

Newton County Sheriff Chris Jennings said the owner of the Holly Haven Campground on the southwest side of Joplin found the scalp near a pond, The Joplin Globe reports.

Cadaver dogs and a dive team were sent to the scene but found nothing. The scalp has been taken to the Missouri State Highway Patrol crime lab for analysis.

Jennings said the scalp was probably dragged to the campground by animals.

The sheriff said the hair on the scalp was braided. But hair color and gender will have to be determined by the lab.

Airport ordered to pay for noise violations

CO DENVER — A judge ordered Denver International Airport to pay \$33.5 million for noise violations that affected nearby neighborhoods during a three-year period starting in 2014.

Jefferson County District Judge Christie Bachmeyer ruled that DIA did not properly monitor aircraft noise, violating

an intergovernmental agreement with Adams County dating back to the late 1980s, The Denver Post reported. The ruling was made public Monday.

Bachmeyer said the airport must now pay \$500,000 for each of the 67 violations over the three-year period from 2014 through 2016.

Overheated hikers, river runner rescued

AZ GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK — Grand Canyon National Park rangers had to rescue a river runner and several hikers who were overcome by the heat recently.

Phantom Ranch rangers responded to a river runner experiencing heat illness and fatigue on a Colorado River trip.

They said the river runner drank too much water, leading to hyponatremia.

The park's helicopter and ambulance transported the patient to a Flagstaff hospital.

The next day, Indian Garden rangers responded to a hiker having heat stroke on the Bright Angel Trail. Other incidents involved some hikers experiencing heat exhaustion on the Bright Angel and South Kaibab trails.

University police search for statue vandals

UT PROVO — Brigham Young University police were searching for people who vandalized an on-campus statue of Brigham Young.

Campus Police Lt. Rich Christianson said surveillance video indicated there were two suspects involved but police are still investigating, The Daily Herald reported.

The vandals poured red latex paint over the front of the statue in Provo, police said.

The word "racist" was written in spray paint across the pedestal beneath the statue of the university's namesake.

Man with sword dies after being shocked

IA NEVADA — A man who was reportedly knocking on doors and carrying a sword died in Nevada after being shocked with a stun gun.

Nevada police said officers were called at 2:44 a.m. to check reports of a man walking up and down a street, carrying a sword and knocking on doors.

Nevada officers, who were joined by Story County sheriff's deputies, ordered the man to drop the sword but police said he stated, "It stays in my hand."

Officers then used a Taser to shock the man, and they then retrieved the sword and handcuffed him. Medics were called, in part to remove the barbs of the Taser, and as they treated the man he stopped breathing, police said.

Ex-student sentenced for voyeurism at school

IN VALPARAISO — A former Valparaiso University student was sentenced to probation after pleading guilty to secretly filming male classmates showering and using the bathroom and posting the videos online.

A Porter County judge sentenced Joshua Baker III of Memphis, Tenn., to one year of suspended prison time for each of the two counts of voyeurism he had pleaded guilty to in the case.

Baker, 22, will serve two years of probation and is required to attend counseling, The (Northwest Indiana) Times reported.

From wire reports

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Reporting
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and Military News

MLB overrules union, will play season

Associated Press

NEW YORK — So, where were we?

Mid-March, a spring training exhibition between the St. Louis Cardinals and Miami Marlins at Roger Dean Stadium in Jupiter, Fla. Even before the final out, both sides had gotten the official word: Major League Baseball was shutting down immediately because of the coronavirus pandemic.

“It felt like the most meaningless baseball game in the history of the sport,” Cardinals infielder Matt Carpenter said.

So now, they’ll try again.

A skewed, 60-game schedule, rather than the full plate of 162, with opening day on July 23 or 24. A shortened, contorted season ordered by Commissioner Rob Manfred on Tuesday night after billionaire owners and multimillion-dollar players couldn’t come to a new economic agreement against the backdrop of the virus outbreak.

“What happens when we all get it?” Milwaukee pitcher Brett Anderson tweeted this week.

From the start, a sprint to the finish. Got to come out strong. Remember last year: The Na-

tionals were 27-33 through 60 games and wound up hoisting the World Series trophy.

Perhaps it’s the perfect setup for outsiders like the Padres or Mariners to sneak into the championship chase.

Let’s not forget those Houston Astros, either. They were the biggest story in baseball when we last saw them, with fans taunting Jose Altuve, Alex Bregman and their accomplices following the trash can-banging, sign-stealing scandal that made national headlines over the winter.

Some things, chances are, won’t change when the games resume.

No minor leagues this year, tough luck there. The majors, meanwhile, give new meaning to short-season ball.

A look at what’s on deck:

Oddballs

An automatic runner on second base to begin all extra innings. Designated hitters in NL games. Pitchers with their own personal rosin bags.

This season will look like none other in baseball history,

the price for trying to play amid a pandemic.

“So long National League. It was fun while it lasted,” Cardinals pitcher Adam Wainwright tweeted.

The extra-inning rule, that’s bound to bring new strategy, different stats to dissect and an innovative twist on the old game. It’ll be — aw, heck, who are we kidding? It will be major league baseball meets Central Park softball.

Just hoping that experiment doesn’t stick around in ’21.

Marking the moment

To date, Bruce Maxwell is the only major leaguer to take a knee during the playing of “The Star-Spangled Banner” before a game. The backup Oakland catcher did that at the Coliseum in September 2017, following the lead of NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick.

Maxwell saw limited time with the A’s in 2018, played in Mexico last year and doesn’t have a job with a big league team this year.

Major leaguers have not, in general, been the first set of players in pro sports to speak

out on issues of social injustice. We’ll see what stances they take on and off the field when games return.

Fly it high!

OK, say Francisco Lindor helps Cleveland win a most elusive World Series title. Or Christian Yelich leads the Brewers to their first flag.

Fans will certainly argue: Is it a legitimate crown or more like a prize won during some European soccer tournament?

Kay Kenealy, a 59-year-old from Waukesha, Wis., who has a 20-game ticket package to Brewers games, took a meaty swing at the debate.

“The season’s the season. It’s kind of like with the Bucks in the running for an NBA championship. A championship’s a championship,” she said. “If the season’s a month long, you play for that month.”

“Whether it be the Brewers or the A’s or someone like that that wins the World Series, I don’t think that requires an asterisk. I think everybody for the next 100 years is going to know that this was a pandemic year.”

FBI says noose in Wallace’s garage was there in 2019

Associated Press

NASCAR went to Talladega Superspeedway on heightened alert after Bubba Wallace, its only Black driver, took on an active role in a push for racial equality.

Wallace had successfully called for the ban of the Confederate flag and received threats. Fans paraded past the main entrance of the Alabama track displaying the flag, and a plane circled above the speedway pulling a Confederate flag banner that read “Defund NASCAR.”

So NASCAR moved quickly when one of Wallace’s crew members discovered a rope that resembled a noose in their garage stall. The sanctioning body called in federal authori-

ties, who ruled Tuesday it had been hanging there since at least last October and was not a hate crime.

U.S. Attorney Jay Town and FBI Special Agent in Charge Johnnie Sharp Jr. said the investigation determined “nobody could have known Mr. Wallace would be assigned” to that same stall. NASCAR said it was the lone garage stall with a pull down rope that resembled a noose.

NASCAR has defended its reaction and insisted it would call the FBI again. A defiant Wallace said there is no confusion and the rope had been fashioned into a noose.

“I wanted to make sure this wasn’t just a knot,” Wallace said on CNN. “It was a noose.

Whether it was tied in 2019 ... it is a noose.”

Wallace never saw the rope. He said NASCAR President Steve Phelps came to see him Sunday night at the track with “tears running down his face.”

“The evidence he brought to me was that a hate crime has been committed, quote-on-quote,” said Wallace, who instantly began to fear for the safety of his family.

Even after the conclusion it was not a hate crime, Wallace remained angry at what he perceives as constant tests of his character. He holds no ill-will toward NASCAR.

“I stand behind Steve and I stand behind NASCAR,” he said. “NASCAR was worried about Talladega. We had that

one circled on the radar with everything going on.”

NASCAR opened the Talladega gates to 5,000 fans, its highest number so far during the coronavirus pandemic.

Since finding his voice over the last month, the 26-year-old Mobile, Ala., native has embraced an international role in NASCAR’s attempt to push past its rocky racial history. Wallace has worn an “I Can’t Breathe” shirt, raced with a Black Lives Matter paint scheme in Virginia and successfully lobbied for the Confederate flag ban.

Roughly 48 hours after the discovery, federal authorities said video confirmed the rope “was in that garage as early as October 2019” hanging from a garage door.

Travelers has top field but no fans

Associated Press

CROMWELL, Conn. — The tournament director for this week's Travelers Championship had an idea. How about filling the natural amphitheater around the 18th green at TPC River Highlands with giant video boards showing fans watching the event and cheering from home?

"We started there. We wanted a Zoom wall with like 5,000 people," Nathan Grube said. "We looked at the renderings, the tech. Let's just say that was not feasible."

The tournament also considered setting up a VIP viewing area so that its top donors could come and watch from a safe social distance.

In the end, Grube said officials decided to keep it as a TV-only event. There will be no Zoom boards, no hospitality tents, no VIPs, not even players' wives or children in Cromwell for the third PGA Tour event to be held during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Travelers will be the first held in its regular time and place on

the schedule.

"We wanted to be able to look back at this a week after the tournament and say, 'OK, we did that as safe as we possibly could,'" Grube said. "I'm hoping we can look back and say, 'OK, maybe we were too safe in that area.' I would so much rather say that than, 'Man we should not have done that.' We're going to err on the side of caution for sure."

The Travelers will have one of its best fields since the Connecticut event was founded as the Insurance City Open in 1952.

The top five players in the world ranking — Rory McIlroy, Jon Rahm, Justin Thomas, Brooks Koepka and Dustin Johnson — will be there. So will fan favorites such as three-time champion Bubba Watson, two-time champion Phil Mickelson and 2017 champion Jordan Spieth. Fifteen of the top 20 players in the world are in the field.

The field won't be finalized until COVID-19 test results come back for all those entered. The uncertainty stems from

the first positive test during the PGA Tour's return, Nick Watney on Friday in Hilton Head, S.C.

And the only people watching in person will be the caddies, those providing broadcast coverage, a few volunteer workers, some journalists and people who live in the River Highlands neighborhood looking on from their properties.

Ed Widders and his wife, Evelyn, live in a house overlooking the 13th fairway. For them, Travelers week is like Christmas, New Year's Day and the Fourth of July rolled into one big holiday, he said. Normally they would host about 25 family members and friends, some from out of state, for a catered party Sunday.

This year, the 81-year-old Widders said just he and Evelyn will be on their deck.

"I'll sit back with a chicken wing in one hand, a beer in the other and watch it go by me," Widders said. "We'll have the TV on, too. It will still be a fun thing."

While the rest of the community isn't invited to the course,

Grube said they will be part of the tournament.

There will be social media and other virtual interactions with fans. That will include an online "Kids Zone," with games and activities provided with the help of the Hole in the Wall Gang Camp, Paul Newman's summer camp for seriously ill children and a main beneficiary of the tournament.

All the net proceeds from the golf tournament go to more than 150 Connecticut charities. This year they will include 4-CT, an independent nonprofit that funds statewide COVID-19 relief efforts such as food banks and child care for health care and essential workers.

The tournament also is working with the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving to help foster positive relationships between police officers and members of the African American community as well as other communities of color.

Last year, with about 200,000 spectators, the tournament donated about \$2.1 million to charity.

Judge denies immediate appeal to women's soccer

Associated Press

A federal judge has denied a request by American women's soccer players to allow an immediate appeal of his decision to throw out their claim of unequal pay against the U.S. Soccer Federation.

U.S. District Judge R. Gary Klausner in Los Angeles has scheduled a trial for Sept. 15 on the players' remaining claim of discriminatory work conditions.

Lawyers for the women had asked him to enter a final judgment on his decision to dismiss the pay claim, which would have allowed them to take the case to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco.

"The granting of an immediate appeal will not eliminate

the possibility of two trials or the possibility of successive appeals involving interlocking facts," Klausner wrote Tuesday. "The court has declined the parties' request to stay trial pending the resolution of any appeal. And should a jury render a verdict unfavorable to plaintiffs on their remaining claims, there is no reason to think plaintiffs will not appeal that decision."

Klausner ruled May 1 the women could not prove discrimination over pay and granted in part the USSF's motion for a partial summary judgment. He said the union for the women's national team rejected an offer to be paid under the same pay-to-play structure as the men's national team's collective bargaining agreement and the

women accepted guaranteed salaries and greater benefits along with a different bonus structure.

He also refused to let go to trial allegations the women were discriminated against because they played more games on artificial turf.

Klausner left intact claims the USSF discriminated in its use of charter aircraft, and in the money it spent on commercial airfare, hotel accommodations, and medical and training support services.

"One way or another, we intend to appeal the court's decision which does not account for the central fact in this case that women players have been paid at lesser rates than men who do the same job," Molly Levinson, a spokeswoman for the players,

said in a statement.

"Tonight's ruling simply means that an appeal may take longer to file and is a reminder that we must not give up our efforts both on and off the field to fight injustice," Levinson said. "Though we face significant challenges, we are strengthened by the reality that our effort is one part of the greater movement for equality happening in our country right now."

New USSF President Cindy Parlow Cone has said she hopes a settlement can be reached. The collective bargaining agreement expires on Dec. 31, 2021.

Players sued in March 2018 under the Equal Pay Act and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and asked for more than \$6 million in damages.