

STARS AND STRIPES®

Wednesday, March 11, 2020

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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WHO declares virus crisis a pandemic

Associated Press

ROME — Expressing increasing alarm about mounting infections, the World Health Organization declared Wednesday that the global coronavirus crisis is now a pandemic.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who heads the U.N. agency, said the WHO is “deeply concerned by the alarming levels of spread and severity” of the outbreak. He also expressed concern about “the alarming levels of inaction.”

“We have, therefore, made the assessment that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic,” he said at a briefing in Geneva.

“All countries can still change the course of this pandemic. If countries detect, test, treat, isolate, trace and mobilize their people in the response,” Tedros said.

Italy weighed imposing even tighter restrictions on daily life and announced billions in financial relief Wednesday to cushion economic shocks from the coronavirus, its latest efforts to adjust to the

fast-evolving health crisis that silenced the usually bustling heart of the Catholic faith, St. Peter’s Square.

Premier Giuseppe Conte said he would consider requests from Lombardy, Italy’s hardest-hit region, to toughen the already extraordinary anti-virus lockdown that was extended nationwide Tuesday. Lombardy wants to shut down nonessential businesses and reduce public transportation.

These additional measures would be on top of travel and social restrictions that imposed an eerie hush on cities and towns across the country from Tuesday. Police enforced rules that customers stay 3 feet apart and ensured that businesses closed by 6 p.m.

But Conte said fighting Italy’s more than 10,000 infections — the biggest outbreak outside of China — must not come at the expense of civil liberties. His caution suggested that Italy is unlikely to adopt the draconian quarantine measures that helped China to push down new infections from thousands per day to a trickle now.

China’s new worry is that the coronavirus could re-enter from abroad. Beijing’s city government announced that all overseas visitors will be quarantined for 14 days. Of 24 new cases that China reported Wednesday, five arrived from Italy and one from the United States. China has had over 81,000 virus infections and over 3,000 deaths.

For most, the coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for a few, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illnesses, including pneumonia. More than 119,000 people have been infected worldwide and over 4,200 have died.

But the vast majority of people recover. According to the WHO, people with mild illness recover in about two weeks, while those with more severe illness may take three to six weeks to recover.

For the global economy, the repercussions are profound, with increasing concerns of wealth- and job-wrecking recessions.

States and schools in US act to stop spread of virus

Associated Press

Governors and other leaders scrambling to slow the spread of the coronavirus stepped up bans on large public gatherings and a rapidly expanding list of universities moved classes online, as the U.S. government’s top infectious-disease expert Wednesday warned that the worst is yet to come.

With cases in the U.S. now topping 1,000 and the number of deaths climbing to 31, lawmakers and health officials set up containment zones and sought to limit contact with those who might be infected.

“I can say we will see more cases and things will get worse than they are right now,” Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said on Capitol Hill.

As for how much worse, Fauci said that would depend on the ability of the U.S. to curtail the influx of travelers carrying the disease and state and community efforts to contain the outbreak.

Elsewhere on Capitol Hill, Speaker Nancy

Pelosi was moving swiftly toward House passage of a coronavirus aid package possibly this week as Congress rebuffed President Donald Trump’s proposed payroll tax break and focused instead on sick pay and other resources to more immediately help workers hit by the crisis.

Pelosi planned to unveil the measure Wednesday, with voting possible as soon as Thursday, after talks with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, whom Trump tapped to negotiate with the Democratic leader. Mnuchin and Pelosi spoke again early Wednesday to discuss proposals for the package.

In Kentucky, Gov. Andy Beshear urged churches across the state to cancel services amid the virus crisis.

“I don’t believe that whether you go to church during this period of time is a test of faith,” he said. “I believe God gives us wisdom to protect each other and we should do that.”

In hard-hit Washington state, Gov. Jay Inslee on Wednesday announced a ban of gatherings of more than 250 people in

virtually the entire Seattle metro area, home to some 4 million people. The Seattle area accounts for about two-thirds of the nation’s coronavirus deaths, including at least 19 from the same suburban nursing home.

Schools and houses of worship were shuttered in the New York City suburb of New Rochelle, epicenter of the nation’s biggest known cluster of cases, with over 100. Gov. Andrew Cuomo said he intends to send the National Guard to help scrub public spaces and deliver food, though no troops appeared to be in place Wednesday morning.

UCLA, Yale and Stanford were among the universities announcing plans to send students home and hold classes remotely.

Chicago canceled its St. Patrick’s Day parade, and the Coachella music festival that draws tens of thousands to the California desert near Palm Springs every April was postponed. One of the biggest resort operators in Las Vegas, MGM Resorts International, said it would close buffets at all of its Las Vegas Strip casinos.

Soldiers 'in limbo' after Army halts moves

BY KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — Maj. David Watkins and his wife, Irina, must be out of their apartment by next week and already have plane tickets to Fort Belvoir, Va., later this month.

But they're worried about more than inconveniences after the Army halted moves to new assignments from South Korea and Italy over the next two months to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus.

"My husband has PTSD and has been having suicidal thoughts, and at the end of February we found out that he has a brain tumor as well," she said Tuesday. "It's been so scary and stressful for the past six months that I can't even think about the option of not being able to leave."

About 2,400 soldiers and family members in South Korea alone will be affected by the order, officials told *Stars and Stripes* on Wednesday.

The sudden decision, which was announced over the weekend and included Italy, caught commanders off-guard and sparked major confusion as officials scrambled to work out the details.

"Frankly it came as a bit of a surprise to all of us," USFK commander Gen. Robert Abrams said Wednesday during a question and answer session with the American Forces Network at Camp Humphreys.

The command has sent more than 100 requests for information to the Pentagon seeking clarification, he said, adding that he has asked for general officer-level waiver authority to approve exceptions.

South Korea-bound travelers were kicked off a military charter flight at the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport on Monday, with many told to go back to their old units.

Lt. Gen. Michael Bills, the Eighth Army commander in South Korea, tried to fix the situation by authorizing move-

ment from Seattle-Tacoma to Osan Air Base since they were in transit, not initiating travel.

"If you're a soldier or an Army family member and you were told to get off the Patriot Express on Monday, March 9th, and you are still in the Seattle Tacoma area, we need you to return to the Seattle Tacoma Airport now," Bills said in a message posted Tuesday. "We are ready to receive you."

The largest impact was, however, on soldiers and their loved ones who already had vacated homes, shipped household goods and sold cars in anticipation of moving.

Veterinary services on post offered Wednesday to extend paperwork for free for people who had already finished requisite vaccination and other time-sensitive procedures required to transport their pets.

"The current stop move will affect over 2,000 soldiers and nearly 400 family members slated to leave the Republic of Korea between now and May

6," Col. Robert Sketch, the Eighth Army's head of personnel management, said in an email. "Eighth Army leadership is looking into ways to mitigate the stress and inconvenience experienced by those affected," he said.

U.S. Army Garrison Italy has said that it had been expecting about 200 soldiers to change assignments, known as permanent change of station, or PCS, during that period.

The Army also barred travel for professional military education unless the course is for six months or longer, in which case participants will travel to the U.S. two weeks early to allow for quarantine.

USAG Italy had formed a task force to review the PCSes, starting with the most imminent and reviewing their status. Maj. Gen. Roger Cloutier, commander of Vicenza-headquartered U.S. Army Africa, will sign off on exceptions to policy when appropriate, officials said.

Cold Response drill cut short over virus fears

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — A U.S.-led cold weather exercise in Norway has been cut short because of concerns over the new coronavirus, U.S. European Command announced Wednesday.

"The decision is a precautionary measure in response to the ongoing outbreak of COVID-19 and to protect the health and safety of all participants and local population," EUCOM said in a statement.

After consulting with allies, Norwegian authorities made the decision to cancel the remainder of the Cold Response 20 exercise just two days after it started.

The cancellation comes days after nearly two dozen U.S. soldiers who were in Norway for

the exercise were quarantined, amid fears that they might have contracted the virus from a Norwegian service member who tested positive for it.

For now, however, EUCOM said that it still intends to move forward with Defender-Europe 20, the largest Army exercise on the Continent in 25 years.

About 1,500 U.S. troops were part of Cold Response, which is one of the largest exercises in Europe.

"We are working closely with our Norwegian allies to manage the safe and orderly transition of our personnel," EUCOM said.

Other participants in the exercise, which focused on building up cold-weather war-fighting capabilities, were the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Germany, France, Belgium,

Denmark, Finland and Sweden. In total, around 15,000 troops were taking part.

Concerns about the new coronavirus hampered training from the start. On Sunday, the Finnish military announced that it was pulling its 400 troops from the exercise, which was slated to run until March 19.

Tuesday's announcement by AFRICOM concerned an exercise known as African Lion, which was set to start March 23 in Morocco. It will now only include activities that do not require lodging troops in close quarters, AFRICOM said.

"The safety and protection of all of our forces — U.S. and partner nation — is a priority," AFRICOM's Gen. Stephen J. Townsend in a statement. "Modifying the exercise improves readiness while mini-

mizing risk to protect both U.S. and partner forces," he said.

American, Moroccan, Senegalese and Tunisian forces are taking part in the exercise.

Academic portions of the drill, which have already started, will continue.

African Lion has been a regular exercise in Morocco for years. While it was traditionally led by the Marine Corps, it was shifted to the Army this year.

Maj. Gen. Roger Cloutier, commanding general of U.S. Army Africa, said that there is still value in the exercise despite its scope being narrowed. Working with partners helps the Army "forge a coalition across multiple countries, force components, national and international organizations," he said.

Taliban POWs set for release before talks

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — Afghan President Ashraf Ghani agreed Wednesday to release Taliban prisoners so that peace talks can begin between the government and insurgent group.

The launch of intra-Afghan talks is a key precondition for the complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan. A phased withdrawal began this week and will be completed in 14 months if all sides fulfill commitments outlined in a deal signed by the U.S. and the Taliban on Feb. 29.

U.S. officials have expressed doubts that the Taliban will live up to their commitments under the deal and have repeatedly called on them to cut down on violence throughout the country.

Intra-Afghan talks were supposed to kick off Tuesday, but were delayed over a disagreement about the prisoner release. The U.S.-Taliban deal, which was reached without Kabul's participation, says up to 5,000 Taliban fighters should be released from government jails in exchange for up to 1,000 detainees held by the insurgents before talks begin.

The government initially refused this, expressing concern that nothing in the deal prevented the fighters from returning to the battlefield. The POWs are also one of the few sources of leverage Kabul has going into the discussions.

But a decree issued by Ghani on Wednesday said that 100 prisoners a day will be released, starting Saturday, until 1,500 have been freed.

The remaining 3,500 prisoners would be released in groups of 500 every two weeks after the intra-Afghan talks begin, the decree said.

The freed prisoners will have their biometric data recorded and will sign a guarantee that they will not return to combat, it said.

Marines' recovery slowed by Iraq terrain, safety concerns

The Washington Post

Details of the effort to recover the remains of two elite Marine Raiders killed in Iraq came into better focus Tuesday, with a top U.S. general saying that unforgiving mountain terrain and concern for the safety of other U.S. service members dragged the mission out for more than six hours.

Marine Gen. Kenneth "Frank" McKenzie, the chief of U.S. Central Command, told the House Armed Services Committee that commanders monitored the operation Sunday hour by hour and did everything they could in a challenging environment. Four other Americans were wounded in the operation.

"It's some of the worst terrain in the world," McKenzie said. "There's no way to do it faster than we did it."

The Marine Corps identified

the fallen Americans on Tuesday as Capt. Moises Navas of Germantown, Md., and Gunnery Sgt. Diego Pongo of Simi Valley, Calif.

Navas was a Special Operations officer, and Pongo was a critical skills operator. The two men, both 34, were assigned to 2nd Marine Raider Battalion, a Special Operations force with headquarters at Camp Lejeune, N.C.

The deaths, the first in combat for the U.S. military in Iraq since August, were announced as the tight-knit Marine Raider force marked the fifth anniversary of a helicopter crash off the coast of Florida that killed seven Raiders and four Louisiana National Guardsmen.

The Marines were killed during an operation with Iraqi forces on an Islamic State hideout in the Qara Chokh Mountains near Mahkmour, about 45

miles outside the city of Erbil. Islamic State fighters were entrenched in a tunnel complex, U.S. military officials said.

Army Col. Myles Caggins, a U.S. military spokesman in Iraq, said that the caves in the mountains hide both fighters and weapons caches. The militants who engaged the Marines on Sunday had both small arms and explosives. The coalition estimates that about 15 to 25 of them were killed, Caggins said.

At the Pentagon, a senior U.S. military official, Navy Rear Adm. William Byrne Jr., told reporters that the terrain was "vertical."

"That in itself made it extremely difficult," he said. "It was a high-threat environment. We knew that going in, and we took the appropriate precautions going into a high-threat environment."

ACX Crystal lawyers seek dismissal of 2 lawsuits in USS Fitzgerald collision

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Lawyers for the shipping company whose chartered vessel collided with the USS Fitzgerald in 2017 asked a U.S. district judge last week to dismiss two lawsuits seeking \$287 million to hold the company liable for injuries and fatalities.

Tokyo-based NYK on March 5 filed motions to dismiss the suits, saying U.S. courts lack jurisdiction over the incident that occurred about 60 nautical miles southwest of Yokosuka, where the warship was based at the time.

NYK Line, a Japanese shipping company, chartered the Philippine-flagged container ship ACX Crystal that collided with the Fitzgerald, a guided-

missile destroyer, about 1:30 a.m. on June 17, 2017.

Seven Navy sailors were killed in the collision, and dozens more were injured physically and emotionally, according to the lawsuits filed Nov. 18 in the Eastern District of Louisiana.

Attorney David Schloss, who represents the sailors and families in the lawsuits, argued the case could be heard in U.S. court because NYK "has substantial, systematic and continuous contacts with the United States as a whole," according to court documents.

However, NYK's attorneys in their motions argue the company "has limited contacts with the U.S. when compared to its global contacts."

The judge may decide wheth-

er the case can be heard in U.S. court "later this year," Schloss told Stars and Stripes in an email Tuesday.

A Navy report in late 2017 said the accident was preventable, and listed crew exhaustion, skipped certifications, poor watch-standing and training and manning problems among the causes.

An August report by the Japan Transport Safety Board said it was "somewhat likely" that the Fitzgerald was "not properly on the lookout" for ACX Crystal. That report also listed other contributing factors, including the ACX Crystal's failure to sound danger signals or contact the Fitzgerald before the crash, but did not assign blame to either party.

Biden extends his delegate lead with wins in 4 states

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Joe Biden decisively won Michigan's Democratic presidential primary, seizing a key battleground state that helped propel Bernie Sanders' insurgent candidacy four years ago. The former vice president's victory there, as well as in Missouri, Mississippi and Idaho, dealt a serious blow to Sanders and substantially widened Biden's path to the nomination.

Biden again showed strength Tuesday with working-class voters and African Americans, who are vital to winning the Democratic nomination.

Sanders captured North Dakota's caucuses, a repeat win in a state that he won four years ago.

The six-state contest Tuesday marked the first time voters weighed in on the primary since it effectively narrowed to a two-person race between Sanders and Biden. And the first four states on Tuesday went to Biden, a dramatic reversal for a campaign that appeared on the brink of collapse just two weeks ago. Now it is Sanders, whose candidacy was ascendant so recently,

who must contemplate a path forward.

Even as the contours of the race came into shape, however, new uncertainty was sparked by fears of the spreading coronavirus. Both candidates abruptly canceled rallies in Ohio that were scheduled for Tuesday night.

The Democratic National Committee also said that Sunday's debate between Sanders and Biden would be conducted without an audience.

One of the few bright notes for Sanders was his strength among young voters, but even that has a downside because they didn't turn out enough to keep him competitive. Sanders won 72% of those under 30 in Missouri and 65% in Michigan, according to AP VoteCast.

According to an Associated Press analysis, Biden had picked up at least 176 new delegates: 71 in Michigan, 40 in Missouri, 31 in Mississippi, six in North Dakota, 17 in Washington and 11 in Idaho on Tuesday. Sanders got 110: 51 in Michigan, 23 in Missouri, two in Mississippi, nine in Idaho, eight in North Dakota and 17 in Washington.

Weinstein sentenced to 23 years in #MeToo case

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Harvey Weinstein was sentenced Wednesday to 23 years in prison for rape and sexual assault, a sight the Hollywood mogul's multitude of accusers thought they would never see.

Weinstein, who was accused of violating scores of women, was convicted last month of raping a woman in a New York City hotel room in 2013 and forcibly performing oral sex on another woman at his apartment in 2006. He faced a maximum of 29 years in prison.

Both women that Weinstein was convicted of assaulting — a once-aspiring actress and a former TV and film production assistant — spoke in court Wednesday before Judge James Burke announced the sentence, confronting Weinstein again after their testimony helped seal his conviction at the landmark #MeToo trial.

Weinstein, who has maintained that any sexual activity was consensual, also spoke in court, saying that he had fond memories of his accusers.

Looking back during the trial at emails they exchanged, he said, he thought they had a good friendship.

"I'm not going to say these aren't great people," Weinstein said. "I had wonderful times with these people. I'm just genuinely confused. Men are confused about this issue."

Burke also heard from Weinstein's lawyers, who pleaded for leniency because of his age

and frail health, and prosecutors, who said the man once celebrated as a titan of Hollywood deserved a harsh sentence that would account for allegations of wrongdoing dating to the 1970s.

In their sentencing letter, prosecutors outlined 16 examples which they said showed that Weinstein "trapped women into his exclusive control" so he could sexually assault them, starting when he was working as a music producer in Buffalo in 1978.

Weinstein was sentenced a week shy of his 68th birthday, and his lawyers argued that a long prison term would, in effect, be a life sentence. They sought a five-year sentence, the mandatory minimum on the more serious of the two charges of which jurors found him guilty.

Weinstein, who used a walker throughout the trial, arrived at the courthouse Wednesday in a wheelchair because of back problems from a car crash last summer. He also has a condition that requires shots in his eyes and last week had a stent placed to unblock an artery.

Weinstein was also charged in California with raping a woman at a Los Angeles hotel on Feb. 18, 2013, after pushing his way inside her room, and sexually assaulting a woman in a Beverly Hills hotel suite the next night.

Weinstein could get up to 28 years in prison on charges of forcible rape, forcible oral copulation, sexual penetration by use of force and sexual battery in the California case.

Russia OKs bill allowing Putin to stay in power past 2024

Associated Press

MOSCOW — The Russian parliament approved a sweeping constitutional reform in the third and final reading Wednesday, a move that will allow President Vladimir Putin to stay in power for another 12 years after his current term ends in 2024.

The Kremlin-controlled lower house, the State Duma, endorsed a set of amendments to the constitution and a provision resetting the term count for Putin after the revised constitution goes into force by a 383-0 vote

with 43 abstentions. A nationwide vote on the proposed amendments is set for April 22.

Kremlin critics condemned the move as a cynical manipulation and called for protests.

Putin, a 67-year-old former KGB officer, has ruled Russia for more than 20 years. After serving for two consecutive four-year terms — a limit outlined in the current version of the constitution — Putin shifted to the prime minister's seat in 2008, with his

close ally Dmitry Medvedev becoming a placeholder president.

The length of the presidency was extended to six years under Medvedev, and in 2012, Putin returned to the Kremlin as president. In 2018, he was re-elected for another six years.

The constitutional reform passed by the Duma on Wednesday would allow Putin to run for presidency two more times after 2024. Ahead of the national vote, it will be reviewed by Russia's Constitutional Court.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Officials: Man tried to bite off woman's finger

MD EDGEWOOD — A Maryland man was charged with assault after authorities alleged he bit off part of his sister-in-law's finger during a confrontation in which she refused to leave his home.

Harford County Sheriff's officials were dispatched to an Edgewood home where they found Richard Young, 61, yelling in the street, news outlets reported. Young had called deputies earlier in the day and demanded his wife's sister leave his house, authorities said.

A fight between he and the woman became physical when Young bit into her hand, sheriff's spokesman Col. William Davis said.

"Somehow her finger ended up in his mouth and he bit off a portion of her finger, which was hanging on by basically what was being described as a thread of flesh," Davis told WBAL-TV.

Health officials confirm dengue fever case

FL KEY WEST — A case of dengue fever was confirmed in the Florida Keys, health officials said.

The patient has not been identified publicly by name or exact location, according to Alison Kerr, a spokeswoman for the Florida Department of Health in Monroe County.

"All indications are that this infection was locally acquired," Kerr told the Miami Herald.

The patient has been treated and is expected to fully recover, she said.

The virus is carried by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which also can carry the virus for yellow fever, Zika and chikungunya.

Officials: Band has 'concerning' traditions

OH ATHENS — An investigation into hazing allegations against Ohio University's marching band found several "concerning" unsanctioned band traditions, according to university documents.

The Marching 110 is one of several campus groups that was investigated last fall for hazing allegations that led to the suspension of all the university's fraternities. The investigation could lead to the removal of some students from the band, The Columbus Dispatch reported.

Assistant Dean of Students Taylor Tackett recommended the College of Fine Arts conduct a membership review, which would include removing certain members, as well as implementing a risk management and assessment plan and anti-hazing workshops.

Sheriff: Man high on PCP calls 911 for ride

LA IOWA — A Louisiana man who was smoking marijuana laced with PCP apparently wanted to take a ride so he called his local sheriff's office, authorities said.

Jeff Davis Parish Sheriff's officials said Charles Ray Stevens, 32, was arrested on criminal mischief charges.

A sheriff's office press release said someone called the 911 emergency center four times and would not answer any questions. Instead, the male caller made short comments and said he "wanted to take a ride."

Deputies went to the caller's house and spoke with a woman who said her fiance had been smoking marijuana laced with

PCP.

Deputies then arrested Stevens and took him for a ride to the parish jail.

Officials: High water pushes shipwreck

MI ROGERS CITY — Wreckage from a freighter that sank in Lake Huron around 115 years ago has moved toward Michigan's shoreline due to high water levels and waves, weakening the ruins further, officials said.

Joseph S. Fay was a ship that sank on Oct. 19, 1905, The Alpena News reported.

One side of the shipwreck had moved about 10 feet inland during a storm last October, said Eric Klein, lighthouse caretaker. He added that it has since been pushed further inland following a series of storms and estimated it's now about 25 feet from its original location near the 40 Mile Point Lighthouse.

Klein said the waves have damaged the shipwreck over time.

Wayne Lusardi, state Maritime Archaeologist, said even though water levels in the Great Lakes fluctuate over time, it's unusual that waves are exposing artifacts and shipwreck pieces that haven't been seen in a while.

Man pleads guilty in dog park death

PA PHILADELPHIA — A man pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter in the death of another man during a confrontation while both were walking their dogs in a Philadelphia dog park.

The Philadelphia Inquirer reported that the plea by Matthew Oropeza, 25, was non-negotiated, meaning the judge will determine the sentence by a May 28 hearing.

Authorities said the defen-

dant knocked Drew Justice, 38, down after the victim told him not to let his dog run unleashed in the dog park in January of last year. Justice fell backward, hit the ground and died shortly afterward, officials said.

License plate would honor shooting victims

CO AURORA — Campaigners for a new Colorado license plate option hope to honor victims of a theater shooting.

The campaign by nonprofit organization Aurora Rise needs 3,000 signatures to start the process of obtaining state approval for the license plate, The Aurora Sentinel reported.

The organization was established following the July 2012 mass shooting at a movie theater in Aurora. James Holmes killed 12 people and wounded numerous others inside the theater.

The license plate would raise funds to benefit the state's Victim Compensation Fund.

Police: Mom arrested after child left in car

AZ CHANDLER — A woman faces child abuse and endangerment charges after her toddler daughter was found alone in the driver's seat of a car that had its engine running, according to Chandler police.

They said Hanan Regina Dema, 22, was arrested and also is accused of drug possession.

Police said when they removed the 3-year-old girl from the car, they saw drugs and drug paraphernalia in the center console of the vehicle.

They said Dema returned to the car about 18 minutes later with takeout food and was taken into custody.

From wire reports

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Gonzaga tops St. Mary's, wins MCC title

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Gonzaga stumbled in last year's West Coast Conference tournament, losing to rival Saint Mary's in the title game after dominating the regular season.

The Zags won another regular-season title this year with a new group of players and again found themselves in a championship-game fight with the Gaels.

Instead of buckling under the pressure, Gonzaga pushed back with a dominating second half to reclaim the title and, potentially, a No. 1 NCAA Tournament seed.

Drew Timme scored 15 of his 17 points in the first half, Filip Petrushev had a double-double and No. 2 Gonzaga beat Saint Mary's 84-66 to reclaim the West Coast Conference tournament title Tuesday night.

"It wasn't always easy, but we adapted at halftime," said Gonzaga's Joel Ayayi. "We came out with an edge and that was the difference in the game."

The top-seeded Zags (31-2)

recovered from a middling performance in the semifinals to win their eighth WCC tournament title in 10 years and 17th overall.

Playing in its 23rd straight WCC title game, Gonzaga raced away from the Gaels in a dominating second half.

Ayayi scored 17 points and Petrushev finished with 10 points and 14 rebounds to help the Zags outscore Saint Mary's 48-22 in the paint.

"They're really big inside. That's their strength," Saint Mary's coach Randy Bennett said. "It's a little bit of a problem for us because we don't have the size. They kept bringing it down in the post and that was the story of the game, why they beat us."

Saint Mary's (26-8) upset Gonzaga in last year's title game to earn the WCC's automatic NCAA Tournament bid and kept pace with the Zags in an entertaining first half this time.

Jordan Ford and Malik Fitts combined to score Saint Mary's first 34 points to keep things

close, but Gonzaga tightened up defensively in the second half to pull away.

Ford finished with 27 points and Fitts 17 for the Gaels, who should be in decent shape to make the NCAA Tournament despite the loss.

"We needed to get the ball out of Jordan Ford's hands," Gonzaga coach Mark Few said. "He's an unbelievable player and when he gets going like that and Fitts is making those deep threes, we had to change the dynamic a little bit."

The Zags and Gaels eked their way into their 11th title-game meeting.

Gonzaga struggled putting away San Francisco 81-77 in the semis while Saint Mary's advanced with a 51-50 victory over No. 14 BYU on Ford's last-second shot.

The Zags won the two regular-season meetings between the rivals by a combined 40 points on their way to claiming an eighth-straight WCC regular-season title.

Petrusev did most of the damage in the final game of

the regular season, scoring 27 points.

It was Timme's time in Las Vegas. The 6-foot-10 freshman repeatedly got deep post position against the Gaels and took advantage, hitting 7 of 8 shots for 15 points in the first half.

Ford and Fitts carried nearly all the load for Saint Mary's, combining to score but seven of the Gaels' first-half points.

Gonzaga led 42-41 at halftime.

"It was a good game — for a half," Bennett said.

The Bulldogs locked in on Ford, Fitts and the rest of the Gaels to start the second half, forcing them to miss six of their first eight shots while building a 56-46 lead.

A short run later in the half pushed Gonzaga's lead to 72-55 and the Zags onto the stage to accept another WCC tournament trophy.

Not bad for a team that had to replace four starters.

"From where we were in September, even the first real practices we had in October, this is as far as any club I've ever coached," Few said.

Hofstra earns first NCAA Tournament berth since 2001

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Eli Pemberton dreamed since he was 6 years old about playing in the NCAA Tournament.

He'll get to live that dream after helping end the Hofstra Pride's long drought without an appearance.

Pemberton scored 12 of his 19 points in the second half and Hofstra came from behind to beat Northeastern 70-61 Tuesday night to win the Colonial Athletic Association Tournament and return to the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2001.

"I knew that I always wanted to be there, and I'm glad that I'm going to be there with my brothers," Pemberton said.

The top-seeded Pride (26-8) clinched the CAA's automatic bid and reached the NCAA Tournament for the fifth time

in program history. It's Hofstra's first CAA title.

Coach Joe Mihalich is back in the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2007, when he was at Niagara. Players sprayed Mihalich with water on stage after receiving the CAA trophy.

Hofstra avenged a 2019 CAA title-game loss to the Huskies.

"It is something to be proud of because we beat a bunch of champions," Mihalich said. "The championship goes through them. They are the defending champions, so to win the championship, you've got to knock out the champ."

Senior Desure Buie scored a game-high 20 points and was named the tournament's most outstanding player. Jalen Ray scored 17 points, and Isaac Kante grabbed 15 rebounds.

"My teammates were tell-

ing me to get the ball and make something happen," Buie said. "That is what came from my coaches and teammates believing in me, and that is just what I did."

The Pride trailed at halftime and used a 17-4 run to pull away. Hofstra held conference leading scorer Jordan Roland to just 11 points.

Maxime Boursiquot led Northeastern with 15 points and nine rebounds.

The Pride were nearly unstoppable during tournament play and delivered an 18-point drubbing of Drexel in the quarterfinals. They scored another double-digit victory against Delaware in the semifinals.

Big picture

Northeastern: The Huskies ran out of gas, and their Cin-

derella run at the CAA Tournament ended with a thud. Northeastern (17-16) upset third-seeded Towson and then beat Elon to reach the tournament championship game.

Hofstra: The Pride are expected to be a No. 13 or 14 seed in the NCAA Tournament and a big underdog in the first round. But the celebration is on in Hempstead, N.Y., because it has been so long since Hofstra made it.

"Growing up, that is always what I wanted to do, sitting at the TV and watching those games," Buie said about advancing to the NCAA Tournament. "You dream of this as a kid. Kemba Walker was my role model, so I used to run home to see him and I just wanted to be a part of something special. I wouldn't trade these guys for the world."

Coronavirus impact on US sports spreads

Associated Press

The novel coronavirus outbreak, which has already reshaped the professional sports landscape in Europe, prompted new restrictions to restrict fan access in the U.S. on Tuesday, with major decisions looming about baseball's opening day and college basketball's NCAA Tournament.

College games will be played without fans in Ohio and California, and with restrictions on large gatherings there and elsewhere, more disruptions to the sports calendar appear inevitable. The NCAA said it would "make decisions in the coming days" about its men's

and women's basketball tournaments after two conferences banned fans from their championships and another canceled its tournament altogether.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee plans to ban gatherings and events of more than 250 people in virtually the entire Seattle area, a person familiar with the decision told The Associated Press on Tuesday night. The person was not authorized to disclose the decision and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Of the 29 known deaths in the U.S., 24 have been in the Seattle area, with 19 tied to a single nursing home.

None of North America's

major sports leagues has postponed games or barred fans in a bid to keep them safe, but there was a flurry of activity as college conferences and schools began making those moves.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom questioned why leagues weren't moving more aggressively.

"I find it quite curious that the four major organizations — NHL, MLS, MLB and NBA — put out guidelines to protect their athletes but not their fans," said Newsom, a Democrat.

Discussions about next steps have been ongoing for weeks as postponements and fan restrictions have become common

elsewhere.

The director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases told a congressional committee Wednesday that he would recommend the NBA not allow fans at games in response to the coronavirus.

That answer by Dr. Anthony Fauci came hours before NBA owners are scheduled to meet to discuss the next steps in responding to the virus.

Wednesday, football club Arsenal announced its players would be self-isolating because of possible exposure to the virus, forcing the postponement of its Premier League game at Manchester City.

College basketball conference championships

Northern Kentucky wins Horizon tournament

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Jalen Tate tied one piece of the net to his championship hat Tuesday and hung the rest around his neck after earning another NCAA Tournament bid.

They will be the newest additions to the family's trophy case — and he hopes not the last.

On Tuesday, Tate scored all of his 14 points in the first half, spent the second half doing the dirty work on defense while leading Northern Kentucky past the University of Illinois at Chicago 71-62 for its second straight Horizon League Tournament title.

"It feels good to be back in the (NCAA) tournament, man, and with these guys it feels great," he told the crowd moments after being named the tourney MVP. "And we're not done, either."

The Norse (23-9) have now made the 68-team field for the third time in four years.

For Tate, this victory helps him pull even with his father, Jermaine, and his older brother, Jae'Sean, with two NCAA appearances each. His brother and father both played at Ohio State though his dad eventually transferred to Cincinnati.

Jalen Tate wound up picking the smaller school across the Ohio River, where he has thrived.

In fact, winning the MVP Award and this year's conference defensive player of the year award might even give the red-

shirt junior family bragging rights.

"I don't think I'll get too far into it, looking back," he said, referring to the family competition. "But getting beaten up, bloodied, upset when I couldn't get my shot off at seven or eight or nine, really prepared me for this. I don't back down from any challenge. It put the toughness in me that I have today."

He made that perfectly clear in Indianapolis, with his father watching every move.

Yes, Tate needed help in the second half as he battled foul trouble and he got it from a reliable source — Tyler Sharpe, who scored 12 of his 16 points in the second half.

But when second-seeded Northern Kentucky needed a defensive stopper after the Flames trimmed a 15-point deficit to 42-38 with 14:03 to play, Tate came through. He played a key role in forcing UIC (18-17) to miss eight consecutive shots and commit three turnovers over the next seven minutes. That gave the Norse just enough time to score 11 straight points and rebuild a 53-40 lead. The fourth-seeded Flames never recovered.

Northeast

Robert Morris 77, Saint Francis 67: Colonials guard Dante Treacy was an unknown entity entering the 2019-20 season, an under the radar sophomore who was just looking to take a small step forward

after a rough freshman campaign.

Instead, he took a giant leap — one that landed him and the Robert Morris right into the NCAA tournament.

Led by Treacy, the host Colonials used a second half surge to defeat the league-rival Red Flash in the Northeast Conference Tournament championship. With the victory, Robert Morris qualified for the NCAA tournament for the first time since 2015.

Summit

North Dakota St. 89, North Dakota 53: For the fifth time in school history, the top-seeded Bison are headed to the NCAA tournament, and this time it was never in doubt.

North Dakota State led from start to finish in the Summit League Tournament championship game and secured the automatic tournament bid.

NDSU's leading scorer, Vinnie Shahid, led the Bison with 25 points on 8-for-14 shooting. Shahid entered the game averaging 18.2 points per game, but he blew by that early in the second half. Tyson Ward scored 15 of his 23 points in the second half for NDSU. He finished with a double-double, grabbing a game-high 13 rebounds.

"It's contagious. We had confidence in each other," Shahid said. "When one guy sees the ball go in, it boosts the confidence for everybody."

The Bison (25-8) raced to a 13-0 lead and the Fighting Hawks were down 21-2.

NHL roundup

Bruins end Flyers' streak at 9 games

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Matt Grzelcyk and Patrice Bergeron scored, Tuukka Rask stopped 36 shots and the Boston Bruins beat Philadelphia 2-0 on Tuesday night to snap the Flyers' nine-game winning streak.

The Bruins (44-14-12) became the first team with 100 points this season and Rask picked up his 50th career shutout. Rask became the sixth active goalie with at least 50 shutouts. He has five this season.

Rask stymied a Flyers' offense that had scored at least three goals in each of their nine wins during the streak. They

scored five goals four times since the streak started Feb. 18 against Columbus.

Philadelphia had been sensational as it shot up the standings and was fighting with Washington for first place in the Metropolitan Division. The Flyers had defeated Boston in a shootout in both games of the series this season, including a bizarre ending in January when the Bruins' Brad Marchand over-skated the puck at center ice on a shootout attempt.

Philadelphia pounded Rask, taking 24 shots over the first two periods. Rask stood tall in net, stopping 36 total shots, and got the cushion he needed late when Bergeron's shot from the

circle appeared to get deflected by a Flyers stick and went in for a 2-0 lead.

Ducks 5, Senators 2: Nicolas Deslauriers scored the fastest hat trick in team history, Ryan Miller made 40 saves and host Anaheim rolled past Ottawa.

Penguins 5, Devils 2: Evgeni Malkin scored two goals and set up another to lead slumping Pittsburgh to a win at New Jersey.

Maple Leafs 2, Lightning 1: Auston Matthews scored his 47th goal of the season and Frederik Andersen made 32 saves as host Toronto beat Tampa Bay.

Predators 4, Canadiens

2: Filip Forsberg scored twice and Nashville withstood a late comeback try by host Montreal.

Hurricanes 5, Red Wings 2: Justin Williams scored a tiebreaking goal 1:38 into the final period, and Sebastian Aho added two goals later in the third to give Carolina a win at Detroit.

Rangers 4, Stars 2: Mika Zibanejad scored his 10th goal in five games to give him 40 for the season, impressive rookie Igor Shesterkin made 31 saves and New York won at Dallas.

Canucks 5, Islanders 4 (SO): J.T. Miller scored the only goal in the shootout and host Vancouver beat New York.

NBA roundup

Dinwiddie scores 23 points to help Nets cool off Lakers

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Spencer Dinwiddie scored 23 points and hit the tiebreaking jumper with 28.3 seconds to play, and the Brooklyn Nets beat the Los Angeles Lakers 104-102 Tuesday for their second straight win since interim coach Jacques Vaughn took over.

Anthony Davis missed a wide-open three-pointer at the buzzer that would have won it for the Lakers, whose four-game winning streak ended after an emotionally charged weekend. Los Angeles lost to a sub-.500 opponent in its first game after back-to-back victories over NBA-leading Milwaukee and the powerhouse Clippers.

Caris LeVert added 22 points as the Nets opened their four-game California road trip by knocking off the powerhouse Lakers, who lost for only the second time in 13 games.

"It feels good because it's a high-quality opponent on the road for a team that is doing its best right now to continue to

find itself," Dinwiddie said.

Rockets 117, Timberwolves 111: James Harden scored 37 points and host Houston beat Minnesota, snapping a four-game skid.

The Rockets' losing streak, which matched a season high, came after they won six in a row and dropped them to sixth in the Western Conference with the playoffs fast approaching.

Russell Westbrook scored 27 points for Houston.

Spurs 119, Mavericks 109: LaMarcus Aldridge had 24 points in his return from injury and host San Antonio withstood Luka Doncic's 38 points to beat Dallas and keep its playoff hopes afloat.

The Spurs had seven players in double figures in snapping a two-game skid. Rudy Gay scored 17 points, Trey Lyles had 14 points and 11 rebounds and DeMar DeRozan added 13 points and 12 assists.

Doncic added seven rebounds and seven assists in 36 minutes.

Magic 120, Grizzlies 115:

Terrence Ross scored 24 points, fueling a rally with 18 in the fourth quarter, and Orlando won at Memphis.

Michael Carter-Williams added 20 points and Nikola Vucevic finished with 19 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists for the Magic.

Trail Blazers 121, Suns 105: Damian Lillard scored 25 points and host Portland beat Phoenix.

The win snapped a two-game skid for the Blazers, who are among several teams vying to pull in front of Memphis for the eighth playoff spot in the West.

Clippers 131, Warriors 107: Kawhi Leonard scored 23 points before sitting out the entire fourth quarter along with the rest of the Doc Rivers' starters, and Los Angeles won at Golden State.

Paul George and Patrick Beverley scored 15 points apiece as the Clippers had seven players in double figures. Reggie Jackson added 16 points and JaMychal Green had 13 points and 10 rebounds.

Wizards 122, Knicks 115: Bradley Beal got back to his high-scoring ways with 40 points, lifting host Washington past New York.

Beal overcame a slow start and surpassed the 25-point plateau for the 22nd time in 23 games.

Bulls 108, Cavaliers 103: Coby White scored 20 points to help offset a career-high nine turnovers in his first NBA start, and host Chicago beat Cleveland.

Wendell Carter Jr. added 17 points. Lauri Markkanen, Denzel Valentine and Otto Porter Jr. each scored 15.

Celtics 114, Pacers 111: Marcus Smart's leaning bank shot in the final minute gave his team the lead after it blew a 19-point advantage, and visiting Boston held on to beat Indiana Pacers and clinch a playoff spot for a sixth consecutive year.

Jayson Tatum scored 30 points for Boston while Gordon Hayward added 27 points, 10 boards and five assists in his home state.