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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Source: White House aware of bounties in 2019

Associated Press

Top officials in the White House were aware in early 2019 of classified intelligence indicating Russia was secretly offering bounties to the Taliban for the deaths of Americans, a full year earlier than has been previously reported, according to U.S. officials with direct knowledge of the intelligence.

The assessment was included in at least one of President Donald Trump's written daily intelligence briefings at the time, according to the officials. Then-national security adviser John Bolton also told colleagues at the time that he briefed Trump on the intelligence assessment in March 2019.

The White House didn't respond to questions about Trump or other officials' awareness of Russia's provocations in 2019. The White House has said Trump wasn't — and still hasn't been — briefed on the intelligence assessments because they haven't been fully verified.

Bolton declined to comment Monday when asked by the AP

if he'd briefed Trump about the matter in 2019.

The revelations cast new doubt on the White House's efforts to distance Trump from the Russian intelligence assessments. The AP reported Sunday that concerns about Russian bounties were also in a second written presidential daily briefing this year, and that current national security adviser Robert O'Brien had discussed the matter with Trump. O'Brien denies doing that.

On Monday, O'Brien said while the intelligence assessments regarding the bounties "have not been verified," the administration has "been preparing should the situation warrant action."

The administration's earlier awareness of the Russian efforts raises additional questions about why Trump didn't take punitive action against Moscow for efforts that put the lives of American service members at risk. Trump has sought throughout his time in office to improve relations with Russia and President Vladimir Putin, moving this year to try

to reinstate Russia as part of a group of world leaders it had been kicked out of.

Officials said they didn't consider the intelligence assessments in 2019 to be particularly urgent, given that Russian meddling in Afghanistan isn't a new occurrence.

The intelligence that surfaced in early 2019 indicated Russian operatives had become more aggressive in their desire to contract with the Taliban and members of the Haqqani Network, a militant group aligned with the Taliban in Afghanistan and designated a foreign terrorist organization in 2012 during the Obama administration.

The National Security Council and the undersecretary of defense for intelligence held meetings regarding the intelligence. The NSC didn't respond to questions about the meetings.

Late Monday, the Pentagon issued a statement saying it was evaluating the intelligence but so far had "no corroborating evidence to validate the recent allegations."

"Regardless, we always take

the safety and security of our forces in Afghanistan — and around the world — most seriously and therefore continuously adopt measures to prevent harm from potential threats," said Pentagon spokesman Jonathan Hoffman.

Concerns about Russian bounties flared anew this year after members of the elite Naval Special Warfare Development Group, known to the public as SEAL Team 6, raided a Taliban outpost and recovered roughly \$500,000 in U.S. currency. The funds bolstered the suspicions of the American intelligence community that Russians had offered money to Taliban militants and linked associations. The White House contends the president was unaware of this development, too.

The intelligence in 2019 and 2020 surrounding Russian bounties was derived in part from debriefings of captured Taliban militants. Officials with knowledge of the matter told the AP that Taliban operatives from opposite ends of the country and from separate tribes offered similar accounts.

Dems: Briefing on Russian bounties inadequate

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Democrats returning from a briefing at the White House on Tuesday said they still have many questions about explosive allegations that Russia offered bounties to Taliban-linked militants for killing American troops in Afghanistan, and questioned why President Donald Trump won't condemn Vladimir Putin over the issue.

Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and a small group of other House Democrats met with White House officials as

Trump downplayed the allegations and the White House said he had not been briefed on them. A handful of Republicans received a similar briefing Monday evening.

The Democrats said their briefing was insufficient and they learned nothing new. Hoyer said it was White House officials giving "their perspective" when lawmakers really need to hear from members of the intelligence community. House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff said, "The right people to give the briefing really were not in the

room."

The intelligence assessments on the Russian bounties came amid Trump's push to withdraw the United States from Afghanistan. They suggested Russia was making overtures to militants as the U.S. and the Taliban held talks to end the long-running war. The assessment was first reported by The New York Times, then confirmed to The Associated Press by American intelligence officials and others with knowledge of the matter.

House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Eliot Engel,

D-N.Y., said Democrats left the White House briefing "scratching their heads." He said the American people need to know more because "for God's sake, these are our soldiers."

Senate Republicans returning to Washington on Monday evening said they had strong concerns about the reports. Many said they wanted more answers. West Virginia Sen. Shelley Moore Capito said that Congress needs to get to the truth, because the allegations are "horrifying if true."

Expanded Taiwan drills in Hill panel's NDAA bill

BY WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs is touting language in a proposed version of the U.S. defense spending bill for 2021 calling for expanded military exercises between the United States and Taiwan, including the biennial Rim of the Pacific drills.

The RIMPAC exercise is scheduled to be held Aug. 17-31 entirely at sea in waters off Hawaii; land-based portions of the exercise are canceled this year to prevent spread of the coronavirus.

The Senate Armed Services Committee last week released its version of the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act that includes numerous provisions intended to help Taiwan maintain sufficient self-defense capabilities, including the U.S. "conducting practical training and military exercises with Taiwan, including, as appropriate, the Rim of the Pacific exercise," and other bilateral naval exercises.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Friday that the bill's language "showed Washington valued the island nation's positive role in maintaining regional peace and stability," the Taiwan News reported.

The full U.S. Senate has yet to vote on the spending bill, and at some future point it must be

reconciled with a similar bill approved by the House.

Taiwan has long sought inclusion in RIMPAC, during which navies from roughly 25 nations gather for a month of exercises on and around Hawaii and Southern California.

Regardless of the outcome of the final bill, Taiwan would not be able to attend this year's RIMPAC because, as a first timer to the exercise, its personnel would be required to attend as observers rather than participants.

"Due to the modified at-sea-only construct of RIMPAC 2020, this iteration of the exercise will not feature an observer nation program," U.S. Pacific Fleet, which oversees invitations to the exercise, said in a statement Monday.

"Taiwan has not previously observed or participated in RIMPAC," Cmdr. John Fage, a spokesman for 3rd Fleet, which runs the exercise, said in a written statement Monday.

"However, we continue to work with all who are genuinely supportive of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific and to find opportunities to further enhance our capabilities and proficiencies together towards that aim."

In 2018, only a month before RIMPAC was to begin, the U.S. rescinded its invitation to China to participate. China regards Taiwan as a renegade province.

Senators look to block US troop cuts in Germany

BY JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — A bipartisan group of U.S. senators has introduced an amendment to next year's national defense bill that would prevent President Donald Trump from withdrawing large numbers of troops from Germany.

"The withdrawal of U.S. troops from Germany would be a gift to Russia, and that's the last thing we should be doing," Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, said in a statement issued Monday, when the legislation was introduced.

"In addition to undermining our NATO alliance, a withdrawal would present serious logistical challenges and prevent our military from performing routine ... readiness exercises," he said.

Members of both parties have resisted the plan announced by Trump in early June to pull some 9,500 troops out of Germany, which would reduce the American military presence there by about a third. Most

of the service members would head back to the U.S., while others could be repositioned in Poland and other locations in Europe, Trump has said.

The 34,000 U.S. troops in Germany play a key role in reinforcing NATO's eastern flank and supporting operations in Africa and the Middle East, advocates in favor of maintaining current force levels have said.

"The United States has always been more secure at home thanks to our allies abroad. ... A hasty arbitrary withdrawal only emboldens our adversaries," Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., said in the statement.

The proposed amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act would limit the funds available to reduce the number of active-duty troops in Germany. Defense Secretary Mark Esper would be required to submit a report to Congress that certifies how a reduction would serve U.S. national security interests while not undermining NATO, security in Europe and the military's ability to respond in a crisis.

Bill would challenge Trump on renaming military bases

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Senate is poised to challenge President Donald Trump this week with legislation requiring the military to rename bases bearing the names of Confederate generals, a proposal that is shaping up to be one of the most contentious items in this year's annual defense bill.

In the Senate, the main issue appears to be timing. The bill

that emerged from the Republican-led Senate Armed Services Committee included a provision giving the Pentagon three years to come up with new names, while an amendment filed by Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., and 35 other Senate Democrats last week would speed up that process, requiring the name changes within a year.

Although there is still vocal opposition to removing the Con-

federate names — Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., has proposed an amendment to strip the renaming requirement entirely — Republican support for the change suggests that it will survive any challenges during this week's floor debate.

But with Trump pledging that he will "not even consider the renaming" of bases, it is possible that the provision could eventually pitch Congress into

a showdown with the president over the entire defense bill.

The push to rename the 10 major bases named after Confederate generals — and remove other Confederate likenesses, symbols and paraphernalia from all defense facilities — has gained momentum as nationwide demonstrations against racial injustice and police brutality enter their second month.

Court throws out La. abortion clinic limit

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A divided Supreme Court on Monday struck down a Louisiana law regulating abortion clinics, reasserting a commitment to abortion rights over fierce opposition from dissenting conservative justices in the first big abortion case of the Trump era.

Chief Justice John Roberts and his four more liberal colleagues ruled that a law that requires doctors who perform abortions must have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals violates abortion rights the court first announced in the landmark Roe v. Wade decision in 1973.

The outcome is far from the last word on the decadeslong fight over abortion with dozens of state-imposed restrictions winding their way through the courts. But the decision was a surprising defeat for abortion opponents, who thought that a new conservative majority with two of President Donald Trump's appointees on board would start chipping away at abor-

tion access.

The key vote belonged to Roberts, who had always voted against abortion rights before, including in a 2016 case in which the court struck down a Texas law that was virtually identical to the one in Louisiana.

The chief justice explained that he continues to think the Texas case was wrongly decided, but believes it's important for the court to stand by its prior decisions.

"The result in this case is controlled by our decision four years ago invalidating a nearly identical Texas law," Roberts wrote. He did not join the opinion written by Justice Stephen Breyer for the other liberals in Monday's decision, and his position left abortion-rights supporters more relieved than elated.

The case was the third in two weeks in which Roberts, a George W. Bush appointee, joined the court's liberals in the majority. One of the earlier decisions preserved the legal protections and work authorization for 650,000 immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children. The other

extended federal employment-discrimination protections to LGBT Americans, a decision that Justice Neil Gorsuch also joined and wrote.

In dissent on Monday, Justice Clarence Thomas wrote, "Today a majority of the Court perpetuates its ill-founded abortion jurisprudence by enjoining a perfectly legitimate state law and doing so without jurisdiction."

Trump's two high-court picks, Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh, were in dissent, along with Samuel Alito.

The presence of the new justices is what had fueled hopes among abortion opponents, and fears on the other side, that the Supreme Court would be more likely to uphold restrictions.

The Trump administration had sided with Louisiana in urging the court to uphold the law.

White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany criticized the decision.

High court declines to hear challenge to border wall

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court is leaving in place a decision that rejected environmental groups' challenge to sections of wall the Trump administration is building along the U.S. border with Mexico.

The high court on Monday declined to hear an appeal involv-

ing construction of 145 miles of steel-bollard walls along the border in Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas.

The Center for Biological Diversity, the Animal Legal Defense Fund, Defenders of Wildlife, and the Southwest Environmental Center had challenged a federal law that

allows the secretary of Homeland Security to waive any laws necessary to allow the quick construction of border fencing. The groups had argued that violates the Constitution's separation of powers. But a lower court dismissed the case.

This is not the first time the Supreme Court has weighed in

on border wall construction during the Trump administration.

Last year, the high court gave the administration the go-ahead to tap billions of dollars in Pentagon funds to replace barriers along the border with Mexico in Arizona, California and New Mexico with more robust fencing.

Golden State Killer admits murders, rapes for life in prison

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Gay Hardwick stood arm-in-arm with her husband to face a criminal dubbed the Golden State Killer and couldn't recognize the elderly man hunched in a wheelchair as the sadistic rapist who had terrorized them 42 years earlier.

In a hushed and raspy voice, Joseph James DeAngelo Jr. — a serial rapist before he became a serial killer — acknowledged in two words, "I admit," that he had attacked the couple in 1978 as he pleaded guilty Monday to

13 murders, and admitted dozens of rapes and crimes too old to be prosecuted as part of a deal to avoid the death penalty.

"It was the clenched teeth and, you know, the breathy voice, so there really wasn't any resemblance — there isn't any resemblance to the old man that sits before us today," Gay Hardwick said. "I'm not sure that a lot of that isn't feigned."

DeAngelo, who hid behind a ski mask during his crimes, sat behind a clear plastic shield to allow surviving victims and their families to see his face

even as they wore masks to prevent possible spread of the coronavirus. The court hearing was held at a Sacramento State University ballroom to accommodate more than 150 observers at a safe distance during the pandemic.

The seemingly frail and feeble 74-year-old ex-cop, who once busted into bedrooms spewing expletives and threatening to use a .357 Magnum to blow the heads off anyone who moved, seemed lost as he turned to his lawyer each time a prosecutor recited the lurid

details of attacks that terrified a swath of Northern California in the 1970s.

But where some saw a frail and confused man, others saw a master manipulator.

The day before his arrest in 2018, DeAngelo weaved his motorcycle through freeway traffic to lose police who were tailing him, prosecutors said. When he appeared in a court two days later, he looked like the lost man who listed sideways Monday with his mouth half open.

Assessing the risks of flying amid pandemic

Associated Press

How risky is flying during the coronavirus pandemic?

Flying can increase your risk of exposure to infection, but airlines are taking some precautions, and you can as well.

Air travel means spending time in security lines and airport terminals, which puts you into close contact with other people. As travel slowly recovers, planes are becoming more crowded, which means you will likely sit close to other people, often for hours, which raises your risk.

Once on a plane, most viruses and other

germs don't spread easily because of the way air circulates, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Airlines have also said they are focusing on sanitizing the hard surfaces that passengers commonly touch.

Some airlines like Alaska, Delta, JetBlue and Southwest are blocking middle seats or limiting capacity. But even if every middle seat is empty, you will likely be closer than the recommended distance of 6 feet to another passenger now that planes are getting fuller.

American, United and Spirit are now booking flights to full capacity when they

can. All leading U.S. airlines require passengers to wear masks. Lauren Ancel Meyers, an expert in disease outbreaks at the University of Texas, says that can help limit risk.

For air travel, and all other types of transportation, the CDC recommends washing your hands, maintaining social distancing and wearing face coverings.

Several airlines announced Monday that they will ask passengers about possible COVID-19 symptoms and whether they have been in contact with someone who tested positive for the virus in the previous two weeks.

Experts see no proof of child abuse surge in lockdown

Associated Press

NEW YORK — When the coronavirus pandemic took hold across the United States in mid-March, forcing schools to close and many children to be locked down in households buffeted by job losses and other forms of stress, many child welfare experts warned of a likely surge of child abuse.

Fifteen weeks later, the worries persist. Yet some experts on the front lines, including pediatricians who initially helped sound the alarm, said that they have seen no evidence of a marked increase.

Among them is Dr. Lori Frasier, who heads the child protection program at Penn State's Hershey Medical Center and is president of a national society of pedia-

tricians specializing in child abuse prevention and treatment.

Frasier said that she received input in recent days from 18 of her colleagues across the country, and "no one has experienced the surge of abuse they were expecting."

A similar assessment came from Jerry Milner, who communicates with child protection agencies nationwide as head of the Children's Bureau at the federal Department of Health and Human Services.

"I'm not aware of any data that would substantiate that children are being abused at a higher rate during the pandemic," he told The Associated Press.

Still, some experts believe the actual level of abuse during the pandemic is being hidden from view because many children are seeing neither teachers nor doctors,

and many child protection agencies have cut back on home visits by caseworkers.

"There's no question children are more at risk — and we won't be able to see those children until school reopens," said Marci Hamilton, a University of Pennsylvania professor who heads CHILD USA, a think tank seeking to prevent child abuse and neglect.

Several states said calls to their child abuse hotlines dropped by 40% or more, which they attributed to the fact that teachers and school nurses, who are required to report suspected abuse, no longer had direct contact with students.

"While calls have gone down, that doesn't mean abuse has stopped," said Gov. Chris Sununu of New Hampshire, which reported a 50% drop in hotline calls.

At least 285 kids developed serious virus-linked condition

Associated Press

At least 285 U.S. children have developed a serious inflammatory condition linked to the coronavirus and while most recovered, the potential for long-term or permanent damage is unknown, two new studies suggest.

The papers, published online Monday in the New England Journal of Medicine, provide the fullest report yet on the condition.

The condition is known as multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children. It is considered uncommon and deaths are rare; six children died among the 285 in the new studies.

Including cases in Europe, where it was first reported, about 1,000 children worldwide have been affected, a journal editorial said.

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's case definition includes current or recent COVID-19 infection or exposure to the virus; a fever of at least 100.4 for at least 24 hours; severe illness requiring hospitalization; inflammatory markers in blood tests, and evidence of problems affecting at least two organs that could include the heart, kidneys, lungs, skin or other nervous system.

Digestive symptoms including nausea and diarrhea are common. Some children may have symptoms resembling Kawasaki disease, a rare condition in children that can cause swelling and heart problems.

At least 35 states have had cases, and they seem to crop up a few weeks after local COVID-19 activity peaks, said Dr. Adrienne Randolph of Boston Children's Hospital. She is a lead researcher for a mul-

tistate study that includes CDC scientists. The second paper involved 99 children in New York state, where the first U.S. cases occurred.

Combined, the papers show 285 cases from March thru mid to late May but Randolph said additional U.S. children have been diagnosed in June.

Most had current or recent COVID-19 infections but had previously been healthy.

About 80% of children in the multistate study had heart-related problems, which included coronary aneurysms — a bulge in a heart artery that can be fatal.

Most affected children had no other health condition but about 30% were obese. The condition also appears to disproportionately affect Latino and Black children and boys. The average age was 8 years old.

Texas looks to contain virus amid voting

Associated Press

PLANO — Three months after Republican Gov. Greg Abbott postponed primary runoffs to July 14 — saying at the time that sticking to the original May election “would threaten the health and safety of many” — Texas is voting at a moment when the outbreak is far more dire. Confirmed coronavirus cases quadrupled in June, Houston hospitals are filling up and Abbott is retreating from one of America’s swiftest reopenings by shuttering bars and scaling back restaurant service.

The result is that at a moment when Abbott is urging the public to stay home, thousands are starting to go to the polls.

And by the looks of it, even more are still going to the gym: At the Carpenter Park Recreation Center, a polling location in the Dallas suburb of Plano, most of the steady lunchtime traffic heading in on the first day of early voting were there to work out, not cast a ballot.

Alaska

JUNEAU — The Anchorage city attorney said Monday that a memo from Alaska Attorney General Kevin Clarkson, exempting state buildings from a city mask order meant to guard against the coronavirus, “unnecessarily risks” the health of residents who work for or do business with state agencies.

Clarkson’s memo “sows confusion” and provides “inaccurate legal advice,” Kate Vogel, municipal attorney for Anchorage, said in a statement.

Anchorage Mayor Ethan Berkowitz signed an order Friday requiring face coverings in certain indoor public settings, such as stores, restaurants, public transit and communal office areas where people from multiple households are present.

California

SACRAMENTO — Los Angeles will close beaches and ban fireworks displays over the holiday weekend as California

officials warned that further restrictions may be necessary to curb a troubling spike in coronavirus cases in much of the state.

Large Fourth of July gatherings are “a recipe for increased transmission of COVID-19,” Barbara Ferrer, Director of Public Health for Los Angeles County, said Monday.

The 10-million-resident county hit a one-day record of 2,903 confirmed cases and more than 100,000 overall.

Ferrer warned Los Angeles could soon be on a “runaway train.” She said the county’s infection rate among those tested has reached 9%. The state’s rate is about 5.5%.

Florida

ST. PETERSBURG — Hundreds of people lined up at coronavirus testing sites around Florida on Monday as the state remained in the grip of COVID-19.

St. Petersburg Police said on Twitter that a testing site located at Tropicana Field — where the Tampa Bay Rays baseball team normally plays — closed early because it was at capacity, shortly after 8 a.m.

The site ran out of tests, officials said. More than five hundred people lined up in their cars for testing. Police said the Florida Department of Health and BayCare, a hospital system asked people to “try again” when testing resumed Tuesday at 7 a.m.

In Jacksonville, more than 300 cars lined up for testing at the TIAA Bank Field, where the NFL Jaguars play. The city’s leaders on Monday enacted a mandatory mask requirement for public and indoor locations, and “in other situations where individuals cannot socially distance.”

Nevada

CARSON CITY — As Nevada experiences an uptick in confirmed cases reported daily, both rural districts with less than 100 students and urban districts with hundreds of thou-

sands are forming reopening committees responsible for envisioning what school will look like when students return for the fall semester.

In rural northern Nevada, Churchill County School District administrators have been reviewing online surveys about remote learning and discussing with local officials how to best reopen before unveiling a plan. Superintendent Summer Stephens said parents were worried about child care and whether remote learning would allow students to grasp material to the same extent as classroom learning.

Las Vegas has faced a barrage of concern and questions from workers, business owners and public health officials about its plans to reopen its tourism industry, which attracts almost 50 million visitors annually. But to John Vellardita, executive director of the Clark County Education Association, the challenge of planning to bring almost 400,000 people through the region’s schools each week without creating more coronavirus hot spots is incredibly daunting.

New Jersey

ATLANTIC CITY — New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy on Monday postponed the resumption of indoor dining, and banned drinking and smoking at Atlantic City’s casinos as they reopen this week, causing one casino to scrap plans to reopen anytime soon.

Murphy said he acted because of a lack of compliance over the use of face masks and social distancing as the coronavirus outbreak continues to rage in many parts of the country.

The decisions had an immediate effect: Atlantic City’s top-performing casino, the Borgata, dropped its plans to reopen soon. It had planned to hold an invitation-only “soft opening” Thursday and open its doors to the general public starting July 6.

Now, neither of those things is happening for the immediate

future, and it was unclear late Monday whether the one-two punch of a smoking and drinking ban would cause other casinos to postpone their reopenings as well.

South Carolina

COLUMBIA — South Carolina hospitals now hold more than 1,000 patients with confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19, and more than 10 localities have ordered people to wear masks to fight transmission of the coronavirus that causes the disease.

There are now 1,032 such patients, the Department of Health and Environmental Control reported Monday.

The department said that 1,320 new cases of the disease caused by the new coronavirus brought South Carolina’s total to more than 34,500. The number of confirmed deaths rose by four, to at least 717.

At least 11 cities, towns and counties are either requiring masks or will soon begin doing so, according to news outlets. Gov. Henry McMaster has said he won’t order masks worn statewide because enforcement would be impossible.

West Virginia

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice is done talking about why he pushed out a top health official during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Republican governor deflected multiple questions Monday about the forced resignation of former public health commissioner Cathy Slemple as he continued to doubt the accuracy of the state’s virus caseload numbers.

Justice has said he thinks the state’s active caseload may have been overstated, floating the idea that the tally could be exaggerated by around 300 cases while providing little detail. He has blamed Slemple, who has worked for decades in public health, and suggested she was responsible for the discrepancy before having her removed from her post last week.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police catch escaped murder suspect

WV HOLDEN — A West Virginia man accused of murder was captured by authorities Sunday night after he escaped from a transport van earlier in the day, police said.

Dominick Joseph McClung, 18, escaped from a parked Donald R. Kuhn Juvenile Center transport van at a convenience store Sunday at 4:30 p.m., news outlets reported.

McClung was captured by State Police around 8 p.m. and was booked in the South Western Regional Jail.

McClung was arrested last fall and charged as an adult with first-degree murder in the death of 68-year-old Karen Yeager.

Court upholds state's gun magazine limit

CO DENVER — The Colorado Supreme Court on Monday upheld the state's ban on large capacity gun magazines, saying limiting magazines to 15 rounds does not prevent people from bearing arms to defend themselves as required by the state constitution.

The law was passed in 2013, a year after the Aurora theater shooting, to limit the number of deaths in mass shootings. While large capacity magazines were used in the Columbine and Aurora shootings, opponents of the law said they have also been widely used by gun owners.

A legal challenge brought by Rocky Mountain Gun Owners and the National Association for Gun Rights was based on the gun rights provision in the Colorado Constitution, which expressly protects the right of people to be armed to defend their homes, property and themselves.

Workers fired after swastika found on pizza

OH BROOK PARK — Two employees were fired after an Ohio couple who purchased a pizza at Little Caesars found that pepperonis had been placed to form a backward swastika.

Misty and Jason Laska made the discovery when they opened the box that they had purchased at the store on Smith Road on Saturday.

The Laskas said they tried calling the store, but were unable to reach anyone.

Little Caesar Enterprises released a statement to WOIO-TV: "We have zero tolerance for racism and discrimination in any form, and these franchise store employees were immediately terminated. We're deeply disappointed that this happened, as this conduct is completely against our values."

At least 6 sickened by recalled salad mixes

ND BISMARCK — At least six people in North Dakota have been sickened with an illness associated with bagged salad mixes, according to the state Department of Health.

The cases are part of a larger outbreak occurring in Midwestern states. All six in North Dakota ate Markside brand salad.

The mixed salads were sold at Hy-Vee, Jewel-Osco and Aldi grocery stores and are contaminated with cyclospora, a parasite that can cause flu-like symptoms. The other brands are Hy-Vee and Little Salad Bar.

Consumers in 12 states are affected by a recall of the products that have sickened dozens of people, including some who were hospitalized.

Police reel in man seen swimming in fish tank

LA BOSSIER CITY — Police in Louisiana were able to reel in a man captured on video swimming through a fish tank at a sporting goods store.

Kevin Wise, 26, told KSLA-TV that he plunged into the indoor aquarium at a Bass Pro Shop in Bossier City last week to follow through on a promise he made to followers on the social media platform TikTok.

"I said that if I got 2,000 likes I would jump in the tank," Wise said. "I got way more than that and didn't want to be a liar."

Bass Pro Shops filed a complaint with the Bossier City Police Department on Friday, saying it cost them to empty out the 13,000-gallon aquarium and clean it after Wise's swim, KTAL-TV reported. Wise was charged with simple criminal damage to property and released with a citation to appear in court, police said.

Collision with ship likely led to death of whale

NJ MONMOUTH BEACH — Preliminary observations of a dead rare whale off the coast of New Jersey are consistent with a collision with a ship, federal authorities said.

The whale was a North Atlantic right whale and its carcass was found Friday off Monmouth Beach. The whales number only about 400 and they are vulnerable to collisions with ships and fatal entanglements in fishing gear.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said the whale has been identified as a male calf. The whale was the first of 10 reported calves from the 2019-20 season, NOAA said.

Philip Hamilton, a research scientist with the New Eng-

land Aquarium in Boston and manager of the North Atlantic Right Whale Catalog, said the death of the animal is "distressing and yet another setback for an endangered species we are working tirelessly to protect." The whales have suffered from poor reproduction and high mortality in recent years.

Veteran gets new home thanks to nonprofit

RI COVENTRY — An Army veteran has become the first person in Rhode Island to receive a mortgage-free home from a national foundation that supports military members injured in combat.

Sgt. Bryan Cline said this week that being handed the keys to his Coventry home is "an amazing feeling," according to WJAR-TV.

Originally from Arizona, Cline and his family were selected to receive a mortgage-free home courtesy of Citizens Bank and the Military Warriors Support Foundation.

There's a competitive vetting process for veterans who could use the gift of a home.

13-year-old female lion at zoo dies from illness

TN KNOXVILLE — A Tennessee zoo has lost its second female African lion to illness in the past year.

Zoo Knoxville officials announced the death of a 13-year-old lioness named Ann on Saturday, the Knoxville News Sentinel reported. She died of suspected complications after undergoing surgery for an infection.

Ann was born at the zoo in 2006. The zoo's other female African lion, Elsa, died last year. Two male lions remain: Jimmy and Zarin.

From wire reports

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Health worries lead some in MLB to sit out

Associated Press

PHOENIX — A small group of players, including Nationals slugger Ryan Zimmerman and Rockies outfielder Ian Desmond, have announced they plan to sit out this season. The Minnesota Twins have shuffled their on-field staff to protect the health of some of their older coaches.

As the sport lurches toward a late July start during the coronavirus crisis, roster flexibility and organizational depth will be key.

Zimmerman, who told The Associated Press last week he still was deciding whether to play this year, ultimately said having three young children, including a newborn, and a mother at higher risk because of multiple sclerosis factored into his decision.

“Given the unusual nature of the season, this is the best decision for me and my family,” Zimmerman said.

The 35-year-old Zimmerman, who has been with the Nationals since 2005, said he still is deciding on his future beyond this season. The two-time All-Star and 2009 Gold Glove winner has 270 career homers. Desmond cited his family as one reason why he decided to stay home for the upcoming 60-game season. But the biracial slugger also mentioned a myriad of issues within baseball, including racism, sexism, homophobia and socioeconomic concerns.

“With a pregnant wife and four young children who have lots of questions about what’s going on in the world, home is where I need to be right now,” the 34-year-old Desmond wrote in an Instagram post. “Home for my wife, Chelsey. Home to help. Home to guide. Home to answer my older three boys’ questions about Coronavirus and Civil Rights and life. Home to be their Dad.”

Desmond, who hit .255 with 20 homers in 140 games last season, had been due \$5,555,556 for the prorated share of his \$15 million salary, part of a \$70 million, five-year contract. He is owed \$8 million next year, and his deal includes a \$15 million team option for 2022 with a \$2 million buyout.

The Twins confirmed Monday that 68-year-old bullpen coach Bob McClure and 66-year-old major league coach Bill Evers won’t be in the clubhouse at the start of this season because of health concerns. Both will stay with the organization to help in altered roles.

Twins manager Rocco Baldelli, who was sitting in a Target Field dugout during a Zoom call, said he’s known both coaches for a long time and that the decisions were difficult. He added that both coaches were disappointed.

“I think we all know that we’re making the right decision, but that doesn’t mean it feels good,” Baldelli said. “It’s very, very challenging to even think about these sorts of things and have these conversations.”

But they’re exactly the conversations that are being had at both the organizational and personal level across the MLB landscape. The defending World Series champion Nationals will begin their title defense without Zimmerman and pitcher Joe Ross, who also declined to play because of health concerns.

“We are 100% supportive of their decision to not play this year,” Nationals GM Mike Rizzo said in a statement. “We will miss their presence in the clubhouse and their contributions on the field.”

Ross, 27, has five seasons of MLB experience. He appeared in 27 games last season.

Zimmerman was due \$740,741 and Ross \$555,556 as prorated portions of their sala-

ries, originally \$2 million for the first baseman and \$1.5 million for the pitcher. If they are deemed high risk by team physicians, they would still get paid and receive service time.

Arizona’s pitching depth took a hit when Mike Leake said he had decided not to play this year. Leake was expected to be a part of the team’s starting rotation after starting 10 games last season and finishing with a 3-3 record and 4.35 ERA following a mid-season trade with Seattle.

Diamondbacks general manager Mike Hazen didn’t elaborate on Leake’s decision, but the pitcher’s agent issued a statement saying he made a personal decision not to play during the pandemic. The GM also didn’t say whether Leake falls under the high-risk category. If Leake does, he would be due \$5,555,556 as the prorated share of his \$15 million salary.

The fragility of baseball’s current health situation has been apparent for the past few weeks. The Philadelphia Phillies had a coronavirus outbreak at their spring training facility in Clearwater, Fla., earlier this month. Seven players and five staff members tested positive in the organization.

Phillies GM Matt Klentak said the team was “fortunate that none of the cases, player or staff, have been especially serious.” He said no one has been hospitalized.

But the outbreak is another example of how difficult it is to limit exposure.

“What is eye opening to a lot of us is how quickly it spread even in an environment where we were on the extreme end of caution,” Klentak said. “The facility in Clearwater was pretty airtight in terms of staggering times of players reporting to work out, cleaning the facilities in between. Truthfully, it was frustrating to some players how strict it was and yet the outbreak still happened.”

Former Iowa RB says he was mistreated by coaches

Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa — Former Iowa running back Akrum Wadley ripped the Hawkeyes on Monday, saying he was so mistreated by some coaches he now regrets playing there.

Wadley’s statement, posted on Facebook, mentioned coach Kirk Ferentz, his son, offensive coordinator Brian Ferentz, director of player development Broderick Binns and Chris Doyle, the former strength and conditioning coach for the

Hawkeyes.

Wadley said Brian Ferentz on several occasions jokingly asked him if he was on his way to commit a robbery when Wadley was leaving with a team-issued wool hat that covered his face in the cold. He said his weight was also a constant issue and was used to belittle him.

“I was threatened by Kirk Ferentz that my meal card would be taken away and I will not eat nor be able to sit with my teammates during eating sessions,”

Wadley wrote. “He did follow through on his threat.”

Wadley, a New Jersey native, piled up a combined 3,633 yards rushing and receiving and scored 35 touchdowns for Iowa from 2014-17.

“I felt like playing for Iowa Football was a living nightmare,” he wrote. “I never drank alcohol prior to going to college but based on my experience there it became the only thing I could rely on, it seems and was what I did to cope.”

More than three dozen former Iowa players, most of them Black, have accused Iowa of racial bias within the program and many singled out Doyle, who left the university. Iowa hired a law firm to conduct a review of the football program. Kirk Ferentz has held news conferences and promised to listen to his former players; Binns, a former player, has been named interim director of diversity and inclusion for the athletic department.

Watney unsure where he got COVID-19

Associated Press

Monday marked the 10th day of self-isolation for Nick Watney, the minimum required for PGA Tour players who test positive for the new coronavirus.

He said he is feeling good except for some minor fatigue, perhaps brought on by a major case of boredom, and except for the distinction of becoming the first of what now is five players and two caddies who have tested positive since the PGA Tour returned amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I will say, it's not the greatest feeling being the first to get it," Watney said in his first interview since he was notified June 19 at the the RBC Heritage of his positive test.

"Some things are so vague around this thing," he said. "The symptoms ... some people get this, some get that. I haven't had a fever or cough the whole time, no shortness of breath. Maybe that's the reason it's so scary. I still don't know how or

where I got it."

He lost his sense of smell, a sensation he described as "gnarly," but said that is coming back. And perhaps the strangest sensation is being at a golf resort without playing golf.

He remains in Hilton Head Island, S.C., as the PGA Tour has moved on to Connecticut, and now Detroit this week, and then two weeks in Ohio. The show goes on.

"Very, very boring," he said. "Being on the road and not playing golf is a weird feeling."

Three more players tested positive during the Travelers Championship — Cameron Champ before the tournament started, Denny McCarthy after his first round and Dylan Frittelli after he missed the cut. Two caddies tested positive, which caused a chain reaction of withdrawals. Harris English tested positive Monday at the Rocket Mortgage Classic in Detroit.

Watney spent part of Monday arranging for a rental car

for the 17-hour drive to Austin, Texas, where he lives with his wife, Amber, and their four children, ranging in age from 6 years to 6 months.

"I don't want to fly at this point," he said. "I just think all this could be a waste of time if I left early and got someone else sick. I'd feel terrible."

He said his wife was nervous when he called her the day of the test. She managed to get herself and the children tested the following day, and the tests came back negative. A week later, none has any symptoms.

Watney laughed at the notion he might be responsible for PGA Tour players all getting a WHOOP strap, which can provide early indications of the virus. That was part of the tour trying to tighten its protocols as it continues its schedule.

The strap is what alerted Watney.

He bought one a year ago to study his sleep pattern and other health metrics, trying to do everything possible to help

the 39-year-old add to his five PGA Tour victories and one appearance in the Presidents Cup.

He typically takes 14 breaths a minute. When he woke up Friday at Harbour Town, it was up to 18, which concerned him. So he asked for a test and was at the golf course when he received the call saying he had tested positive.

"Once you're a member of the WHOOP service, they're always talking about performance," he said. "They also sent out data from users who have gotten the virus. A common thing was the respiratory rate. I read an article they had published, and it was alarming. I didn't wake up short of breath. It wasn't difficult to breathe. But this thing has tracked my respiratory rate. And based on that, I thought I should be tested."

The tour identified 11 people with whom Watney had contact. They were tested twice, with all results negative.

Nets' Dinwiddie, Jordan test positive for coronavirus

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Spencer Dinwiddie and DeAndre Jordan said Monday they have tested positive for the coronavirus, potentially leaving the Brooklyn Nets without two starters when the NBA season resumes.

Jordan said he won't be in Florida with the Nets when they return from the suspension of the 2019-20 season, while Dinwiddie told The Athletic that he was experiencing symptoms and it was unclear if he would be at Disney's ESPN Wide World of Sports complex.

At least six players on the Nets have tested positive for the virus. The other four were back in March, when Kevin Durant said he was one of them.

Both players said they tested positive after returning to New York to rejoin the team. Some players left the city, which was a hot spot at the time, after the

NBA halted play.

Dinwiddie said he tested negative for the virus multiple times after returning to Brooklyn and took part in a couple of practices. But he has since tested positive and said he has a fever and chest soreness.

His absence would be a significant blow to the Nets, given he has played so well this season with Kyrie Irving out of the lineup because of injuries. Dinwiddie is averaging 20.6 points.

Jordan announced his status on Twitter, saying he learned of his diagnosis Sunday night and it was confirmed again Monday.

The center signed with the Nets last summer along with Durant and Irving. The 2016 U.S. Olympic gold medalist spent most of the season as a reserve but had moved into the starting lineup for both games after Jacque Vaughn replaced

Kenny Atkinson as coach in March.

The Nets have a half-game lead over Orlando for seventh place in the Eastern Conference.

Wizards rule out Wall's return

John Wall will not join the Washington Wizards for the resumption of the NBA season this summer, ending the chances of the five-time All-Star guard playing his first game since 2018.

General manager Tommy Sheppard effectively ruled out Wall returning this season when he said Monday the 29-year-old wouldn't be part of the Wizards' traveling party to Central Florida. Among the factors in the decision was a cap of 35 people per team in the quarantined bubble at Walt Disney World. The COVID-19

pandemic also hindered Wall's progress in his rehab from multiple surgeries.

"He definitely lost all the basketball gains that he had made," Sheppard said on a video call with reporters. "He's got to focus on what he's got to do, but having somebody go into that bubble that's not going to play, that's just more people going into the bubble."

Wall hasn't played an NBA game since December 2018. Surgery for bone spurs in his left heel ended that season; while he was working his way back from that, he tore his left Achilles tendon and needed another operation in 2019.

He declared himself "110 percent" healthy in late May, saying, "I'm itching to get back out there."

The Wizards put the brakes on that, meaning Wall will try to return for the 2020-21 season as originally planned.