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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Marines to eliminate tank battalions

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Marine Corps has decided it must eliminate its tank battalions and reduce its infantry and artillery units in 10 years as it converts its force to one more aligned with taking on potential adversaries such as China, the service announced Monday.

Marine Commandant Gen. David Berger said in October that the Marine Corps is “not optimized for great competition. It is not optimized to support a naval campaign.” The reality of the world has forced them to “throw out old assumptions and start fresh,” he said at the time.

Since summer, the Marine Corps has undergone a review of its personnel, units and equipment to determine what type of forces the service will need to fight future battles.

The Pentagon’s 2018 National Defense Strategy puts China and Russia as the major world powers that the United States must be prepared to challenge as America’s military advantages decline. The

economic policies of China and its militarization of the South China Sea and Russia’s efforts to undermine NATO and its nuclear arsenal are major concerns for the U.S. military, according to the National Defense Strategy.

“The Marine Corps is redesigning the 2030 force for naval expeditionary warfare in actively contested spaces, fully aligning the service with the direction of the [National Defense Strategy],” the service Combat Development Command said in a statement, adding it will continue to evaluate and adjust the force design.

The Marine unit categories that will see reductions in 10 years are:

- Infantry battalions, which will drop to 21 from 24.
- Artillery batteries, which will go to five down from 21
- Amphibious vehicle companies, which will go down to four from six.
- F-35B and F-35C Lightning II fighter squadrons, which will have fewer aircraft per unit, from 16 aircraft down to 10.

Tilt-rotor, attack, and heavy-lift squad-

rons will also have reductions and deactivations. The Marine Corps will eliminate its law enforcement battalions, units that build bridges and reduce the service personnel by 12,000 in 10 years, a less than 7% reduction in the service’s total force, according to the statement.

The reduction in units, equipment and personnel is geared toward the Marine Corps’ refocused efforts to work more closely with the Navy, especially in the Pacific region to compete against China.

The III Marine Expeditionary Force, based at Camp Courtney on Okinawa, Japan, is the main focus of Marine efforts in the region, according to the statement. The III MEF will be modernized to have three Marine littoral regiments that are trained and equipped to operate within contested maritime areas, according to the statement. The region will also have three Marine expeditionary units that are globally deployable. The other two Marine expeditionary force units will provide forces to the III MEF, according to the Marine Corps.

Navy hospital in Japan processing coronavirus tests

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Patients at Defense Department hospitals in Japan can expect quicker coronavirus results since Naval Hospital Yokosuka set up a lab last week to process tests, a U.S. Forces Japan official said Tuesday.

The lab at Yokosuka can provide results 5-6 hours after it receives the test, said Chief Master Sgt. Rick Winegardner, USFJ senior enlisted leader, during a virtual town hall with American Forces Network radio at Yokota Air Base.

Previously, base hospitals in Japan waited up to seven days for patient test results, the Yokosuka hospital commander, Capt. Drew Bigby, said in a video on USFJ’s Facebook page.

Tests were processed at Japanese hospitals, or flown to Tripler Army Medical Center in Hawaii, the Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention in Atlanta or Naval Medical Center San Diego for processing, said Dr. Andrew Fisher, an Air Force major and the public health emergency officer at Yokota, earlier this month.

Yokosuka started processing those test samples “about a week ago,” after specially trained medical staff were brought in to use specialized equipment, hospital spokeswoman Erika Figueroa told Stars and Stripes on Tuesday.

That capability should “dramatically increase the number of tests we can do daily in Japan and will speed the results,” USFJ spokeswoman Maj. Genieve White wrote Friday in an email to Stars and Stripes.

As the number of infections rise in the U.S., hospitals there are “quickly getting overwhelmed with the amount of testing required,” Winegardner said Tuesday. Processing tests in Yokosuka should help relieve some of that pressure.

Military hospitals in Japan have tested

more than 100 service members, DOD civilians and families since testing began about six weeks ago, Winegardner said. As of Tuesday morning, none had tested positive.

Testing is not unlimited. Coronavirus tests are administered after the subject has been screened and signed off by a physician.

The Yokosuka lab can process “a little under 40 tests a day — and that’s coming from all over USFJ,” Winegardner said.

“When somebody thinks they might have it or they’re starting to exhibit symptoms, you are still going to call the doc,” he said in the town hall. “The doc is going to say what protocols you’ll need to do and then they will make the decision if you’re going to come in and get tested.”

Physicians use CDC guidelines to screen patients for testing, White wrote in her email.

Coalition bases in Afghanistan confirm 4 cases of coronavirus

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan—Four service members in Afghanistan have tested positive for the coronavirus while being held in a screening facility after arriving in the country, military officials said Tuesday.

The four were isolated and tested after they showed symptoms of the disease caused by the virus. Officials were working to identify and quarantine anyone they might have been in contact with, NATO's Resolute Support mission said in a statement. The nationalities of the service members and other details were being held pending approved release from "national authorities," Resolute Support said.

More than 16,000 troops from 39 countries are deployed as part of the mission to train, advise and assist Afghan forces. About half are American. Thousands more U.S. service members are also deployed to the country under a separate counterterrorism mission, but the U.S. has begun drawing down its overall numbers to 8,600 troops.

About 1,500 Resolute Support military and civilian personnel, most of whom arrived in Afghanistan in recent weeks, are living in screening facilities as a precautionary measure. At least 38 people were exhibiting flu-like symptoms and were being treated in isolation, the statement said.

Resolute Support had also temporarily halted incoming personnel, it said last week, after announcing measures taken to prevent the spread of the virus, such as increased use of teleconferences to advise Afghan forces.

U.S. Central Command has since instituted a two-week quarantine for all U.S. and allied personnel before they deploy to the Middle East, to reduce potential strain on forward deployed medical facilities.

"Resolute Support is implementing every available control measure to prevent the spread

of the virus," the statement said Tuesday. "We are closely monitoring, continually assessing and adjusting our operations so we can continue to protect our force."

The measures were taken after some U.S. lawmakers voiced concern that U.S. troops in Afghanistan were not properly protected from the pandemic, which has spread rapidly in neighboring countries. It shares a porous border with Iran, which has been among the countries hardest hit by the virus, leading thousands of Afghans to return home.

As of Tuesday, 74 Afghans in 12 provinces had been diagnosed with the virus, many after having recently traveled outside the country, health officials said. However, the only confirmed fatality from the disease was a 40-year-old man with no recent travel history.

Limited testing — fewer than 400 tests so far — could account for the relatively low number of confirmed cases, a United Nations report said Monday.

In light of the pandemic, Afghan and Taliban officials were expected to carry out a video call Tuesday to keep alive a fragile peace process. Last month, the U.S. and Taliban signed an agreement aimed at initiating internal Afghan peace talks and leading to the full withdrawal of foreign forces by the end of summer 2021.

Returning from a surprise visit to Kabul on Monday, after failing to persuade rival leaders President Ashraf Ghani and former Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah to form a unified administration, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced \$1 billion in cuts to annual aid to the country, as well as a potential \$1 billion reduction next year, under a broader review of U.S. support. But Washington wasn't abandoning the country, Pompeo said.

"To illustrate America's steadfast commitment to the Afghan people, the United States will be providing \$15 million in assistance to help combat the spread of the coronavirus in Afghanistan," he said.

Army command in Europe imposes coronavirus curfew

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — One of the largest U.S. Army commands in Europe has placed thousands of soldiers, family members, civilians and contractors within its area of responsibility under a 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew, in an effort to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

The curfew, believed to be the first imposed on defense personnel and their families in Europe because of the pandemic, was included in a general order signed Monday by Maj. Gen. Christopher O. Mohan, commander of the Kaiserslautern-based 21st Theater Sustainment Command.

"Here's the bottom line," Mohan said in a video announcing the curfew and other, tighter restrictions. "If you're not at work, at a doctor's appointment, picking up groceries, getting gas or picking up food from some limited takeout facilities, you need to be at home. From 2200 to 0500, we need you either at work or at home."

The order applies to commands on installations within the 21st TSC's footprint, a spokesman for the command said Tuesday. Mohan is the senior officer for Army installations within U.S. Army Garrison Rheinland-Pfalz, U.S. Army Garrison Benelux, Kosovo, Romania and Bulgaria.

People can go out at night for three reasons only — official travel, medical emergencies and pet care, Mohan said.

Troops found violating the order could face administrative action or punishment under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, the order said.

Those who don't fall under the UCMJ who violate the order could lose logistical support,

access to government housing, be banned from entering U.S. installations or be ordered to return to the U.S., the order said.

The order also bars soldiers living on and off base from traveling more than 18.6 miles from their residence unless they're going to work or another military installation, a grocery store, medical appointment, pharmacy, bank, maintaining or fueling a vehicle, picking up takeout food or doing laundry.

Outdoor exercise is authorized within the same radius outside curfew hours, as long as it is conducted away from areas with a lot of people and either alone or with household members.

Soldiers living in barracks must "generally remain in their room or shared barracks suite," but may leave "for the same reasons, to go to the same places" — grocery stores, banks and the like, it said. Only the residents may be inside a barracks room or suite, and social distancing must be observed in communal areas, it said.

Laundry machines must be sanitized after each use. Block parties are out, the order said.

Extra patrols on base or in neighborhoods won't be called on to enforce the general order, said Master Sgt. Dan Bailey, a 21st TSC spokesman, but if "you were to get caught and something were to occur, you could be held accountable."

"We expect our personnel to do what's right," he said. "This is about trying to protect our people, keep them safe and healthy ... and ultimately, we'll hopefully flatten the curve."

Other commanders in Europe have issued similar general orders, but none, either in the Army or Air Force, have included curfews.

UN: 85% of new cases, deaths are in Europe, US

Associated Press

BERLIN — The World Health Organization said Tuesday that it has counted more than 395,000 total coronavirus cases globally, including 17,000 deaths. More than 103,000 have recovered from the virus, mostly in China.

Overnight reporting showed that 85% of the new cases are being reported in Europe and the United States, said Dr. Margaret Harris, a WHO spokeswoman.

Harris said that “in fact the outbreak is accelerating very rapidly and the case numbers we received overnight will put that up considerably.”

Spain began storing bodies in an ice rink converted into a makeshift morgue, as virus deaths rose in the country.

As virus deaths mounted and Americans hoped for some economic relief from their divided government, health officials and leaders warned that the world was entering a critical pe-

riod that would determine just how deeply the pandemic slices through their nations.

While Chinese authorities said that they would finally end a two-month lockdown in hard-hit Hubei province where the outbreak first began, nations in Europe, North America and elsewhere pressed harder to enforce the stay-at-home restrictions placed on 1.5 billion people worldwide.

“We are not helpless bystanders,” said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, noting that it took 67 days to reach 100,000 cases worldwide but just four days to go from 200,000 to 300,000. “We can change the trajectory of this pandemic.”

One viral social media video showed Italian mayors, sometimes profanely, berating their citizens for not staying inside.

It appears that it will be soon that the U.S., which on Monday had a total of more than 46,000 infections and 530 deaths from the virus, overtakes hard-hit Italy in the number of infec-

tions. Authorities have said that the U.S. is on track to eventually overtake China’s nearly 82,000 infections, and how soon that happens depends on how seriously Americans take the stay-at-home restrictions.

In New York, Gov. Andrew Cuomo sounded his most dire warning yet about the pandemic, saying that the infection rate in New York is accelerating and the state could be as close as two weeks away from a crisis that projects 40,000 people in intensive care.

Such a surge would overwhelm hospitals, which now have just 3,000 intensive care unit beds statewide.

On the other side of the world, India will begin the world’s largest lockdown.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced it in a TV address Tuesday night, warning that anyone going outside risked inviting the coronavirus inside their homes. He pledged \$2 billion to bolster the country’s beleaguered health care system.

More than 8,000 Guard members deployed

By ROSE L. THAYER

Stars and Stripes

More than 8,000 members of the National Guard, including some through federal funding, are working in all 50 states and four U.S. territories to help control the spreading coronavirus pandemic, which has now infected more than 41,500 Americans, the National Guard Bureau reported Monday.

President Donald Trump announced Sunday that National Guard members activated in California, New York and Washington have been deployed under a federal status known as Title 32, which allows governors to continue to have control of the troops with funding coming from the federal government.

“In this case, it was the governors who asked the president for the authorization to do this,” Air Force Gen. Joseph Lengyel, chief of the National Guard Bureau, said during a Sunday evening news conference. Governors and adjutants general know what the needs are in their states, he said.

The authorization will “help with unity and speed of response,” Lengyel said, likening the coronavirus to a hurricane hitting all 54 states and territories at once.

Activating the National Guard costs about \$8 to \$9 million per 1,000 service members, depending on how many troops are activated and the duration of their duty, Lengyel said.

The federal status also helps the troops deployed in those states, because it makes them eligible for Tricare health insurance, education benefits and adds to their retirements, Lengyel said.

States with the largest number of activated troops include New York with 1,800, Maryland with more than 1,500 and Florida with 1,062.

10th USFK case spurs new restrictions

By KIM GAMEL

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — A U.S. military contractor working at Eighth Army headquarters on Camp Humphreys has tested positive for the coronavirus, prompting new on-base restrictions to prevent complacency after more than a month of near confinement for members of the military community.

The latest infection — the 10th case linked to U.S. Forces Korea — underscored the community’s vulnerability despite strict limitations on access and movement aimed at forming what commanders call “protective bubbles” to try to stop the coronavirus from spreading on bases across the divided peninsula.

Officials further tightened restrictions in a bid to prevent people from letting their guard down too soon as the overall pace of infections in South Korea has started to slow. Only 76 new cases were logged Tuesday, down from a high of 909 on

Feb. 29. In total, 9,037 people have tested positive for the virus in the country.

Beginning Wednesday, on-post restaurants will be takeout only and chairs will be removed from the facilities to ensure compliance, Col. Michael Tremblay said, adding that no more group physical training will be allowed in the gyms.

Only one U.S. soldier has been infected with the virus in South Korea. Other cases were his wife, three other military dependents, four South Korean employees and, now, the military contractor.

The American patients are still under medical care but doing well. They are being tested to determine next steps, USFK spokesman Col. Lee Peters said.

The contractor was the second person at Camp Humphreys, the largest U.S. base in South Korea, to be infected. The other nine were on bases in the southeastern city of Daegu and surrounding areas that were at the center of the outbreak in South Korea.

US, UAE troops hold exercise amid pandemic

Associated Press

AL-HAMRA MILITARY BASE, United Arab Emirates — U.S. Marines and Emirati forces held a major military exercise Monday that saw forces seize a sprawling model Mideast city, a drill conducted amid tensions with Iran and despite the new coronavirus pandemic.

Troops raced over the dunes of the Al-Hamra Military Base to take the model city, complete with multistory buildings, an airport control tower, an oil refinery and a central mosque. Controlled explosions rang out as Emirati troops rappelled from hovering helicopters and Marines searched for “enemy” forces in narrow streets on the Persian Gulf.

The biennial exercise, called Native Fury, shows the close ties between American forces

and the UAE, a federation of seven sheikhdoms on the Arabian Peninsula home to Abu Dhabi, the capital, and Dubai, its financial heart.

It also comes after the U.S. killed Iran’s most prominent general in a drone strike in January, and Tehran retaliated with a ballistic missile attack on American forces in Iraq. While acknowledging the tensions, U.S. officials dismissed the idea of Tehran viewing such an exercise with suspicion, only some 185 miles from its shores.

“Provocative? I don’t know,” said Brig. Gen. Thomas Savage of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, the ranking U.S. commander at the event. “We’re about stability in the region. So if they view it as provocative, well, that’s up to them. This is just a normal training exercise

for us.”

The exercise saw 4,000 U.S. troops from the Army, Marines and Navy position armored vehicles and other equipment from Kuwait and the island of Diego Garcia in al-Hamra using a portable pier system. The barren desert, some 125 miles southwest of Abu Dhabi, is home to the UAE’s vast oil reserves as well as its new Barakah nuclear power plant.

Emirati military officials at the base in al-Hamra on Monday declined to speak to Associated Press journalists. U.S. Ambassador John Rakolta Jr., on hand for the event, praised the UAE.

“Partnerships are based on many aspects, many fundamentals, and this happens just one of them,” he said when asked about Yemen. “Trust is a huge, huge factor. Transpar-

ency, common values all work into a partnership.”

Rakolta also described the exercise as “defensive in nature” when asked about Iran.

“I don’t believe that they’re intended to demonstrate a provocative act to the Iranians to say we’re coming,” he said. “Rather, we’re protecting ourselves and we want to sit down at the conference table and negotiate a lasting peace settlement.”

There was no immediate reaction in Iranian state media.

Also a concern is the ongoing outbreak of the new coronavirus. Rakolta said that no U.S. diplomat in the UAE had contracted the virus. Savage said that those U.S. forces involved had had little contact with the outside world after shipping out for the event and none had tested positive since.

Campaign themes for both parties upended

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The coronavirus pandemic and the nation’s crashing economy are scrambling the themes both major political parties thought would carry them to victory in November for control of the White House and Congress.

Shattered, certainly for now, is President Donald Trump’s ability to tout a brawny economy and record stock market prices as the predicate for his reelection. The GOP could face a hard time calling Democratic candidates socialists with a straight face as Congress works on a bipartisan, nearly \$2 trillion rescue package that would essentially have government drive the economy indefinitely.

Democrats have said that they’re the party that will protect people’s health care, but it’s unclear that would be heard by people focused mostly on when life will return to normal. And by pounding away at Trump’s competence, they’d risk alien-

ating voters who want policymakers to produce solutions, not partisan wrangling.

“We’re in the middle of a hurricane. We don’t know all the political consequences. We don’t know if it’s a Cat 1 or a Cat 5,” said GOP consultant Matt Mackowiak.

Trump has seized public attention with almost daily briefings about the government’s response to the pandemic. That’s left former Vice President Joe Biden, the likely Democratic presidential nominee, and his party’s congressional candidates searching for ways to break into the news cycle.

GOP operatives said that Republican candidates must emphasize rallying behind the effort to battle the twin crises.

“The message is, ‘We all need to come together, support the president and vice president and do all we can to fight the virus,’” Republican strategist John Feehery said. “Throw everything else out the window.”

House considers voting options amid outbreak

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — With at least two members of the House testing positive for COVID-19, Democrats are recommending that they pass a nearly \$2 trillion economic rescue package by unanimous consent, meaning that no lawmakers would have to be present for the vote.

If that doesn’t work — only one member has to object to stop it — then House Democrats said that there are other options for voting from afar, including proxy votes that could see a handful of members casting votes for others. The options were discussed in a new report commissioned by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and released late Monday evening.

One option Democrats are taking off the table: remote electronic voting. The report, written by House Rules Committee Chairman James McGovern, D-Mass., determined that there were too many security concerns in addition to

logistical and technical challenges in the middle of the public health crisis.

The simplest route is the most obvious: passing the legislation by voice vote or unanimous consent, neither of which requires the full House to be present. The report said that this is “by far the best option” — using existing House rules and practices. It could be derailed, however, if even one member on the floor objects.

Under the proxy proposal, a member of the House could be allowed to designate a colleague to vote for them in the event that they are unable to return to Washington amid the coronavirus outbreak. If there are objections to a unanimous consent vote, the report said, proxy voting “is likely the best of the options available under the circumstances.”

Proxy voting would require a rules change but could be quickly adopted if there were universal support for the idea, according to the report.

US to cut aid if Afghan infighting ruins pact

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Washington's unprecedented threat to cut \$1 billion in Afghanistan funding — a response to the refusal of rivals in Kabul to work together to advance peace — comes at a time when the impoverished nation risks being overwhelmed by the coronavirus pandemic.

On Tuesday both President Ashraf Ghani and his rival, former Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, blamed one another for failing to resolve the feuding, which prompted U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to threaten the massive funding cut.

Pompeo called out the two leaders as he ended a rushed visit to Afghanistan on Monday, defying a near-global travel ban because of the virus. He left Kabul without being able to secure a power-sharing deal.

Ghani told the nation in a televised address that Abdullah's power-sharing demands were unconstitutional. For his part, Abdullah said Pompeo's visit was a missed opportunity.

Pompeo said the Trump administration would slash \$1 billion in assistance to Af-

ghanistan and reduce all cooperation unless Ghani and Abdullah agree on forming a new government.

Speaking to reporters aboard his plane on the return flight home, Pompeo said he was hopeful the two rivals "will get their act together and we won't have to" cut the assistance.

"But we're prepared to do that," he said.

Earlier, he said Ghani and Abdullah's "leadership failure poses a direct threat to U.S. national interests." Apart from reducing assistance by \$1 billion this year, another \$1 billion will be cut in 2021 if the bickering continued, Pompeo said.

Ghani seemed unfazed, though his government covers barely 25% of its budget, according to John Sopko, the U.S. Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. More than 75% of all expenses, including the running of government ministries, is covered by the international community.

Sopko's regular reports have also criticized the Afghan government for widespread corruption and Transparency International has ranked Afghanistan among the most corrupt at 173 out of 180 countries. The United States alone pays \$4

billion annually toward Afghanistan's security forces.

"I can assure you that the reduction of the U.S. assistance would not have a direct impact on the system," Ghani said in his speech.

From Kabul, Pompeo flew to the Persian Gulf to meet with a leader of the Taliban, the Afghan insurgent group that last month signed a peace deal with the U.S. as a first step toward withdrawing American troops from Afghanistan by mid-2021.

As part of the deal, rival factions in Afghanistan were to come together in all-Afghan talks about shaping the country's future. However, Washington made clear from the start that the pace of a U.S. troop withdrawal is linked to the Taliban clamping down on terror groups and aiding in the fight against the militant Islamic State group — not on the success of intra-Afghan talks. After meeting chief Taliban negotiator Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar in Qatar, Pompeo told reporters he was satisfied the Taliban were keeping their side of the deal, had reduced violence and were ready to start negotiations with the leadership in Kabul.

Congress close to \$2 trillion deal for virus aid package

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Top congressional and White House officials said they expected to reach a deal Tuesday on a nearly \$2 trillion measure aimed at easing the economic damage inflicted by the coronavirus pandemic.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and congressional leaders engaged in final negotiations after a tumultuous but productive day on Monday. While the two sides have resolved many issues in the sweeping package, some final sticking points remained at press time.

Ravaged in recent days, stocks climbed as negotiators signaled a resolution was in sight.

At issue is an unprecedented economic rescue package that would give direct payments to most Americans, expanded unemployment benefits, and a \$350 billion program for small

businesses to keep making payroll while workers are forced to stay home. A point of contention has been \$500 billion for guaranteed loans to larger industries.

The one-time rebates are about \$1,200 per person, or \$3,000 for a family of four.

Hospitals could get up to \$200 billion for the expected influx of sick patients, said Mnuchin.

Opening the Senate on Tuesday, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell combined optimism about the chances for a deal with frustration at the delays — and a sober view of the crisis at hand.

"The urgency and the gravity of this moment cannot be lost on anyone," he said. "It's the most serious threat to Americans' health in over a century and quite likely the greatest risk to America's jobs and prosperity that we've seen since the Great Depression."

Pandemic doesn't deter rollbacks by agencies

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration is rejecting appeals to slow its deregulatory drive while Americans grapple with the coronavirus, pushing major public health and environmental rollbacks closer to enactment in recent days despite the pandemic.

As Americans stockpiled food and medicine and retreated indoors and businesses shuttered in hopes of riding out COVID-19, federal agencies in recent days moved forward on rollbacks that included a widely opposed deregulatory action by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The proposed rule would require disclosure of the data behind any scientific study used in the rulemaking process. That includes confidential medical records opponents say could be used to identify people.

The EPA says the rule, first

introduced in 2018, is designed to increase transparency. But early drafts drew more than a half-million comments, most of them in opposition. Health experts say it would handcuff federal officials' ability to regulate proven health threats in the future, by making it impossible for regulators to draw on findings of public health studies.

The EPA has dismissed demands from 14 attorneys general, the National Governors Association, the National League of Cities and dozens of other government, public health and environmental groups and officials that it at least tap the brakes on that proposed rule while officials confront "the national emergency that arises from the COVID-19 pandemic."

EPA spokeswoman Enesta Jones said the agency is "open and continuing our regulatory work as usual."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Train helps rescue hiker after 200-foot fall

NH BRETTON WOODS — A hiker descending Mount Washington who was severely injured in a 200-foot fall was rescued with the help of the Cog Railway train that takes visitors up and down the summit during tourism season.

New Hampshire Fish and Game conservation officers said that the hiker, Ashley Furness, 35, of Bartlett, was with a companion Sunday afternoon when she slipped and fell, striking several rocks. She was descending along the railway tracks and was about 2 miles up from the railway station.

Her companion called for help and kept her warm with a blanket after descending to where she landed. It took hours for rescuers to reach her due to the steep, icy terrain and remote location. The Cog Railway prepared a train, which reached her and returned to a waiting ambulance at the base around 11 p.m. Sunday.

Man shot after bringing gun into county jail

FL ORLANDO — A man who held three people captive while being booked into the Orange County Jail in Orlando on Saturday night was shot in the shoulder by deputies and officers.

Eric Jefferson Stanley, 25, was taken to a hospital for treatment, Orange County Sheriff John Mina said. Stanley is facing multiple felony charges.

Mina told news outlets that Stanley was arrested with one other person on drug charges Saturday. He slipped off the flex cuffs he was restrained with and pulled a gun. Officials didn't say how he got the gun inside the booking area.

Mina said Stanley pointed the gun at a corrections officer.

He shot at the jail nurse when she tried to run away. Then officers shot at him from outside, hitting him in the shoulder.

Orville Wright bust back in place at memorial

NC KILL DEVIL HILLS — The bust of aviation pioneer Orville Wright is back on a pedestal next to the memorial honoring his and his brother's achievements more than a century ago.

The National Park Service said the bust and the granite base damaged during a theft in October have been repaired, The News & Observer of Raleigh reported. The bust was placed back atop the base at the foot of Wright Brothers National Memorial Park last Friday.

A similar bust remains on the other side of the memorial in the likeness of Wilbur Wright. It was at Kill Devil Hills that the brothers conducted their powered air flight with a pilot aboard on Dec. 17, 1903.

The park service said last fall that the granite base on which the Orville Wright bust was mounted had been toppled and damaged. The bust was located a few days later tucked in some sand dunes.

Kids removed from home with suspected meth lab

MA FOXBOROUGH — Four young children have been removed from a Foxborough home, and two people will face charges after authorities said that they uncovered a suspected methamphetamine lab.

Police removed the children while serving a search warrant at the home Sunday, state fire officials said. The children were taken to a hospital for evaluation.

Officials said the arrests are the result of months of investigation by the Massachusetts

State Police's Clandestine Lab Enforcement Team. The team is made up of detectives, chemists and bomb squad technicians who work with officials at the state's Department of Fire Services.

\$10K reward for tips on killer of whooping crane

LA NEW ORLEANS — The reward for information leading to the person or people responsible for killing an endangered whooping crane has increased to \$10,000, according to wildlife officials in Louisiana.

Donations doubled a reward offered earlier, according to a news release from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

The 1½-year-old crane's body was found Nov. 15 in a rice and crawfish field in the town of Elton in Jefferson Davis Parish. A necropsy determined that it had been shot that day or the previous day. Whooping cranes are among the world's most endangered birds.

Threats against judges lands man back in jail

FL FORT LAUDERDALE — Broward Sheriff's officials said that a South Florida man went before a judge for the third time in a week for threatening county judges.

Records showed that Todd Edward Watson, 56, is being held in the Broward County Jail without bond on several charges that include aggravated stalking. According to his latest arrest report Saturday, Watson twice left "obscene, filthy, vulgar, indecent and threatening" voicemails on the phones of three judges, in violation of the terms of his probation.

"This is the third time I've arrested him," said Detective Joseph Kessler at a court

hearing Wednesday. "He basically has been terrorizing the judges and their families here in the Broward County courthouse for several years."

Felon poses with gun on Facebook, gets jail time

MT MISSOULA — A convicted felon has been sentenced to a year in federal prison after his probation officer saw a picture of him holding guns on a sporting goods company's Facebook page, the U.S. Attorney's Office said.

Brandon Richmond Turner, 29, of Missoula, had been sentenced for a felony in Lake County in January 2017 and was prohibited from possessing firearms, prosecutors said.

His probation officer saw the image last June. Turner admitted he retrieved his rifle and a pistol from a friend, who was keeping his guns after his conviction.

Turner pleaded guilty in December to being a felon in possession of a firearm and was sentenced Friday.

Court mulls ongoing education for judges

MI LANSING — The Michigan Supreme Court is seeking public comment on a proposal to require annual education courses for judges.

The court said that the goal is to ensure proficiency about current law, integrity on the bench and administrative skills. Judges would be required to fulfill a minimum of 12 hours of continuing education each year.

Justice Richard Bernstein said that ongoing education is a good goal. But he said he's also concerned that a mandatory program would turn into a hardship for an "already burdened judiciary."

From wire reports

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Tokyo Olympics postponed until 2021

Associated Press

TOKYO — The IOC announced a first-of-its-kind postponement of the Summer Olympics on Tuesday, bowing to the realities of a coronavirus pandemic that is shutting down daily life around the globe and making planning for a massive worldwide gathering in July a virtual impossibility.

The International Olympic Committee said the Tokyo Games “must be rescheduled to a date beyond 2020, but not later than summer 2021, to safeguard the health of the athletes, everybody involved in the Olympic Games and the international community.”

It was an announcement seen as all but a certainty as pressure mounted from nervous athletes, sports organizations and national Olympic committees — all confronting the reality that training and qualifying schedules, to say nothing of international anti-doping protocols, had been ruptured beyond repair.

Four-time Olympic hockey champion Hayley Wickenheiser, the first IOC member to criticize the body’s reluctance to postpone, called it the “message athletes deserved to hear.”

“To all the athletes: take a breath, regroup, take care of yourself and your families. Your time will come,” she wrote on Twitter.

IOC President Thomas Bach and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe met via phone Tuesday morning, and they, along with a handful of executives from the IOC and Japan’s organizing committee, agreed to make the call.

Other Olympics — 1916, 1940 and 1944 — have been canceled because of war, but none have ever been postponed for any reason, let alone a renege virus that has accounted for more than 375,000 cases worldwide, with numbers growing exponentially. The Tokyo Games will still be called the 2020 Olympics, even though they will be held in 2021.

“The leaders agreed that the Olympic Games in Tokyo could stand as a beacon of hope,” the IOC said in a statement.

The decision offers a sense of relief for athletes, who no longer have to press forward with training under near-impossible conditions, unsure of when, exactly, they need to be ready — and for what.

“Thankful to finally have some clarity regarding The Olympic Games. A huge decision but I think the right one for sure,” British sprinter Adam Gemili said on Twitter. “Time to regain, look after each other during this difficult period and go again when the time is right!”

One reason the IOC took longer to make the decision was because it wanted to figure out logistics. It will be a daunting challenge. Many of the arenas, stadiums and hotels are under contract for a games held from July 24-Aug. 7. Remaking those arrangements is doable, but will come at a cost. Tokyo has already spent a reported \$28

billion to stage the games.

There’s also the matter of the international sports schedule. Virtually all 33 sports on the Olympic program have key events, including world championships, on the docket for 2021. Perhaps the best example of what a disruption this can cause would come from track. Famous Hayward Field at the University of Oregon was rebuilt and expanded at a cost of \$200 million to hold next year’s world championships. Now that event could be postponed, canceled or see its stature greatly diminished if it’s run within months of a rescheduled Olympics.

“A lot can happen in one year, so we have to think about what we have to do,” said Toshiro Muto, the CEO of the organizing committee. “The decision came upon us all of a sudden.”

But for weeks, it was becoming increasingly clear that pressing on with a July 24 starting date was no longer a choice.

NFL briefs

Cowboys center Frederick retires, cites level of play

Associated Press

Travis Frederick said he thought he played well at center for the Dallas Cowboys after returning from a nerve disorder that sidelined him for an entire season.

The 2016 All-Pro made it clear Monday it wasn’t good enough.

Frederick retired from the NFL at 29, saying he “could no longer perform at my highest level” even though he went to his fifth Pro Bowl in his only season after recovering from Guillian-Barre syndrome.

“Each day, I faced a struggle: I could no longer perform at my highest level,” Frederick wrote in a long statement posted on Twitter and released by the team. “Playing ‘well’ is not

what I expect of myself and not what my teammates deserve. Because of this, I know my days as a football player are done.”

A first-round pick seven years ago, Frederick missed all of 2018 after getting diagnosed with the auto-immune disease during training camp.

Giants reach deals with Lewis, Coleman

The New York Giants have reached agreements on one-year contracts with running back Dion Lewis and wide receiver Corey Coleman.

Lewis spent the past two seasons with the Tennessee Titans. He was released earlier this month in a salary-cap move. Playing behind Derrick

Henry, he carried 54 times for 209 yards.

Previously, Lewis played three seasons in New England and his first two with Philadelphia.

Lewis has rushed for 2,310 yards and 11 touchdowns and caught 172 passes for 1,281 yards and seven scores in his seven seasons.

Coleman missed all of 2019 with a knee injury sustained in training camp. He was a 2016 first-round draft choice by the Cleveland Browns.

Seahawks acquire CB Dunbar from Redskins

RENTON, Wash. — The Seattle Seahawks have finally addressed one of their defensive

needs. No, it had nothing to do with Jadeveon Clowney or the pass rush.

Seattle landed some needed depth in the secondary by acquiring cornerback Quinton Dunbar from the Washington Redskins for a fifth-round pick Monday, according to a person with knowledge of the move.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because the deal had not been announced. ESPN first reported the trade.

The move could end up being another trade steal for John Schneider and the Seahawks as they attempt to upgrade the secondary. Seattle had a need for cornerback depth and Dunbar should instantly jump into the competition as a potential starter.

Dayton's Toppin voted AP player of year

Associated Press

Obi Toppin and Anthony Grant spent the season transforming Dayton from an unranked team that wasn't even picked to win its conference into one of the nation's best, complete with the most wins in program history.

The pair behind the Flyers' remarkable rise claimed The Associated Press' top individual honors: Toppin is the men's college basketball player of the year and Grant is the coach of the year.

"Our team is very appreciative of what we accomplished," Toppin told the AP, "just because we made history at our school."

Indeed. Dayton (29-2) went from being picked to finish third in the Atlantic 10 to No. 3 in the final Top 25 poll, matching the program's best poll finish, first set in 1956. The Flyers went unbeaten in league play and in road games, leaving them positioned to claim a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament that was canceled amid concerns about the coronavirus pandemic.

Now Dayton has its first win-

ners of the AP's top awards, joining St. Joseph's in 2004 (with Jameer Nelson and coach Phil Martelli) as the only programs in the past 40 seasons to claim both in the same year.

"In the 31 games that we played, our guys did a heck of a job of playing consistent and taking advantage of the opportunities that were in front of us," Grant said. "What we did accomplish in the shortened season is something I think that hopefully will be remembered."

The 6-foot-9, 220-pound Toppin followed his unanimous selection to the AP All-America first team by appearing on 34 of 65 ballots from Top 25 voters, who submitted ballots after the cancellation of the NCAA Tournament.

Iowa junior Luka Garza was second in the balloting, earning 24 votes after averaging 23.9 points and 9.8 rebounds for the Hawkeyes. Fellow All-Americans Markus Howard of Marquette, Payton Pritchard of Oregon and Udoka Azubuike of Kansas split the remaining votes.

It wasn't that long ago that Toppin was a 6-foot-2 high

school junior who had never dunked in a game and then a senior lacking any Division I scholarship offers, sending him to prep school before ending up at Dayton. But he has blossomed as a redshirt sophomore into an efficient scorer who made regular appearances on TV highlight reels with high-flying dunks.

He averaged 20 points and 7.5 rebounds while shooting 63% from the field and 39% from three-point range, leading a season-long surge by the Flyers that rallied a community shaken by devastating tornadoes and a deadly mass shooting in the past year.

Dayton grabbed national attention early, taking Kansas to overtime in a loss in the Maui Invitational championship game. The Flyers' only other loss came in December on a buzzer-beating three-pointer in overtime against Colorado. Dayton had won 20 straight games when the season ended.

"Honestly, if you had asked me, I swear we could've won a national championship and our team was so ready to play in the tournament," Toppin said. "We were so locked in. But because

of this virus, things happened. It's just going to be a what-if for the rest of our lives, but it's something we're going to have to live with."

Grant earned 30 of 65 votes to claim the AP coaching award in his third season at his alma mater. Baylor's Scott Drew, who guided the Bears to a 23-game winning streak and five weeks at No. 1, was second with 13 votes.

San Diego State's Brian Dutcher was third with 12 votes after leading the Aztecs to a 26-0 start, followed by Florida State's Leonard Hamilton — who earned six votes after leading the Seminoles to their first-ever Atlantic Coast Conference regular-season title.

Grant, a former Dayton player, said he has some of the same what-if thoughts as his star player. Still, he said he prefers to be grateful for "a special group" that deftly handled the added attention and pressure that came quickly amid the Flyers' steady climb up the rankings.

"I thought our guys' ability to stay focused on the things they could control really told the story of our year," Grant said.

Oregon's Ionescu selected top women's player

Associated Press

Sabrina Ionescu capped off a unprecedented college career by entering an exclusive club.

Oregon's star guard was the unanimous choice Monday as The Associated Press women's basketball player of the year, receiving all 30 votes from the national media panel that selects the Top 25 each week during the season. Since the award was first given in 1995, the only other player to receive all the votes is former UConn star Breanna Stewart.

"That's pretty crazy. Someone I look up to and have a good relationship with," Ionescu said. "To be in that class with her is an honor."

Ionescu, who was only the

eighth player to earn AP All-American honors three times, shattered the NCAA career triple-double mark and became the first player in college history to have 2,000 points, 1,000 rebounds and 1,000 assists.

"Sabrina is a transcendent basketball player," Oregon head coach Kelly Graves said. "There's really nothing that she couldn't do on the court. She was the ultimate leader."

Ionescu came back for her senior season, saying she had unfinished business and hopes of winning an NCAA title. She averaged 17.5 points, 9.1 assists and 8.6 rebounds this season as well as having eight of her 26 career triple-doubles.

She helped the Ducks win the Pac-12 regular season and

tournament titles. The native of Walnut Creek, Calif., was honored as the conference's most outstanding player of the tournament and regular season.

Ionescu guided Oregon to a 31-2 mark this season, which ended prematurely with the cancellation of the NCAA Tournament because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"I have enjoyed everything that I did this year," said Ionescu during the Pac-12 Tournament. "I never second guess my choice."

Ionescu might have been the most recognizable college player this year in either the men's or women's game. Her jerseys sold out in hours at stores.

"Sabrina is a basketball player, period. She was this year's

Zion [Williamson] and a household name," AP voter Deb Antonelli said.

"Fans and ball players respect her game because she works hard and produces when the brightest lights are shining on her. She delivered stats in the game no other four-year player has ever accomplished man or woman."

While Ionescu was a unanimous choice, South Carolina coach Dawn Staley received 20 votes from the panel to win the AP's coach of the year award for the first time. Northwestern coach Joe McKeown was second with five votes, Graves garnered four ballots and North Carolina State's Wes Moore received one.