

STARS AND STRIPES[®]

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Trump announces national emergency

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House approved legislation Saturday to provide direct relief to Americans suffering physically, financially and emotionally from the coronavirus pandemic. Passage came after President Donald Trump had declared the outbreak a national emergency, freeing up money and resources to fight it, and threw his support behind the congressional aid package.

Trump's emergency declaration unleashed as much as \$50 billion for state and local governments to respond to the crisis.

The White House said Saturday it is now conducting temperature checks on any people in close contact with Trump and Vice President Mike Pence, as a precaution. The White House doctor said he still saw no need for Trump to be tested after his recent interactions with several people who tested positive for the virus.

Trump also announced a range of executive actions, including a new public-private partnership to expand coronavirus testing capabilities with drive-through locations, as Washington tries to subdue the virus whose spread is roiling markets, shutter-

ing institutions and disrupting the lives of everyday Americans.

But he asserted "I don't take responsibility at all" for the slow rollout of testing.

The hard-fought aid package will provide free testing, sick pay for workers, enhanced unemployment benefits and bolstered food programs.

The House passed the bill after midnight on a bipartisan vote, 363-40. It now goes to the Senate.

"We did what we said we were going to do: Put families first," said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Trump tweeted his approval, all but ensuring that wary Republicans would join with a robust vote. "Good teamwork between Republicans & Democrats as the House passes the big CoronaVirus Relief Bill," he tweeted Saturday. "People really pulled together. Nice to see!"

Trump's tweet of approval instilled fresh energy in the measure, all but ensuring that wary Republicans would join with a robust vote.

The crush of activity capped a tumultuous week in Washington as the fast-moving virus left ordinary Americans suddenly

navigating self-quarantines, school closures and a changed way of life.

The White House was dealing with the crisis on multiple fronts as it became increasingly personal to the president.

Trump has been known to flout public health advice — and was eagerly shaking hands during an event Friday — but acknowledged he "most likely" will be tested soon. This, after he was exposed to several people who have tested positive for the virus. The White House physician indicated later that Trump's interactions were low-risk and testing is not necessary. But the White House subsequently said people close to the president and vice president are having their temperatures checked for any fever.

Trump took a number of other actions to bolster energy markets, ease the financial burden for Americans with student loans and give medical professionals additional flexibility in treating patients during the public health crisis.

Central to the aid package, which builds on an emergency \$8.3 billion measure approved earlier, are the free testing, sick pay and family leave provisions.

Rockets again strike base housing US troops in Iraq

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — A barrage of rockets hit a base housing U.S. and other coalition troops north of Baghdad on Saturday, Iraqi security officials said, just days after a similar attack killed three servicemen, including two Americans.

The U.S.-led coalition said at least 25 107mm rockets struck Camp Taji just before 11 a.m. Some struck the area where coalition forces are based, while others fell on air defense units, the Iraqi military statement said.

Three coalition members and two Iraqi soldiers were wounded in the attack at Camp Taji, according to spokesman for the

U.S.-led coalition Myles Caggins. The nationalities of the wounded coalition members was not immediately known.

A statement from Iraq's military said the "brutal aggression" wounded a number of air defense personnel who remain in critical condition, but did not provide a number.

Iraqi forces later discovered seven platforms from which the rockets were in the Abu Azam area, north of Baghdad. Another 24 missiles were discovered in place and ready to launch.

The attack was unusual because it occurred during the day. Previous assaults on military bases housing U.S. troops

typically occurred at night.

The earlier rocket attack against Camp Taji on Wednesday also killed a British serviceman. It prompted American airstrikes Friday against what U.S. officials said were mainly weapons facilities belonging to Kataib Hezbollah, the Iran-backed militia group believed to be responsible.

However, Iraq's military said those airstrikes killed five security force members and a civilian, while wounding five fighters from the Popular Mobilization Forces, an umbrella organization including an array of militias, including some Iran-backed groups.

Iran-backed Shiite militia

groups vowed to exact revenge for Friday's U.S. strikes, signaling another cycle of tit-for-tat violence between Washington and Tehran that could play out inside Iraq.

Iraq's military also cautioned the U.S. from taking retaliating as it did on Friday without taking approval from the government. Taking unilateral action would "not limit these actions, but rather nurtures them, weakens the ability of the Iraqi state," the statement said.

America's killing of Iraqi security forces might also give Iran-backed militia groups more reason to stage counterattacks against U.S. troops in Iraq, analysts said.

DOD to limit military's domestic travel

By KAT BOUZA

Stars and Stripes

The Department of Defense will place restrictions on permanent changes of station and temporary duty travel amid concerns over the coronavirus outbreak, according to a memo released Friday.

The order, which goes into effect Monday, applies to all military and civilian personnel and dependents assigned

to DOD installations, facilities and surrounding areas within the United States, the memo stated.

The guidance is expected to be in effect through May 11, according to the DOD.

"These restrictions are necessary to preserve force readiness, limit the continuing spread of the virus, and preserve the health and welfare of Service members, DOD civilian employees, their families,

and the local communities in which we live," Deputy Secretary of Defense David Norquist said in the memo.

The restrictions will also pause civilian hiring at DOD installations and components for individuals outside the local commuting area of vacant positions.

Exceptions to the ban may be granted on a case-by-case basis with command approval, the memo stated, for issues such as

mission-essential travel or humanitarian reasons.

Service members are authorized local leave only in accordance with service, according to a DOD email announcing the restrictions.

The announcement comes several hours after President Donald Trump declared the coronavirus pandemic a national emergency, hoping to free up as much as \$50 billion to respond to the outbreak.

Troops in Afghanistan not being tested for COVID-19

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — U.S. troops in Afghanistan are not being tested for the coronavirus, U.S. military officials told the House Armed Services Committee.

There is "no availability of testing for COVID-19" for troops there, a U.S. Central Command representative told the committee in a March 12 statement made available by the committee on Friday.

"Military personnel who believe they are at risk or have flu-like symptoms have immediate access to on-base medical care," the command official said. "This care includes screening and thorough medical diagnosis. If at any time in the course of medical examination members are suspected or considered high risk with symptoms (a requirement to meet testing protocols per the Center for Disease Control & World Health Organization), the medical community will send samples to appropriate testing facilities at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany and/or civilian testing facilities in Munich, Germany, to conduct a COVID-19 test."

The statement also indicated that "precautionary quarantine or isolation care procedures are in place at each of our Military Medical Treatment Facilities in Afghanistan."

The committee has asked Defense Department officials similar coronavirus questions about U.S. troops stationed or deployed in or near other risk countries in addition to Afghanistan. The committee is still waiting for replies, an aide said.

Members of Congress are particularly concerned about the nearly 13,000 troops in Afghanistan because many of them are deployed near Iran.

Iran has more than 11,000 confirmed cases of coronavirus, the third-most in the world behind China's 80,000-plus cases and Italy's more than 15,000, according to the Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University. Many U.S. troops are stationed in Italy.

South Korea, another nation with a substantial U.S. military presence, has nearly 8,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 — the fourth-most in the world.

Congressional aides said they have been told that Central

Command is weighing whether to scale back or cancel military exercises in the region, but no decisions have been made.

It could not be immediately determined if the Senate Armed Services Committee has asked the Pentagon for answers about coronavirus protections for U.S. troops.

In addition to the House Armed Services Committee's queries, at least two members of Congress have asked the Defense Department for answers about U.S. troops at risk for exposure to the virus in Afghanistan.

The Pentagon has reduced participation in a number of military exercises to cut the risk of troops being exposed to the virus or contributing to the spread.

The decision on whether to curb or cancel Central Command exercises will be taken against the backdrop of growing U.S. tensions with Iranian proxies in Iraq. U.S. military fighter jets bombed Kataib Hezbollah bases on Thursday in response to rocket attacks that had killed two U.S. military personnel and a British servicemember the day before.

Paratroopers quarantined after return from rotation

By CHAD GARLAND

Stars and Stripes

More than 300 82nd Airborne Division paratroopers returning from Afghanistan began a 14-day quarantine Saturday to prevent potential spread of the coronavirus, the division said in a statement.

The paratroopers of the 3rd Brigade completed a nine-month rotation in support of the U.S.-led Resolute Support mission and will undergo health monitoring and medical treatment at Fort Bragg, N.C.

Soldiers returning from any country with a Level 2 or higher travel advisory by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are subject to 14-day quarantine as directed by the Department of the Army, officials said. The CDC has issued a global Level 2 travel advisory, while China, Iran, South Korea and most of Europe are at Level 3, warranting stronger precautions.

The 82nd Airborne soldiers returning from Afghanistan who live off post will be quarantined at their own residences and soldiers assigned to barracks or without local residences will be isolated on the base.

Europe tightens measures as China relaxes

Associated Press

BERLIN — Spain prepared to declare a state of emergency on Saturday and Italy tightened its lockdown by closing down parks, while Denmark and Poland became the latest countries to shut their borders to most travelers in a bid to slow the spread of the new coronavirus.

As European countries took ever more severe, though widely varying, measures to reduce contact between their citizens and slow the pandemic, China — where the virus first emerged late last year — continued to ease up lockdown measures in its hardest-hit region.

The number of new cases has dwindled in China, but the virus has in recent weeks spread exponentially in the Middle East, Europe and North America, leading President Donald Trump to declare a state of emergency for the United States on Friday. By Saturday, more than 145,000 infections and over 5,400 deaths had been confirmed worldwide.

Europe has now become the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic, with countries imposing a cascade of restrictions in efforts to prevent their health systems collapsing under the load of cases. Schools, bars and shops not selling essential goods are among the facilities being closed in many places.

Spain's Cabinet met Saturday to declare a two-week state of emergency and announce

more measures to control the outbreak of the coronavirus that has spiked sharply in recent days to over 4,000 infections. The measure would allow the government to limit free movement, confiscate goods and take over control of industries and private facilities, including private hospitals. It wasn't immediately clear how far officials would go.

Residents in Madrid, which has around half the infections, and northeastern Catalonia awoke Saturday to shuttered bars and restaurants and other non-essential commercial outlets as ordered by regional authorities.

Spain's measures to date, though, fall far short of those ordered by Italy, the worst-hit European country, which has reached a total of over 17,600 confirmed cases — the largest outbreak after China — with 1,266 deaths. The government in Rome has ordered an unprecedented lockdown, ordering businesses to close and restricting people's movement.

Mayors of many Italian cities, including Rome and Milan, decided to close public playgrounds and parks. Under a government decree issued earlier in the week, people had been allowed in parks as long as they kept at least a distance of 1 meter between each other.

While limiting public life to a minimum, Premier Giuseppe Conte has said production — particularly of food and health

supplies — must not stop. On Saturday morning, union and industrial leaders reached an agreement on special measures to keep factories running.

Elsewhere in Europe, some countries moved to isolate themselves from their neighbors.

Denmark closed its borders and halted passenger traffic to and from the country, a measure that was due to last through April 13. Travelers were to be turned away at the border if they are unable to show that they have “a legitimate reason” to enter, for example they are Danish citizens or residents.

“I know that the overall list of measures is very extreme and will be seen as very extreme, but I am convinced that it's worth it,” Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said.

Poland was closing its borders starting at midnight and denying all foreigners entry unless they lived in Poland or had personal ties there. Non-citizens allowed in will be quarantined for 14 days. The Czech Republic and Slovakia took similar action.

Russia said its land borders with Norway and Poland will be closed to most foreigners beginning Sunday.

On the other side of the globe, New Zealand announced that all incoming passengers, including New Zealand citizens, will be required to isolate themselves for 14 days, with few exceptions.

Number of guardsmen activated for virus may reach 1K

By ROSE L. THAYER

Stars and Stripes

The number of activated National Guard members could approach 1,000 personnel over the weekend as more states utilize their troops to combat the spread of the coronavirus and support local communities grappling with school closures and increased demand on state health departments.

On Friday, more than 400 Guard members are working in seven states — Florida, Iowa, Louisiana, New York, Rhode Island, California and Washington — under the direction of their governors in response to the respiratory illness, COVID-19, according to the National Guard Bureau in Washington, D.C.

“As other states are requested to support civil authorities, those numbers will change rapidly. By the end of the day, we expect that number to approach 1,000,” according to the bureau. Thirty-three states have declared an emergency because of the virus, which enables the governor to

activate the Guard if needed.

The governor of Maryland called upon the National Guard on Thursday, and more than 250 soldiers and airmen will be part of the initial response, said Brig Gen. Adam Flasch, director of the joint staff for the Maryland National Guard.

To ensure that the service members responding to the coronavirus don't contract or spread the illness, all troops coming on duty will undergo a health screening and questions about recent travel, Flasch said. Checks will continue throughout their activation, and leadership is instructed to practice social distancing, meaning formations are a little larger and wider.

Maryland is one of at least five states to close all schools, so one of the first missions for troops is to deliver food to students on the free lunch program who may otherwise go hungry. The New York National Guard, which has about 360 activated personnel, began a similar mission Thursday, said Eric Durr, spokesman for the New York National Guard. That state as a whole has not closed schools, but certain cities have,

such as the New York City suburb New Rochelle.

“I don't think we as Americans wanted to endure a pandemic, but it's something we've spent a lot of time planning for,” Flasch said. “The best solution is to follow the plans, listen to health professionals and get out there and make a difference in our communities.”

The Maryland Guard is uniquely situated to assist the Maryland Department of Health with the National Strategic Stockpile, which holds medical supplies to distribute nationwide during shortages. While shortages have not occurred during the response to the new coronavirus, Flasch said troops are doing preplanning and “looking at all angles” to make sure the stockpile is ready to assist.

In New York, troops are also conducting transportation missions, moving supplies and personnel where they are needed, Durr said. They are also manning call centers with a script to help screen whether callers need to be directed to health professionals.

Army infantry recruits to get bonuses

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Army needs more young Americans in the infantry, and it is offering new bonuses and student loan repayments as incentives to fill its ranks of front-line fighters, service officials said Thursday.

The Army's Fort Knox-based Recruiting Command is offering bonuses up to \$15,000 or a repayment of student loans up to \$65,000 for recruits who enlist on an infantry contract, the command announced in a statement. The actual payments depend on the length of enlistment agreed upon and when they ship to Fort Benning, Ga., for initial training, the command said.

Soldiers are also eligible for

up to \$4,000 per year in tuition assistance, Recruiting Command said.

It marks the second time in the last year that the Army has offered enlistment bonuses in an effort to recruit new trainees for the infantry.

The Army faced a shortage of some 3,300 infantry recruits last year and boosted enlistment bonuses up to \$40,000 for people who signed infantry contracts before Oct. 1, 2019.

That effort came on the heels of the Army missing its total recruiting goal for fiscal year 2018, its first recruiting failure in more than a decade. That failure forced the service to drastically alter its recruiting enterprise, including a launch of new initiatives aimed at young people such as social media advertisements and es-

ports competitions.

The service made its recruiting goal last year, and Army officials said last month that they were more optimistic about recruiting in 2020 than they have been in many years. However, they declined to provide specific data about their recruiting efforts so far this fiscal year.

Individuals must score at least an 87 out of 99 on the combat line score of the Armed Forces Qualification Test and pass the Occupational Physical Assessment Test at the heavy level in order to qualify to join the infantry, Recruiting Command said.

The Army is looking for individuals to enter the infantry who "possess tremendous discipline and high moral character," the ability to remain calm through stressful situations and

a willingness to face danger.

"There's a very unique bond between infantry soldiers not found in any other [career] in the Army," Staff Sgt. Leonard Markley, an Army recruiter who has served in the infantry, said in a statement. "It's us against the world, and we [in the infantry] all know about the hardships that come with this: Walking countless miles, sleep deprivation and rationed meals."

Recruits who enlist in the infantry attend One Station Unit Training at Fort Benning for 22 weeks, during which they learn the skills and tactics required to fight in an infantry unit. After graduation, they are assigned their specialty either as 11B infantrymen or 11C mortarmen.

Primaries to still be held Tuesday

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Elections officials in the four states holding presidential primaries next week say they have no plans to postpone voting amid widespread disruptions caused by the coronavirus outbreak. Instead, they are taking extraordinary steps to ensure that voters can cast ballots and polling places are clean.

They have been scrambling to recruit replacements for poll workers dropping out over fears of contracting the virus, providing cotton swabs for voters to use on touchscreen machines and extending absentee voting deadlines. Only one state, Louisiana, announced plans to postpone its primary, from April to June.

The top elections officials from the four states — Arizona, Florida, Illinois and Ohio — said in a joint statement that the vote will go on Tuesday,

saying they were confident the elections would be secure and safe. They encouraged healthy poll workers to show up.

Election officials routinely prepare for natural disasters and other disruptions, but COVID-19 outbreak poses a unique challenge as some areas of the country urge members of the public to work from home and avoid crowds.

Election Day voting in the U.S. largely relies on an army of poll workers who staff schools, community centers and government buildings open for the public to cast ballots in person. Because many poll workers are older, they may be especially concerned about the virus. School closures and safety concerns at senior living communities have thrown some polling places into question.

Some states might be able to send all voters ballots they can fill out and mail back.

Sanders perturbed by virus' impact on rallies

Associated Press

BURLINGTON, Vt. — Bernie Sanders acknowledged Friday that fears about the spread of coronavirus have damaged his ability to leverage large rallies into support at the polls, and suggested that future Democratic presidential primary voting should be delayed if health officials deem doing so appropriate.

"We do more rallies than anybody else, and (they're) often very well attended. I love to do them," the senator told reporters at a hotel in his home state of Vermont. "This coronavirus has obviously impacted our ability to communicate with people in the traditional way that we do. That's hurting."

Thousands of people gathering to hear him speak has defined Sanders since he first sought the White House in 2016. But the practice has been curtailed as health officials attempt to slow the virus' spread. Instead, Sanders has convened

the media three straight days to blast the Trump administration for what he calls its inadequate response and warn of dire upcoming health and economic effects.

"If this isn't a red flag for the current dysfunctional and wasteful health care system, frankly I don't know what is," Sanders said, advocating for his signature "Medicare for All" plan.

He called elections "the bedrock of our democracy" and said they shouldn't be delayed "on a wily-nilly basis." But he also noted that everything from the NBA season to Broadway musicals had been disrupted to avoid large crowds coming together, adding, "I don't think there's anybody out there, no matter what your political view may be, who wants to see people become infected because they are voting."

Sanders said, in lieu of rallies, he plans to utilize social media and internet livestreams,

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman placed Nazi propaganda at schools

CA SANTA ANA — A Southern California woman pleaded guilty to charges involving the posting of Nazi propaganda at one school and near another.

The Orange County District Attorney's Office said Grace Ziesmer pleaded guilty to misdemeanor counts of vandalism and graffiti in exchange for a court offer of 40 hours of community service and one year of probation.

Authorities said the 23-year-old posted Nazi propaganda in March 2019 on the campus of Newport Harbor High school and on light poles near Fullerton College.

80-year-old mobster sentenced in drug ring

NJ CAMDEN — An 80-year-old reputed mobster who admitted taking part in a drug trafficking ring while he was on federal probation for similar crimes was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

Carl Chianese of Point Pleasant will also have to serve three years of supervised release once he's freed from prison.

Chianese and two other men — one who also is a reputed mobster — were charged in 2018 with possession of methamphetamine, heroin, fentanyl, tramadol and marijuana, all with the intent to distribute, federal prosecutors said.

Deputy who restrained amputee not charged

AZ TUCSON — A Pima County sheriff's deputy seen on video tackling a teenage quadruple amputee at a Tucson-area group home last year will not face charges,

prosecutors said.

The Pima County Attorney's Office could not prove "beyond a reasonable doubt" that Deputy Manuel Van Santen's use of force on a 15-year-old boy was unnecessary, Nicol Green, the office's chief trial counsel, said in a letter.

Deputies went to the group home after a worker called 911 to report the teen had knocked over a trash can and made verbal threats.

A video showed the deputy tussling on the kitchen floor with the boy, who is screaming and cursing.

Officer, suspect hurt in traffic stop gunfire

AL BIRMINGHAM — An Alabama police sergeant and a suspect were both shot and wounded during an exchange of gunfire that followed a traffic stop, authorities said.

Birmingham police Sgt. Rod Mauldin told new outlets West Precinct Sgt. Anthony Wheeler was shot at least once in the leg during a foot chase after the traffic stop.

Mauldin said Wheeler and another officer pulled over a vehicle with three people inside. When the car stopped, two people fled from the vehicle and a foot chase began.

During the pursuit, gunfire was exchanged, according to Mauldin. All three were taken into custody.

Bill banning owning, breeding iguanas OKed

FL TALLAHASSEE — Floridians who breed iguanas for fun may soon have to look for another hobby.

The Florida Legislature sent Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis a bill that would make it illegal to possess, import, barter, trade, sell or breed green iguanas and

tegu lizards.

People who currently have a license to breed the reptiles would be grandfathered under the bill but could only sell the lizards to customers in other states.

Officer accused of using gun to threaten man

DE GEORGETOWN — A Maryland police officer accused of threatening a man with a gun during an off-duty incident in Delaware surrendered to authorities, according to the police department where he is employed.

A Sussex County grand jury indicted Salisbury, Md., Police Officer Ronald Brown, 42, on an aggravated menacing and firearm charge, according to a Salisbury police statement.

A 39-year-old man filed a complaint with the department alleging Brown had revealed a handgun then grabbed him and threatened him during a confrontation, Salisbury police said. The argument began over payment for work being done on Brown's car, State Police added.

Man charged with grabbing officer's gun

MO FLORISSANT — A St. Louis area man was charged with grabbing a police officer's gun and pointing it at her while she was driving a squad car.

Sean Radford, 25, of Florissant was jailed on bond after he was charged with disarming a peace officer, unlawful use of a weapon and resisting arrest.

Saint Louis County police said officers arrested Radford after responding to a domestic violence disturbance. After he was put in the front seat of a patrol vehicle, he is accused of maneuvering himself toward

the officer, removing her gun from its holster, pointing the weapon at her and demanding that she let him out of the moving vehicle.

The documents said the officer and Radford then fought over the gun before she regained control of the weapon.

Man charged in death of former football star

PA PHILADELPHIA — A man was charged in the death of a former New Jersey high school football star who was shot following a fistfight in Philadelphia.

Police said that Anthony Nieves, 22, was charged with murder, aggravated and simple assault, reckless endangerment and weapons crimes.

Authorities said Zaire Williams, 25, of West Deptford, N.J., was shot in the head just blocks from Temple University, where he had played football before transferring to the University of Maine.

Ban on gender treatment for minors approved

AL MONTGOMERY — The Alabama Senate passed a bill that would ban gender therapies such as prescription hormones or gender confirmation surgery for minors.

The legislation would make it a felony for medical providers to prescribe puberty-blockers or hormones to anyone under age 19, or perform gender confirmation surgery on minors.

The bill, sponsored by Trussville Republican Sen. Shay Shelnutt, passed 22-3, news outlets reported. The legislation now moves to the state's House of Representatives.

From wire reports

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Commentary

Who knows when baseball will return?

Associated Press

The games are over, at least for now.

There's only so much you can say about that when people are dying and the world is in danger. The playground has always been the place to leave your troubles behind but when no place is really safe, sports can't be, either.

That includes America's pastime, as painful as that might be.

Baseball may or may not be played again this year. There are no guarantees anymore, and anyone who thinks the major leagues will soon pick back up where they suddenly left off Thursday is either guessing or has a crystal ball that the rest of us have yet to properly study.

That could mean no opening day anytime in 2020, as shocking as that might be. No pen-

nant races, and no World Series to help us get the stink of the Houston Astros off our minds.

Nothing except a long, hot summer without the game that means so much to so many.

The great baseball philosopher Yogi Berra famously declared that it ain't over 'till it's over. Well, it's over, at least for now, after the plug was finally pulled Thursday as exhibition games were still being played in Florida.

"It felt like the most meaningless baseball game in the history of the sport," infielder Matt Carpenter said as his Cardinals played the Marlins in Jupiter, Fla.

Baseball players are lucky in a way. Unlike college seniors who might miss the only March Madness of their life, they still get paid and still have a chance to play when this all gets better.

Not like the guy pouring you a

beer or the woman handing you a hot dog. Their jobs are gone, at least for the near future, and the chances of finding something else in a suddenly perilous economy are about as good as they are being picked to sing the national anthem if opening day ever arrives.

Same for the people who guide you to a parking spot, and those who take your tickets. The security guards, equipment guys, broadcast helpers and many, many others are all in the same boat.

While the rest of us might need help finding something to do other than watching sports, they need help just to live their lives.

Kevin Love stood up quickly on the basketball side to pledge \$100,000 for team and arena staff hurt by the loss of NBA games in Cleveland. Expect other NBA stars to do the same kind of thing, and Dallas owner

Mark Cuban says he's got a plan to pay his workers even if there are no games.

Baseball needs to step up for its people, too, if only because those in the sport understand it's the right thing to do.

"My heart really goes out to the people who are living paycheck to paycheck and for whom this is an economic catastrophe," Seattle owner John Stanton said in Arizona.

Here's hope that Stanton backs his words with his wallet, because a lot of good people will soon be suffering. The official delay is for two weeks, but Stanton said he doesn't have high confidence that the season will begin on April 9 as now planned.

The original plan to start March 26 was made so a World Series Game 6 would not be on election night. Now there's a chance it could come on inauguration day.

With NBA hiatus, Carter may have played final game

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Vince Carter leaned back in his seat, dabbed his eyes and struggled to contain his emotions.

After almost 22 seasons in the NBA, longer than anyone else has ever played the game at its highest level, this still seemed too quick, too sudden.

He kept going back to one word Wednesday night.

"Weird."

Carter, closing out his brilliant career with the struggling Atlanta Hawks, was a minor piece of the puzzle on an evening of fast-moving developments.

In the midst of all these momentous decisions and terrifying uncertainty, one of the NBA's greatest players, the guy who brought us the high-flying thrills of "Vinsanity" and still had an ample amount of game at age 43, was playing possibly his final game.

"There's so many unintended things that come about from this," Hawks coach Lloyd Pierce said. "Vince is probably the main one for us. Just understanding that this is kind of a surreal moment. This could be it for Vince. I'm glad the fans were able to remind me of that."

As the final seconds of what could be the final game ticked down, and the Knicks had secured a wild 136-131 victory, the fans began to chant.

"We want Vince! We want Vince! We want Vince!"

Pierce heard them. Caught up in trying to win the game, the coach suddenly recognized that Carter's career — which was supposed to last 15 more games — might actually be ending right here.

Pierce signaled for Carter to take the court. He checked in while the crowd roared. Julius Randle made one more

free throw, then the Knicks left the stage to the NBA's senior citizen.

Carter dribbled to the top of arc, 26 feet from the basket. The New York players all peeled away, making sure he had a clear look at the three-pointer.

Nothing but net.

When the horn sounded, Carter doled out careful, hands-free hugs.

"Thank you Vince!" the fans roared, over and over.

"If it ended today," Carter said, "at least I scored my last basket. It will be a weird but cool memory."

Maybe it was an appropriate way to go out.

After all, when Carter began his pro career with the Toronto Raptors in 1998, the NBA was in the midst of a bitter labor dispute that wiped out most of the first half of his rookie season.

When Carter finally took the court, he began a dazzling ca-

reer that featured 10 straight trips to the All-Star Game in his prime and evolved into a role as the league's sage senior citizen, essentially a player-coach who advised and molded the next generation of stars.

That's what brought him to Atlanta for the final two seasons of his career. He agreed to join a rebuilding team that had no hope of bringing him his first NBA title — the only real blemish on his résumé — but did have talented young stars-in-the-making like Young and Collins.

"Him being here has helped me tremendously, especially with him knowing how to handle the spotlight and the bright lights," Young said. "I obviously want to play a lot of years in this league. I'm just trying to mimic a lot of the things he does day to day. He's a great person first. I think that's why he's had so much success in the league."

White: UFC to fight on amid virus 'panic'

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The UFC is determined to fight on amid the coronavirus pandemic.

While leagues and organizers across sports canceled or delayed competition this week, the UFC proceeded with its plans for a fan-free event Saturday night in Brasilia, Brazil. Next weekend, the promotion still plans to stage a full fight card with fans inside London's O2 Arena.

The UFC hasn't canceled any competitions, even those previously scheduled for areas where large gatherings are now banned. Instead, the promotion has moved events scheduled for March 28 in Columbus, Ohio, and April 11 in Portland, Ore., to the new UFC Apex complex in Las Vegas, where it has a small arena and television production capabilities.

UFC President Dana White attributes his decision to go against the sports world's collective mindset partly to a conversation Thursday with President Donald Trump and

Vice President Mike Pence. White and Trump are longtime friends and business associates.

"I talked to the president and the vice president of the United States about this," White said on ESPN, his promotion's broadcast partner. "They're taking this very serious. They're saying, 'Be cautious, be careful, but live your life and stop panicking.' Everybody is panicking, and instead of panicking, we're actually getting out there and working with doctors and health officials and the government to figure out how we can keep the sport safe and how we can continue to put on events."

Combat sports are among the most elemental competitive events, with just two fighters and a referee in a cage or ring surrounded by three judges and relatively few vital support personnel. That's a big reason why the UFC believes it can continue while the rest of the sporting world grinds to a halt.

The UFC won't have fans in the stands in Brasilia or Las

Vegas, but the competition will go on — and more importantly to the fighters, they'll get paid in a sport that usually provides no financial compensation to its combatants for their months of preparation and training unless a fight actually takes place.

"I would bet more than half of fighters would expose themselves to coronavirus before not getting to fight," UFC welterweight Anthony Rocco Martin said. "We aren't union and don't get paid to not fight. Most spend all their money getting to their next fight."

The Bellator mixed martial arts promotion went against that industry standard Friday after it canceled a scheduled fan-free show in Uncasville, Conn., a few hours before it was scheduled to begin. President Scott Coker said Bellator will pay everyone involved in the show, an announcement greeted with surprised excitement by its fighters.

White said the UFC will monitor its fighters for symptoms of coronavirus before al-

lowing them to compete. The UFC issued guidelines to its fighters and employees this week asking them to adhere to standard practices for avoiding contraction and transmission of disease.

"We're always looking out for the health and safety of our fans, our athletes, whatever it might be," White said. "This thing going on, we're going to do the same thing."

White stands increasingly alone among sports' power brokers in his perception of the pandemic. NASCAR and the PGA Tour scrapped planned events Friday, a few days after nearly every team sports league in North America had abandoned hopes of regular competition in upcoming weeks.

"I'm good with fighting in an empty arena," tweeted Kevin Lee, who was scheduled to compete in the main event in Brasilia even after missing weight by 2½ pounds Friday. "Let's not panic too crazy, let us fight, entertain the people stuck at home."

Boston Marathon moved from Patriots Day to Sept. 14

Associated Press

BOSTON — The Boston Marathon on Friday was postponed for five months due to the coronavirus pandemic, sacrificing the customary Patriots Day start in the hopes of preserving the uninterrupted 124-year tradition of the world's most prestigious long-distance run.

In delaying the marathon from April 20 to Sept. 14, the city avoids for now an event that draws more than 30,000 runners from around the world, packs them in buses and starting corrals and then sends them off on a 26.2-mile trek from Hopkinton to Boston's Back Bay. An estimated 1 million people line the course as it winds through eight cities and towns, high-fiving, hugging and even kissing the runners along the way.

The Boston Marathon has

never been canceled since the first edition in 1897, when 15 men drew a starting line in the dirt in Ashland and headed for the city to commemorate the first modern Olympic Games the previous year. In 1918, the format was modified to a relay race due to World War I; the 2013 race was stopped when two bombs exploded at the finish line, several hours after the winners had finished but while many runners were still on the course.

"We've shown before that whatever the challenge to our marathon and to our city, we are Boston Strong," Mayor Marty Walsh said at a news conference on Friday, when the city's signature event joined virtually every college or professional league worldwide in canceling or postponing competition. "The marathon is Boston. It connects us. It reflects

us. It brings out our community spirit and our resiliency."

The Boston Athletic Association had been silent on the fate of the race even as other high-profile sports events were scuttled. The Masters was postponed indefinitely on Friday; previously the NBA and NHL suspended their seasons, Major League Baseball halted spring training and put off opening day, and all NCAA championships were canceled, including the March Madness basketball tournament that is one of the highlights of the sports calendar.

"The B.A.A. understands the city's decision that the Boston Marathon cannot be held on April 20, 2020," race organizers said in a statement. "We offer our full support to take all reasonable efforts to postpone."

It is the first time that the race won't be held in April. For

the first 49 years, the marathon was held on April 19, the anniversary of the first Revolutionary War battles in Lexington and Concord, or on the 20th if Patriots Day fell on a Sunday.

The state holiday was changed to the third Monday in April in 1969. The race has been on that day ever since — traditionally with the Red Sox playing in the morning so the baseball fans can wander over to Kenmore Square after the game to see the runners pass by with one mile to go.

"It won't look right on the calendar," Gov. Charlie Baker said. "But it's the right thing to do."

The new date moves the race to a crowded fall, with the London, Paris and Barcelona marathons also postponing until after the summer over COVID-19 concerns; Rome's race was canceled.

NCAA scrambled to save March Madness

Associated Press

As it became apparent the NCAA basketball tournaments could not be held during their usual three-week window because of concerns about the coronavirus, organizers scrambled to devise a plan for a 16-team event to salvage the postseason in one long weekend.

NCAA vice president of men's basketball Dan Gavitt told AP on Friday that he started to consider ways of condensing the tournament Wednesday night after the NBA announced one of its players tested positive for the virus and the league suspended its season.

But the reality set in that even a shortened tournament could not be pulled off without putting people at risk, and the NCAA's biggest event of the year was canceled Thursday afternoon.

The cancellation of the men's and women's basketball tournaments came a day after the NCAA had announced it planned to play the games while

restricting fan access.

"We did spend a significant amount of time very late Wednesday night trying to figure out alternative models," Gavitt said.

The next morning, Gavitt presented the idea to the men's basketball selection committee. The women's selection committee was scheduled to meet later in the day.

Gavitt said the hope was to play games starting March 26 at State Farm Arena in Atlanta. The city had been scheduled to host the Final Four at Mercedes-Benz Stadium on April 4 and 6.

The idea was to have the selection committee choose the top 16 teams in the country, regardless of conference, to participate. The first three rounds would have been played from March 26-28, with a championship game on March 30. Gavitt said he believes eight or nine of the 32 Division I conferences could have been represented.

"Far from ideal. Far from perfect," Gavitt said. "Imperfect as it may be, that was one

of the only reasonable options we thought we could at least maintain some level of our tournaments."

Gavitt said there was some hope early Thursday a full tournament could still be played. As that faded, the idea of holding a smaller event got "mixed interest" from the committee.

"There was a real concern about not being inclusive enough, with only 16 teams," Gavitt said. "But the other thing that was in play at that point in committee members' minds, and we saw this play out at conference tournaments, once an NBA player was infected, I think it started to really hit home for the players, from what I've heard from coaches by text message and anecdotally."

NCAA President Mark Emmert said postponing the tournament indefinitely also wasn't feasible.

"The immediate logistical problems were that we had this rapidly, continuing right now, number of schools that were shutting down," Emmert said. "We had the reality that if you

start a tournament six weeks from now a bunch of our seniors will have moved on. And when you looked at the projections of where the virus was going to be in six weeks it looks worse, not better."

Similar reasoning went into the cancellation of all spring championships, including sports such as baseball and softball with national tournaments that don't start for another two months. It was a move that surprised some athletic administrators.

But with hundreds of schools closing campuses, some through the semester, and conferences suspending athletic activities, the NCAA could have faced the possibility of holding national championships in sports where many of the usual participants were not fielding teams.

Thursday was supposed to be one of the busiest — and best — days of the college basketball season. There were 58 Division I men's games scheduled, with tournaments for most of the strongest conferences in full swing.

Brazil lagging behind others in coronavirus protocols

Associated Press

SAO PAULO — The biggest country in South America has also been slowest in the region to impose restrictions on large gatherings at sporting events as the coronavirus continues to spread.

Unlike neighboring countries that have announced tough measures since the beginning of the week, Brazil has been taking a more moderate approach.

As recently as Thursday night, more than 50,000 fans watched the Copa Libertadores group stage goalless clash between southern Brazilian teams Gremio and Internacional in Porto Alegre.

Matches of traditional state tournaments were played Friday night to a few thousand fans and will go on this weekend, with only some games in

Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro to be played behind closed doors.

In comparison, many other tournaments in soccer-crazy South America were suspended, including in Colombia, Peru, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela. Three countries decided to keep playing, but only behind closed doors nationwide: Argentina, Chile and Bolivia.

Brazil's two biggest cities — Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo — contain most of the country's 107 coronavirus cases registered so far. No deaths have been reported, but government officials say they expect the number of people affected to soar in the next couple of weeks.

If Brazil's health ministry had not recommended empty stadiums in Sao Paulo and Rio this weekend, many fans would have attended the matches

scheduled.

More than 40,000 had already bought tickets for two matches in Sao Paulo on Saturday, including a derby. Another 20,000 were set for a Rio state league clash between Copa Libertadores winners Flamengo and Portuguesa.

"As there is no order from the health ministry, the decisions are made by state governments," Brazil's health ministry said in a statement. "The ministry makes recommendations, but each state has its contingency plans and takes its decision accordingly with their panorama."

Other Brazilian soccer state bodies decided to play behind closed doors, too, but some still insisted on allowing fans despite Friday's recommendations of health authorities that also suggested postponements and cancellations to all orga-

nizers of sporting events in the nation.

A far different scenario has unfolded in Uruguay, where discussions about suspending sporting events were already well advanced before the tiny country announced its first coronavirus case on Friday. Hours after the information was revealed, all soccer matches were suspended, even in youth divisions, and the country's basketball competition was set to stop on Saturday.

In Argentina, where two people already died because of the coronavirus, there are many loud voices calling for no soccer at all during the outbreak.

"This should be stopped. We can live with it, but how about people that need to work here every day? How can they do it?" asked Diego Maradona, now a coach at Gimnasia La Plata, in an interview with Fox Sports.