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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Troops return to austere conditions

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — It wasn't the welcome home that U.S. soldiers expected when they returned from war zones in the Middle East in the past week.

When their planes landed at Fort Bliss, Texas, they were herded into buses, denied water and the use of bathrooms, then quarantined in packed barracks, with little food or access to the outdoors. "This is no way to treat Soldiers returning from war," one soldier told The Associated Press in an email.

The soldiers posted notes on social media about the poor conditions. Their complaints got quick attention from senior Army and Pentagon leaders. Now changes are under way at Fort Bliss and at Fort Bragg in North Carolina, where the first soldiers placed under quarantine also complained of poor, cramped conditions.

Quarantining troops on military bases is becoming a greater challenge for military officials. While continuing missions and

training, they also have to try to prevent the spread of the highly contagious coronavirus by enforcing two-week quarantines of soldiers who have spent months overseas.

In one of Bragg's remote training areas, large white tents have popped up over the past few days to house hundreds of 82nd Airborne Division troops returning to the base from Afghanistan and Middle East deployments. The tent city, being called Forward Operating Base Patriot (FOB Patriot), materialized almost overnight after commanders realized the limits of the barracks when troops began arriving on Saturday.

Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy said senior leaders were looking into soldiers' complaints and seeking answers from Fort Bliss. Pentagon chief spokesman Jonathan Hoffman told reporters that Defense Secretary Mark Esper had heard about the problems and "his response is, we can do better and we need to do better."

Hoffman said the command-

er at Fort Bliss has met with all of the quarantined soldiers and "talked through some of their concerns. The spokesman added, "We are going to do better. This is something unusual for all these bases to be handling, and they are doing the best they can."

In the early days of the quarantine, soldiers at Fort Bliss posted photos on social media showing foam food trays dotted with small piles of peas and rice. On Thursday, in an email statement, Fort Bliss described changes that have been made.

"The dining facility we initially used could not keep pace with demand," said the statement. "The portions were inadequate, and led to our number one complaint. Fort Bliss leaders saw photos and immediately took action."

One soldier, in an email to the AP, said when soldiers got off the plane from Afghanistan, they were loaded onto buses and did not get water or permission to use the bathroom for hours.

"We can't walk down the hall, go outside, or exercise. We finally received drinking water at 0900 this morning," said the soldier, describing Day Two. "The Army was not prepared, nor equipped to deal with this quarantine instruction and it has been implemented very poorly."

The AP is not identifying soldiers who described the conditions, in order to protect their identity so they could speak freely and not worry about potential reprisals.

Fort Bliss said that the food service plan has already increased to give troops three hot meals a day and that soldiers are now getting donated snacks and are allowed to order food and have it delivered to a central location. The troops are also allowed to go outside more and will get more access to gym equipment.

According to officials, soldiers at Fort Bragg are being separated into groups that returned from overseas together for the two-week quarantine.

Navy limits virus testing for sailors aboard ships

The San Diego Union-Tribune

SAN DIEGO — Navy sailors on ships at sea and in port won't be tested for COVID-19 unless they meet the same benchmarks for testing as their civilian counterparts, according to Naval Medical Forces Pacific.

Those benchmarks, set by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, include a fever of at least 100.4 degrees, symptoms of acute respiratory illness and a connection with a known COVID-19 case or recent travel to a high-risk area, according to Regena Kowitz, a Naval Medical Forces Pacific spokeswoman.

Those measures will remain in place despite concerns that the virus can spread from people who are not showing symptoms, or whose symptoms are mild.

According to the CDC website, research-

ers believe the virus is most contagious when people are symptomatic; however, experts told CNN Thursday they are concerned it can spread via those without symptoms as well.

One San Diego sailor who tested positive — a student at a Naval Base San Diego schoolhouse — was asymptomatic for COVID-19, but was tested because two others from the school also tested positive, Brian O'Rourke, a Navy spokesman, told The San Diego Union-Tribune Monday.

Other sailors have reached out to The San Diego Union-Tribune anonymously over recent days concerned about the lack of testing even for those sailors with symptoms of the virus.

Three sailors assigned to ships in San Diego — two on the amphibious assault

ship Boxer and one on the littoral combat ship Coronado — have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last five days.

Although ships have been vectors for the spread of the virus — as seen with the Diamond Princess, Grand Princess and Boxer — Kowitz said that, as of Thursday, there is no plan to lower the testing threshold for the Navy's shipboard sailors.

"Sailors should not be going to work ill and if they have concerns, they should contact their primary care facility," Kowitz said in an email.

During a phone interview Thursday, Kowitz said Naval Medical Forces Pacific is preparing Navy medical staff — including those working in the San Diego area — to deploy on the hospital ship Mercy to an unnamed West Coast city.

Hypersonic glide body launch a milestone for Army, Navy

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — The U.S. Army and Navy successfully launched a hypersonic glide body Thursday at Hawaii's Pacific Missile Range Facility, taking a major step in the Pentagon's goal of developing weapons that can travel five times the speed of sound or faster.

The glide body, sometimes called a glide vehicle, flew at hypersonic speed to a designated impact point, the Defense Department said Friday in a statement. It did not specify the top speed the glide body reached.

In a fully functioning hypersonic weapon, a conventional rocket booster first launches the glide body, which then accelerates at hypersonic speeds to deliver the warhead aboard it.

"This test was a critical step in rapidly delivering operational hypersonic capabilities to our warfighters in support of the National Defense Strategy," Army Lt. Gen. L. Neil Thurgood, director of Hypersonics, Directed Energy, Space and Rapid Acquisition, said in a Defense Department statement. His office is leading the Army's Long Range Hypersonic Weapon program.

Both China and Russia are developing hyper-

sonic weapons, which unlike conventional ballistic missiles can be maneuvered deftly after launch to avoid detection or destruction.

The Defense Department described Thursday's launch as a "major milestone towards the department's goal of fielding hypersonic warfighting capabilities in the early- to mid-2020s."

Vice Adm. Johnny Wolfe, director of the Navy's Strategic Systems Programs, said in the statement that this test follows up one done in October 2017 and put "additional stresses" on the system. "It was able to handle them all," Wolfe said.

"Today we validated our design and are now ready to move to the next phase towards fielding a hypersonic strike capability," he said.

Once the glide body is fully fielded, the Navy and Army will each develop individual weapon systems and launchers for use on sea or land, the statement said.

"The glide body tested today is now ready for transition to Army and Navy weapon system development efforts and is one of several applications of hypersonic technology underway across the Department," Mike White, assistant director of hypersonics in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, said in the statement.

N. Korea test-fires missiles off coast

BY KIM GAMEL
AND YOO KYONG CHANG
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea test-fired two short-range missiles that flew more than 250 miles before splashing into the sea off its eastern coast Saturday, the South Korean military said.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un also guided an artillery fire competition between large combined army units "on the western front" Friday, state-run media reported.

The military activity showed the North is continuing to develop its weapons programs as nuclear talks with the United States have been deadlocked for more than a year.

The two projectiles, which were presumed to be short-range ballistic missiles, were launched from a western area Saturday, according to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

It said the projectiles flew more than 250 miles and reached a maximum altitude of 30 miles.

"Our military is maintaining a readiness posture and tracking and monitoring the situation in case of additional launches," it said.

The North conducted a series of other missile tests and artillery drills earlier this month in what South Korean officials said was part of winter training drills.

The show of strength came after the United States and South Korea canceled plans for a joint military training exercise this month because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The allies insist they are continuing regular training and remain ready to fight if needed.

Ship building deemed 'national need'

Alabama Media Group

Delivering military warships is a "national need" that is "unwavering and crucial" to national security and requires Mobile-based Austal USA's employees during the COVID-19 pandemic, a high-ranking Navy official said Thursday.

Assistant Secretary to the Navy James Geurts, in a letter to Austal President Craig Perciavalle, instructed the company to inform the Navy of problems that might arise while the company continues building ships at its Mobile-based facility. The company employs around 4,000 people and builds its warships in a facility located across the Mobile River from downtown Mobile.

"Given the missions essential functions you perform, while

ensuring the safety and well-being of the workforce, I cannot stress enough the importance of accomplishing the missions, and notifying the government of any impediments that are considered likely to interfere with timely accomplishment of this missions," Geurts wrote.

He said the Navy understands the coronavirus pandemic presents "a challenge" and that the military branch is "dedicated to working closely" with Austal to ensure workforce safety.

Craig Savage, a spokesman with Austal USA in Mobile, Ala., said the company has six ships under various phases of construction. He said that the company is adhering to the strict safety guidelines from the Centers for Disease Con-

trol and Prevention and the World Health Organization by taking "significant steps to distance the workforce for large gatherings."

"Austal USA's primary concern is the health and well-being of our workforce," said Savage. "Austal remains open and operating under close care."

He said the company's precautions include travel restrictions for "non-essential employees," review of recently traveled employees, comprehensive facility sanitization, social-distancing, and moving to virtual meetings whenever practical.

"We're continuing to monitor developments and updating our response accordingly," Savage said.

No consensus on \$1T+ rescue package

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Negotiators from Congress and the White House were resuming top-level talks Saturday on a ballooning \$1 trillion-plus economic rescue package, racing to strike a deal after President Donald Trump unleashed fury on those questioning his handling of the coronavirus outbreak.

It was an extraordinary moment in Washington: Congress undertaking the most ambitious federal effort yet to shore up households and the U.S. economy and an angry president lashing out at all comers. All while the global pandemic and the nationwide shutdown grip an anxious, isolated population bracing for a health care crisis and looming recession.

When one reporter asked Trump what

he would tell a worried nation Friday, the president snapped, “I say that you’re a terrible reporter.”

On Capitol Hill, key congressional and White House officials converged Saturday for more talks. The sweeping aid package of paychecks for suddenly jobless Americans, money for hospitals and aid to industry is all but certain to swell far beyond the initial \$1 trillion price tag. Combined with other actions by the Federal Reserve, it could be a \$2 trillion pump to the economy, officials said Saturday.

The Senate was convening the rare weekend session with the aim of drafting the package Saturday, holding an initial vote Sunday and winning Senate passage on Monday.

“We need to act with urgency, we need to

act with significance, we need to act with boldness,” White House legislative affairs director Eric Ueland told reporters.

Despite the enormous pressure on Washington to swiftly act, the challenges are apparent. Lawmakers and administration officials labored late into the evening Friday over eye-popping sums and striking federal interventions, surpassing even the 2008-09 bank bailout and stimulus.

“Everybody is working very hard,” Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said, exiting one closed-door session and heading into another.

While key negotiators said they made progress during the daylong talks, they failed to hit an end-of-day deadline Friday to strike a deal. Talks broke around 10:30 p.m.

Californians adjust to near lockdown

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — While California awoke Friday to the reality of a near lockdown to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, it was business as usual for Rick Curnutt and his family, who were hunkered down in China during the early days of the outbreak and spent two weeks in self-quarantine when they returned last month.

“This is take three for us,” the Los Angeles filmmaker joked. “This has become routine by now. We’re kind of professional homebodies.”

That’s not the case for nearly

40 million fellow Californians who were coming to terms with Gov. Gavin Newsom’s order that they stay home indefinitely with exceptions for essential jobs, errands and some exercise.

Even after a growing number of cities and counties had placed restrictions on movement and activity, the order was a stunning development and further blow to businesses and workers reeling from the impact, and parents struggling to telecommute with children at home amid a prevalent fear of the rapidly spreading virus.

Normally congested freeways in California were truly free — of traffic — and city streets remained mostly empty in areas usually bustling with cars, bikes, scooters and commuters emerging from rail stations and stopping at coffee shops and bakeries. Yosemite National Park closed to visitors Friday, the latest of California’s top tourist destinations to do so.

The governor’s effort to curb the pandemic in the nation’s most populous state was by far the most sweeping and was followed Friday by similar an-

nouncements in New York and Illinois.

Los Angeles County Health Director Barbara Ferrer urged people to stay home and only go out for essential needs. Those who have been tested and come back negative shouldn’t have a false sense of security.

Still, there were plenty of signs of life from employees still working, others taking advantage of allowable activities and some pushing the limits of the new rules.

Army recruiting force shifts to digital focus

By COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Army on Friday began closing the doors of its more than 1,400 recruiting stations across the nation in an effort to protect its recruiters from the fast-spreading coronavirus, service officials said.

The Army’s 10,000-plus recruiting force will shift to a

nearly 100% focus on digital operations via social media, phone calls, text messages and video chats for an indefinite period, U.S. Army Recruiting Command announced. Recruiters are expected to work almost exclusively from home while social distancing practices to contain the virus remain recommended by federal health officials, a spokeswoman for the command said.

Maj. Gen. Frank Muth, Recruiting Command chief, said he was confident the mission would not grind to a halt without face-to-face meetings with potential recruits. Muth has been among the leading advocates for Army recruiters to focus heavily on digital operations since the service fell short of its 2018 recruiting goal.

“We are very confident in our ability to operate in the

virtual space, as it has become a primary method of talking to potential soldiers in recent years,” Muth said Friday. “While face-to-face discussions are valuable when discussing options to serve in the U.S. Army, we are able to work around that, if necessary. Right now, I think that is necessary for the health and safety of our force and those around them.”

Lockdowns multiply as health care strained

Associated Press

BERLIN — Streets, squares and highways were deserted in large parts of the world Saturday as curfews and lockdowns multiplied in the face of a rapidly advancing virus that is severely straining many health systems.

Once-bustling outdoor plazas fell quiet in Bavaria after it became the first German state to tell people to stay home, except to go to work, buy food, visit the doctor or exercise. Police reported fewer people breaching the curfew than in previous nights.

Colombia became the latest South American country to announce a lockdown, and Sri Lanka closed all expressways for a weekend curfew.

The number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 recorded in Africa rose above 1,000 Saturday, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. At least 40 of Africa's 54 countries now have cases.

More than 275,000 cases have been confirmed globally, including over 11,000 deaths, according to a running tally by Johns Hopkins University. At least 88,000 have recovered.

But with hospitals already under pressure, officials in many countries are desperate to prevent — or at least limit — a repeat of what has happened in China and southern Europe. The coronavirus out-

Italy records biggest 24 hour rise in deaths

Associated Press

ROME — Italy has recorded its highest day-to-day-rise in the number of deaths of people infected with the new coronavirus.

Civil Protection Chief Angelo Borrelli said Friday the country recorded 627 more deaths in the 24 hours since Italy surpassed China on Thursday as the nation with the most COVID-19-related deaths. The total now stands at 4,032.

Authorities said most of the people who died had existing health problems such as heart disease and diabetes before they were infected with the virus.

Borrelli says Italy also saw a staggering increase of 5,986 cases from a day earlier, bringing the official total in Italy to 47,021.

The soaring numbers come despite a national lockdown that drastically limits when residents are allowed to leave their homes. Police have issued citations to thousands of people for being out and about without valid reasons, such as going to work or shopping for food.

Mayors and governors throughout the country have been demanding even stricter measures. Italy's national government is widely expected to respond soon.

break overwhelmed medical services in the central Chinese city of Wuhan earlier this year and now is pushing them to the limit in Italy and Spain.

Germany's southwestern state of Baden-Wuerttemberg on Saturday offered to take in patients from the neighboring region of eastern France that's struggling with a surge of infections overwhelming hospitals.

In Britain, which still lags

behind Italy, Spain and France in the spread of the virus, the country's overstretched health system is creaking. The state-funded National Health Service has about 4,000 critical-care beds and some 5,000 ventilators, and officials say that's far fewer than will be needed as the number of cases spikes in the coming weeks. Britain has asked 65,000 retired nurses and doctors to return to work.

Lisa Anderson, a consultant cardiologist at St George's Hospital in London, said "there is a lack of protection for us which extends to a lack of plan of how to segregate patients clean and dirty, how to protect us and keep us away from the public."

"Doctors have no faith in what is going on," she told the BBC.

Britain has recorded 3,983 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 177 deaths.

China has been sending aid to several European countries, promoting its expertise and experience gained from fighting the outbreak at home. An Air China flight carrying 18 tons of medical supplies including hundreds of thousands of surgical and protection masks landed in the Greek capital, Athens, Saturday.

As the pandemic has eased in Asia, China and other parts of the region are now trying to avoid importing cases from Europe, the U.S. and elsewhere.

China reported Saturday that its mainland had no new home-grown cases of the disease for the third straight day, but 41 imported ones in the previous 24-hour period. That followed a surge in cases in the territory of Hong Kong on Friday, including 35 imported ones.

Restrictions on movement are being eased gradually in China as it tries to restart the economy without bringing back the disease.

Jordan goes on lockdown as Iran's death toll mounts

Associated Press

AMMAN, Jordan — Air raid sirens echoed across Jordan's capital Saturday to mark the start of a three-day curfew, the latest mass lockdown in the Middle East aimed at containing the coronavirus, which has claimed another 123 lives in Iran, home to the region's worst outbreak.

The latest deaths bring Iran's overall toll to at least 1,556 amid 20,610 confirmed cases, according to figures released by the Health Ministry. Iran has faced widespread criticism for its lagging response to the outbreak, which has even infected and killed some senior officials.

In one of the strictest measures yet, Jordan has ordered all shops to close and all people to stay off the streets until at least Tuesday, when it plans to announce specific times for shopping. Anyone caught violating the curfew faces up to one year in prison.

Several countries in the Middle East have closed schools, universities and non-essential businesses. Many are threatening fines or jail time to those caught violating the decrees.

Egypt announced that all museums and archaeological sites, including the famed pyramids at Giza, would be closed from

Monday until the end of March. Mostafa Waziri, head of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, said authorities would sterilize all sites during the closure.

The council initially said the closure would begin Sunday before issuing a corrected statement.

Iran has been much slower to take action against the virus. It has urged people not to travel during the Persian New Year, a major national holiday, but many appear to be ignoring the guidance. Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said the number of cases has increased in many popular tourist destinations.

Vital but vulnerable, cleaners hold the line

Associated Press

NEW YORK — When hospitals need to prep a room for the next coronavirus test, when jetliners discharge their passengers at the gate, when suburbanites start to take sanitary precautions more seriously, the call goes out:

Send in the cleaners.

These largely unsung workers are often the first line of defense against the global COVID-19 pandemic, cleaning and disinfecting homes, offices, medical facilities and public spaces where the novel coronavirus could spread. But the people doing all this cleaning earn low wages, frequently lack sick leave and paid days off, and can be fired with no warning.

Amid all that is the constant fear that they could encounter the virus themselves, despite diligent precautions.

Shasmin Lewis, who spends her mornings doing office work for MaidPro in Philadelphia and her afternoons cleaning homes, says her hours have jumped almost 80% to 40 hours a week. She brings her own mask to work even though MaidPro provides both masks and gloves, washes her hands frequently and wears gloves

even when dusting.

“I’m very worried, but I plan on staying around until we can’t,” she said. Not only do her elderly customers need her help, she says, but like countless workers, she has enough savings to support her and two kids for about a month — even though she’s moving into management.

Overall demand for cleaning has been heavy. Airlines, including Delta and Southwest, added disinfecting measures on flights. Amtrak increased the frequency of cleaning services at trains and stations, in some cases on an hourly basis, and is using more disinfectant to wipe down handrails, door knobs and handles.

During the first two weeks of March, ads for cleaners were up 75% in the U.S. and 20% in the U.K. compared to a year ago, according to Ziprecruiter, an online job posting site.

But that’s starting to change as cities across the U.S. and Europe enter lockdown and schools, hotels, restaurants and other businesses shut down.

Last week, Zoraida Rodriguez was working overtime to keep the Bernard B. Jacobs theater clean for well-heeled Broadway enthusiasts. She and other custodial work-

ers were called in early and stayed late to help with deep cleaning, disinfecting door knobs, stair rails and anything else theatergoers might touch.

Now, Rodriguez is out of a job. Broadway theaters abruptly closed until at least April 12 and possibly beyond. At least 204 theaters and stadium service workers lost their jobs, according to the Service Employees International Union that represents them. There is no clear answer about whether they would get severance pay or any type of relief. Rodriguez was told to pick up her last paycheck this week.

Rodriguez, 53, has worked cleaning Broadway theaters for nearly 16 years, making \$20 an hour. She had health insurance, paid sick leave and vacation. Those benefits are gone, although SEIU is negotiating for some relief. For the moment, she says she’ll rely on unemployment benefits and her daughter’s salary from a New Jersey beauty salon — although salon hours are falling as customer traffic plummets.

“We really live paycheck to paycheck, and it is difficult for us to last a month without working,” Rodriguez says.

Amid pandemic, drive-in theaters find their moment

Los Angeles Times

Brenna Coogle frequented the Paramount Drive-In as a child growing up in Lakewood but hadn’t been there in about 30 years.

On Tuesday night, however, she visited it for the first time in decades to take in a showing of Pixar Animation Studios’ “Onward” with her 9-year-old son and friends.

Moments before previews began, Coogle stood near her car under a darkening sky and considered how the coronavirus had upended daily life. She said the widening pandemic made her feel she couldn’t go most places — including a conventional movie theater — and she yearned for a distraction.

“So, Day Two of home school, we are all cooped up in the house, and this was a way to go out and still be distant from other people but not at our house,” Coogle said.

Drive-in theaters have long

been viewed as an anachronistic diversion — perhaps worthy of an occasional visit, if that. Now, though, several among the country’s 305 drive-in theaters are experiencing a surge in interest amid the closure of other entertainment options because of social distancing efforts and governmental advisories during the coronavirus outbreak.

In interviews with The Times, owners of drive-ins in California, Kansas, Oklahoma and Missouri said that they remain open, with several reporting increases in business in recent days. Operators said they were mindful of restrictions on large gatherings and would close if a mandate required them to do so.

Ticket sales Tuesday at the two-screen Paramount Drive-In were “at least double” what they typically would be, said Beau Bianchi, whose family has owned the facility in Paramount since 1946. In all,

the drive-in — which offered a double feature on both of its screens — welcomed 136 cars and sold 320 tickets. The family’s neighboring 11-screen indoor cineplex closed Sunday, but Bianchi said he expects business to continue to grow at the drive-in.

“It has been a welcome relief for families and adults looking for a little getaway from the house,” Bianchi said. “We’ve been trying to let people know that we have a safe environment and (offer) a little escape.”

As the coronavirus spreads, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have recommended that events including 50-plus people not be held for the next eight weeks. And in situations where high-risk populations are involved, the organization has said gatherings of 10 or more people should be canceled. But some drive-in owners said they aren’t sure whether their theaters should

be considered gathering places. Doug Mercille, owner of the Starlite Drive-In in Cadet, Mo., said it’s a “gray area.”

Owners who are keeping their facilities open said that seeing a movie at a drive-in can require little to no human contact, largely because patrons are, of course, confined to their cars during the showing. And some operators have taken steps to minimize interaction among people, including shutting down or limiting their concessions.

At Paramount Drive-In, it was possible Tuesday to take in a film without ever leaving the car: the only contact with the theater’s staff came when buying a ticket from a gloved worker at a drive-up kiosk. After that, another worker, who also wore gloves, examined tickets near the entrance to the parking area and explained that vehicles should not be positioned directly next to one another.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man tries to elude cops, crashes car into church

NC BESSEMER CITY — A man led officers on a 30-mile police chase in a stolen vehicle before he crashed it into a church, police said.

Officers were trying to stop Dytalion Ny'Quan Degraffenreid, 22, for speeding, but he led police on a chase from Bessemer City to Charlotte, The Gaston Gazette reported.

According to Bessemer City police, Degraffenreid tried to turn into a Charlotte church parking lot but instead drove down an embankment, and a passenger inside the SUV fled. Police said Degraffenreid backed the SUV into a Bessemer City patrol car but crashed into a church after failing to make a turn.

Degraffenreid was being held in the Gaston County jail under a \$50,000 bond on multiple charges.

Driver hurt in head-on collision with snowplow

ND RAY — A 76-year-old North Dakota man driving a pickup the wrong way on a four-lane highway was seriously injured after running head-on into a snowplow, authorities said.

The crash happened about 4:15 a.m. on U.S. Highway 2 about 12 miles east of Ray. The Highway Patrol said the snowplow operator saw the pickup driver traveling eastbound in the westbound lanes and slowed to almost a complete stop before the collision.

The pickup driver, who lives in Ray, was taken to a Williston hospital. The snowplow driver, Wayne Lerohl, 56, was not injured.

The crash remains under investigation.

Man charged for killing after his keys taken

MI CHARLEVOIX — An 82-year-old northern Michigan man who was told he couldn't drive was charged in the fatal shooting of his daughter, authorities said.

The man's 77-year-old wife was also shot and survived at their home in Charlevoix County's Bay Township.

The man, whose name wasn't released, was charged with murder and attempted murder. His wife told police that he's in the early stages of dementia and was upset that car keys had been taken away.

Man accused of running cattle Ponzi scheme

SD RAPID CITY — A South Dakota man faces federal charges that he ran a multi-million-dollar cattle Ponzi scheme.

A federal grand jury indicted Robert Blom, 58, of Corsica on charges of wire fraud, mail fraud and money laundering. Blom pleaded not guilty to the indictment, U.S. Attorney for South Dakota Ronald Parsons said.

The indictment alleges that around January 2014 and continuing through February 2019, Blom devised a scheme to defraud investors. As part of his custom cattle-feeding business, Blom solicited investors for groups of cattle. After the cattle were sold, Blom paid profits to investors in the groups. But prosecutors allege Blom sold the same groups of cattle to multiple investors.

Prosecutors allege Blom sometimes altered the cattle purchase invoices to try to conceal that he sold the same group of cattle to different investors.

Ex-boyfriend stabbed in woman's home break-in

AL ATHENS — An Alabama woman's ex-boyfriend broke into her home and was stabbed by her new boyfriend, authorities said.

Timothy Steven Walters, 41, was in a hospital recovering from stab wounds but was expected to be charged with several counts once he's released, news outlets reported.

Walters violated a protection-from-abuse order when he broke into the woman's house, Limestone County Sheriff's Office spokesman Stephen Young said.

Walters assaulted the new boyfriend inside the home, and then the new boyfriend stabbed Walters with a pocketknife, Young said. Walters also assaulted the woman when she tried to render aid to him, the spokesman added.

Police funds cut after near-nude chief incident

NH CROYDON — A New Hampshire town that eliminated its one-man police department prompting the then-chief to disrobe to his underwear and walk into a snowstorm has voted to decrease its budget by over \$31,000.

Residents in the small town of Croydon voted to cut back appropriations for the now-scraped police department, the Valley News reported.

The town's three-member selectboard voted to get rid of the department and move to 100% coverage by the New Hampshire State Police.

Richard Lee, who had been chief for 20 years, was told to turn in the key to his cruiser, his guns and his uniform. He went into an office he shared with town officials and took off his clothes in front of the board chairman.

Man arrested for impersonation, scams

IL CHICAGO — A Berwyn man accused of claiming to be a state employee was arrested for allegedly scamming people of more than \$10,000, prosecutors said.

Hugo Torres, 47, approached at least four people when he impersonated a supervisor with the Illinois Secretary of State's office attempting to hire employees, according to the Illinois Attorney General's Office.

Prosecutors said Torres asked people to pay \$400 in cash for fake application fees for a job exam. They also said he claimed he could assist them with obtaining a driver's license or resolving traffic tickets in return for payment, the Chicago Sun-Times reported.

Torres was charged with a felony theft deception of over \$10,000 and theft by deception of over \$500, according to prosecutors.

Police: Suspects chain, try to drag away ATM

NC CHAPEL HILL — Authorities in North Carolina were searching for at least two suspects who were captured chaining an ATM to a stolen pickup and attempting to drag it away, according to officials.

Chapel Hill police officers responded to a Bank of America branch near the University of North Carolina where they found the fallen ATM damaged, town officials said in a statement. Police said it didn't appear any money was taken.

At least one suspect could be seen wearing a mask and carrying a crowbar, WNCN-TV reported.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES

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Commentary

Surely Brady knows he's starting over

Associated Press

Well, it's official now. Tom Brady is a Buccaneer. Sounds strange, doesn't it? Naturally, there's been a rush of excitement in the NFL backwater known as Tampa Bay, even amid the anxiety and uncertainty of the coronavirus outbreak.

But before they start ordering those Super Bowl rings, a dose of reality is in order.

Chances are, this won't end with a confetti and champagne shower — which is the extraordinarily high standard that Brady has set throughout his G.O.A.T. of a career.

We all know it's extremely rare for past-their-prime athletes to leave a longtime team and somehow find the Fountain of Youth elsewhere. For every Peyton Manning, there's a Babe Ruth or a Michael Jordan, a Willie Mays or a Joe Namath, a Hank Aaron or a Johnny Unitas.

But if expectations are kept at a reasonable level, this seismic shift in the NFL landscape could still go down as a

success.

Instead of championship-or-bust, the Bucs should be satisfied with playoffs-or-bust.

After nearly two decades in New England, Brady certainly recognizes that he's starting over at a point when most athletes have already hung it up.

"Excited, humble and hungry," he wrote Friday in an Instagram post that included a picture of him signing his new two-year, \$50 million contract — all of it guaranteed — in what appeared to be his kitchen. "If there is one thing I have learned about football, it's that nobody cares what you did last year or the year before that."

What Brady has done is beyond remarkable: six Super Bowl championships, 17 AFC East titles — including the last 11 in a row — and a record of 249-75 over nearly two decades as the Patriots' starting quarterback.

But even with his 43rd birthday approaching and his legacy more than secured, he's not satisfied.

The great ones never are.

That's surely why they tend

to hang on longer that they should. That's why Brady was willing to trade snowy New England for Florida's sunny Gulf Coast — and not as part of a retirement plan.

"You earn the trust and respect of those around through your commitment every single day," Brady wrote. "I'm starting a new football journey and thankful for the (Buccaneers) for giving me an opportunity to do what I love to do. I look forward to meeting all my new teammates and coaches and proving to them that they can believe and trust in me."

Brady is joining a woebegone franchise that ranks near the bottom of the league in attendance and hasn't won a single playoff game since capturing its lone Super Bowl title during the 2002 season.

In fact, the Bucs have made the postseason only two times since then, their last appearance coming 13 long years ago.

Only the woeful Cleveland Browns are in the midst of a longer playoff drought.

So, that's where the bar is set for Brady and his new team.

A playoff appearance should be judged a success. Winning a playoff game would be a bonus. And no one can deviate from the ultimate goal: setting this franchise on a course for long-term success before Brady hands off to a much-younger successor, whoever that may be.

The pieces are certainly in place to make that work.

Tampa Bay coach Bruce Arians is hailed for his offensive acumen, though he'll have to adjust his downfield passing philosophy to better suit Brady's possession-type style. The Bucs have a pair of Pro Bowl, 1,000-yard receivers in Chris Godwin and Mike Evans, which should be a welcome change for Brady after working last season with a New England offense that was desperately lacking in big-play weapons. Tight ends Cameron Brate and O.J. Howard add to Brady's potential arsenal. The offensive line is decent enough, and the Bucs may be able to pick off a few more additions in free agency merely by offering up the chance to play with the NFL's greatest quarterback ever.

Big catch: Saints add free-agent wide receiver Sanders

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Free-agent wide receiver Emmanuel Sanders has agreed to a two-year contract with the Saints, New Orleans general manager Mickey Loomis said Saturday.

The 5-foot-11 Sanders, who turns 33 next week, caught 36 passes for 502 yards and three touchdowns for the 49ers last season. He also started all three of San Francisco's postseason games, catching five passes for 71 yards.

His contract, first reported by ESPN, is said to be worth about \$16 million with bonuses that could push the total value as high as \$19 million.

The Saints struggled last

season to find consistent production from a receiver other than All-Pro Michael Thomas, who caught an NFL-record 149 passes for 1,725 yards and nine touchdowns.

Free agent Ted Ginn Jr., who turns 35 next month, ranked second among Saints receivers with 30 catches — behind running back Alvin Kamara (81), tight end Jared Cook (43) and running back Latavius Murray (34).

New Orleans may well have missed out on a top-two seeding in the past NFC playoffs because of their inability to defend Sanders in a 48-46 loss to San Francisco in early December.

Sanders caught seven passes in that game for 157 yards, in-

cluding a 75-yard touchdown. He also threw a 35-yard touchdown pass on a trick play. When the playoffs began a month later, New Orleans was seeded third despite being in a three-way tie with San Francisco and Green Bay for the NFC's best record at 13-3.

Also Friday:

■ Denver agreed to a two-year deal with former Chargers running back Melvin Gordon that is worth \$16 million with all but \$2.5 million guaranteed. Although his new deal is less than the \$10 million annually Gordon turned down from the Chargers during an unsuccessful holdout last season, it allows him to face his old team twice a year and to hit free agency

again in 2022 at age 28. His \$8 million annual salary also ranks fourth in the NFL among running backs.

■ Saints left guard Andrus Peat agreed to a five-year contract keeping him in New Orleans and virtually ensuring the entire 2019 starting offensive line will return. The deal is worth a total of \$57.5 million.

■ The Steelers added tight end Eric Ebron on a two-year deal, as well as guard Stefen Wisniewski, who won a Super Bowl with the Chiefs. And Pittsburgh made a rare in-division trade, acquiring backup defensive tackle Chris Wormley and a seventh-round pick from Baltimore for a fifth-round pick in this year's draft.

Mini golf tours playing through outbreak

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Anna Nordqvist drained a birdie putt on the second playoff hole, pumped her fist and gave a slight wave to a half-dozen people clapping near the green. The tournament title in hand, the two-time major champion turned to playing partner Lisa Pettersson and hesitated.

The customary post-round hug was out of the question, so the Swedish players touched elbows and walked off the green with a laugh.

The major golf tours may have shut down during the coronavirus outbreak, but a handful of mini tours are playing through.

“I’m sure there’s a lot of people questioning why we’re playing, but everyone is playing golf anyway,” Nordqvist said after winning a Cactus Tour event at Moon Valley Country Club on Friday. “Everyone got their own cart or they’re walking, you keep your distance and the golf course is a great place to be right now.”

The spreading coronavirus caused a ripple effect across the sports landscape as just about every major sport postponed or canceled events and seasons. The LPGA joined the fray, postponing tournaments scheduled through the end of April and pushing the ANA Inspiration, its first major of the season, to September.

The Cactus and Outlaw tours have pushed on in Arizona, which has among the fewest coronavirus cases in the United States with around 64.

The Outlaw Tour, a men’s tour with events across the Phoenix area, held a three-day tournament this week at Western Skies Golf Course in Gilbert. Jared de Toit, a PGA Tour Latinoamerica player, shot a final-round 59 on Thursday, but lost in a playoff to fellow Canadian Wil Bateman.

Nordqvist shot a final-round 66 at Moon Valley to tie Pettersson and won it with a roughly 12-foot birdie putt on the second playoff hole. England’s Holly Clyburn also won an Egglund’s

Best Tour event in Lake Mary, Fla., this week.

“It’s definitely strange, but we’re taking precautions,” Pettersson said.

The Cactus Tour’s Moon Valley stop featured a limited field of 27 players and had preventative measures in place to protect from the coronavirus.

All carts were sanitized before each of the three rounds, and those players who didn’t walk were limited to one per cart. The players were asked to space out on the course to follow social distancing guidelines and the post-round hugs often found in women’s golf were replaced by waves — and one last high-elbow.

Even the group photo at the end had social distancing; Cactus Tour director Mike Brown had the players stand arm’s length apart before taking the picture.

“We followed all the guidelines,” Brown said. “It’s safer for them for a chance of getting something doing what I did because they’re all individu-

als, not cramming into a golf cart right next to someone. But we’re obviously keeping an eye on how things go.”

The Cactus Tour has been an early stepping stone for LPGA players since its inception in 2005, holding women’s tournaments across the Southwest, primarily in Arizona. The tour has events scheduled through a tournament Aug. 3-5 in Beaumont, Calif.

The LPGA Tour’s U.S. schedule typically kicks into full gear in the spring, but now players are scrambling to find places to play.

Nordqvist led last week’s Outlaw Tour event — she was the only woman in the 56-player field — after an opening-round 64 before tying for 28th at Moon Valley. Nordqvist stayed in the Phoenix area and picked up a win worth \$2,000 on the Cactus Tour, where she hadn’t played since 2009.

“It’s been a rough stretch, obviously,” she said.

At least she and other players have a place to play — for now.

Tokyo Olympics

USA Swimming head urges USOPC to push for delay

Associated Press

DENVER — The head of USA Swimming urged the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee to push for a 12-month postponement of the Tokyo Games, signaling the first fissure between powerful American factions attempting to maneuver the U.S. team through the coronavirus crisis.

CEO Tim Hinchey sent a letter Friday to his counterpart at the USOPC, Sarah Hirshland, calling for the delay.

“Everyone has experienced unimaginable disruptions, mere months before the Olympic Games, which calls into question the authenticity of a level playing field for all,” Hinchey wrote. “Our athletes are under tremendous pres-

sure, stress and anxiety, and their mental health and wellness should be among the highest priorities.”

Only hours before receiving the letter, the USOPC leaders essentially repeated the IOC line — that while athlete safety would always be their top priority, it was too soon to employ drastic measures, and that they would press forward with logistical preparations for a July 24 start.

“The decision about the games doesn’t lie directly with us,” USOPC board chair Susanne Lyons said.

She and Hirshland showed no appetite for getting out front on the postponement issue, which is gaining more steam among athletes, some Olympic leaders and, now, one of America’s

most high-profile national governing bodies.

Left unsaid was the impact the USOPC’s voice could have in moving toward a postponement. In theory, no national Olympic federation has more power to alter the shape of an Olympics than the one in the U.S., which brings 550 athletes and its billion-dollar broadcaster, NBC, to the show every two years.

“We urge the USOPC, as a leader within the Olympic Movement, to use its voice and speak up for the athletes,” Hinchey wrote.

Other sports organizations were adding their voices.

Nic Coward, the chairman of UK Athletics in Britain, told BBC Sport that leaving the Olympic starting date un-

changed “is creating so much pressure in the system. It now has to be addressed.”

And the CEO of Swimming Canada, Ahmed El-Awadi, put out a statement saying: “We hold the opinions of our brothers and sisters at USA Swimming in high regard, and share many of the same concerns around health and safety.”

After the USA Swimming news, Hirshland and Lyons sent out a joint statement, emphasizing the multiple moving parts that are influencing any decision from the IOC, and looking ahead to an important IOC meeting next week, at which leaders will receive feedback from countries.

“Rest assured we are making your concerns clearly known to them,” the statement said.