

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

New carriers' toilets require a pricey fix

The Virginian-Pilot

The Navy's two newest aircraft carriers have a problem with their toilets getting clogged and it costs \$400,000 to fix each time there's an issue with their sewage systems, according to a congressional watchdog report released Tuesday.

The Norfolk-based USS Gerald R. Ford and USS George H.W. Bush were both built with a new toilet and sewage system that's similar to what is used on commercial aircraft, but increased in scale to accommodate more than 4,000 people, the Government Accountability Office report said.

But there's been unexpected and frequent clogging of the

system, causing the Navy to determine it needs to acid flush each aircraft carrier's sewage system "on a regular basis."

"According to fleet maintenance officials, while each acid flush costs about \$400,000, the Navy has yet to determine how often and for how many ships this action will need to be repeated, making the full cost impact difficult to quantify," the report said.

Both ships were built at Newport News Shipbuilding, which also recently christened the future aircraft carrier USS John F. Kennedy. Shelby Oakley, a director in GAO's Contracting and National Security Acquisitions team, said the Kennedy has the same system.

"The issue is not with water pressure because the system is a pressurized vacuum system. The issue, essentially, is that the pipes are too narrow and when there are a bunch of sailors flushing the toilet at the same time, like in the morning, the vacuum pressure doesn't work as effectively," Oakley wrote in an email to *The Virginian-Pilot*. "Waste builds up because it isn't sucked down and then you need the acid wash."

The cost issues with the clogged toilets were included in a report that focused on how the Navy could save by paying attention to maintenance concerns when designing and building ships.

The GAO found 150 exam-

ples of systemic maintenance problems throughout the fleet for all classes of ships, resulting in at least \$130 billion more in maintenance than the Navy planned.

The report was requested by the Senate Armed Services Committee.

"As we state in our report, the quantity and breadth of the 150 problems we found — resulting in billions of dollars in unexpected costs, maintenance delays, and unreliable ships — suggest that existing policies and guidance have not ensured that new ships are reliable and can be sustained as planned," the report said.

White House, Senate reach deal on \$2T rescue bill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON—The White House and Senate leaders of both major political parties announced agreement early Wednesday on an unprecedented \$2 trillion emergency bill to rush sweeping aid to businesses, workers and a health care system slammed by the coronavirus pandemic.

The urgently needed pandemic response measure is the largest economic rescue measure in history and is intended as a weeklong or monthlong patch for an economy spiraling into recession and a nation facing a potentially ghastly toll.

"To the American people, we say, big help, quick help is on the way," Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said Wednesday morning on CNN.

Schumer said he expected approval by the Republican-led Senate later in the day. That would leave final congressional

approval up to the Democratic-controlled House, where the timetable for votes is unclear and whose members are mostly scattered around the country.

Top White House aide Eric Ueland announced the agreement in a Capitol hallway shortly after midnight. Some final pieces of the agreement need to be finalized in detailed legislative language.

The Senate was likely to pass the measure Wednesday afternoon. In the House, both Democratic and Republican leaders hope to clear the measure for President Donald Trump's signature by a voice vote without having to call lawmakers back to Washington, but that may prove challenging, as the bill is sure to be opposed by some conservatives upset at its cost and scope. Ardent liberals were restless as well.

The rescue package would give direct payments to most Americans, expand unemployment benefits and provide a

\$367 billion program for small businesses to keep making payroll while workers are forced to stay home.

One of the last issues concerned \$500 billion for guaranteed, subsidized loans to larger industries, including a fight over how much to give airlines. Hospitals would get significant help as well.

"After days of intense discussions, the Senate has reached a bipartisan agreement on a historic relief package for this pandemic," said Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., a key negotiator. "It will rush new resources onto the front lines of our nation's health care fight. And it will inject trillions of dollars of cash into the economy as fast as possible to help Americans workers, families, small businesses and industries make it through this disruption and emerge on the other side ready to soar."

At the White House on Tuesday, even as the crisis deep-

ened, President Donald Trump expressed eagerness to nudge people back to work in the coming weeks and held out a prospect, based more on hope than science, that the country could return to normal in under a month.

"We have to go back to work, much sooner than people thought," Trump told a Fox News town hall. He said he'd like to have the country "opened up and just raring to go" by Easter, April 12. But in a White House briefing later, Trump said that "our decision will be based on hard facts and data."

Medical professionals have said that social distancing needs to be stepped up, not relaxed, to slow the spread of infections. At the White House briefing, the public health authorities said that it was particularly important for people in the hard-hit New York City metropolitan area to quarantine themselves for 14 days.

Navy curbs movement for some sailors

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
AND SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKANAVALBASE, Japan—U.S. Navy installations in Japan moved Wednesday to restrict movements and activities in response to a state of heightened risk for the coronavirus declared by the far-reaching Indo-Pacific Command.

INDOPACOM increased its health-risk status to the Defense Department's second-highest level as the pandemic worsens across the globe. INDOPACOM is at Health Protection Level Charlie, which indicates a substantial risk of the coronavirus, according to a message on the command's website Wednesday.

Level C indicates that a disease is spreading at a high rate and calls for measures such as limiting movement and meetings, maintaining social distance, self-isolating to avoid spreading or contracting the disease and even more stringent measures, if needed, according to information from

Pacific Air Forces. The highest risk level, Delta, signals a severe risk and widespread community transmission.

The same day, Naval Forces Japan issued a memorandum to sailors tightening down on liberty and travel for its service members. Those living off base may travel only between the base and their homes, according to the memo. Sailors' family members are encouraged, but not required, to comply with the restrictions.

"All off-base restaurants, bars, cafes, night clubs and like establishments, indoor fitness facilities, onsens and public baths are off-limits," Naval Forces Japan commander Rear Adm. B. P. Fort wrote in the memo.

The restrictions apply only to Navy personnel, but "government civilian employees and contractors and their dependents are strongly encouraged to meet the intent of this order," Naval Forces Japan spokesman Lt. Cmdr. David Levy told Stars and Stripes in an email Wednesday.

At Sasebo Naval Base, Japan, commander

Capt. Brad Stallings has imposed the naval forces restrictions on travel and liberty, according to a post on the base official Facebook page.

U.S. Army installations on the main islands of Japan on Wednesday had already suspended non-essential visitor passes. U.S. Army Garrison Japan spokesman Timothy Flack said that the suspension would remain in effect until at least April 8.

Some installations may impose further movement and travel restrictions in addition to those already imposed by DOD, and the movement of people potentially exposed to the virus may also be further restricted, the command said.

Additionally, the CDC has issued a level 3 travel advisory for many countries in the INDOPACOM area of operations, meaning that Americans should avoid nonessential travel to those destinations. As of Wednesday, level 3 countries include Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

Three sailors first to test positive on deployed ship

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Three sailors aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt in the Philippine Sea were flown off the ship Tuesday after testing positive for the coronavirus, acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly announced.

"These are our first three cases of [the coronavirus] on a ship that's deployed," Modly told reporters at the Pentagon during a briefing on the Navy's efforts to help combat the virus.

The sailors were flown to a military hospital in the Pacific region, according to Adm. Michael Gilday, chief of naval operations. He said he did not know how many people are in isolation aboard the ship after being in contact with the sailors. The aircraft carrier has about 5,000 people aboard, Gilday said.

The Roosevelt was last in port 15 days ago in Saigon in southern Vietnam. It was the second

time that an American aircraft carrier has made a port call to the country since the fall of Saigon in 1975 at the end of the Vietnam War.

Since Feb. 28, ships in the Pacific region under the command of 7th Fleet have been directed to spend at least 14 days at sea between port visits due to the virus outbreak.

Gilday said that he believed most port visits now in the Pacific are just for maintenance or supplies, and only in rare cases would a sailor need to be away from the pier to pick up equipment.

The Navy is following the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines to test only when a person has symptoms associated with the virus. The ship has the capability to test sailors, but it must still send samples to a Defense Department laboratory to be processed, said Rear Adm. Bruce Gillingham, the Navy's surgeon general.

Marine recruiters voicing concerns as offices stay open

BY IMMANUEL JOHNSON
Stars and Stripes

The Marine Corps is leaving recruiting offices open and conducting in-person interviews with potential Marines, even as Army efforts move online and recruiters voice safety concerns tied to the coronavirus pandemic.

A Marine Corps Recruiting Command memo on March 17 called for recruiters to "strike the difficult balance between mission and the protection of our team and families," adding that travel is limited to mission-essential requirements.

"Where we can't stay physically connected to our target market, we'll stay connected through virtual means," the memo said.

Recruiters who spoke with Stars and Stripes, however, said that the threat posed by COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, isn't being taken seriously enough.

"Recruiters are still expected to do interviews in their office and drive kids to (Military Entrance Processing Station) where they may not be able to practice preventive measures for COVID-19," a Marine recruiter in Michigan said on condition of anonymity, because he was not authorized to speak.

In Michigan, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer issued a statewide stay-at-home order for three weeks that began Monday. Navy and Marine personnel, however, are exempt from that order when conducting official business, a Naval Criminal Investigative Service memo stated Monday.

The Navy has said that it will continue in-person recruiting, though they have closed their doors locally, the Michigan recruiter said.

The Marine Corps Recruiting Command did not specify how many of its offices remain open following a Stars and Stripes query.

Spain's deaths leap; Prince Charles infected

Associated Press

MADRID — The death toll in Spain from the coronavirus shot up by more than 700 on Wednesday, surpassing China and now second only to Italy as the pandemic spread rapidly in Europe, with even Britain's Prince Charles testing positive for the virus.

In India, the world's largest democracy, the government put its 1.3 billion people on lockdown.

Spain recorded a record daily increase of 738 deaths, pushing it to 3,434 overall and past China's 3,285, the Ministry of Health said. The country's infections rose by 20% to 47,610, and more than 5,000 have recovered.

Fernando Simon, head of Spain's health emergency coordination center, said he hoped the numbers would peak soon.

"If we are not already at the peak, we are very close," he said. "I cannot say that we have reached it."

Even once the numbers crest, it would be "counterproductive" to think about relaxing restrictions anytime soon,

he added.

The elderly are among the most vulnerable to the coronavirus, and Spain's nursing home system has been hit particularly hard. Prosecutors are investigating several homes after military troops disinfecting them discovered elderly people living among suspected victims who had died.

Spanish media reported that 23 residents of a Madrid retirement home had died from COVID-19 or symptoms related to the new virus, news reports said. The residence hung up when called by The Associated Press, but its management released a statement saying that it had been pleading for more staff and supplies, including virus tests, after 55 of its workers had been forced to take medical leave.

National police also arrested two people in southern Spain on Tuesday for throwing stones and other debris at a convoy of ambulances and police vehicles, as 28 elderly people were being transferred from a nursing home with a high number of infections to another facility in

their town.

With its health system overwhelmed, Spanish hotels have been converted into hospitals and a Madrid ice rink is being used as a temporary morgue. Lawmakers were set to extend the country's lockdown for two more weeks to April 12.

Charles, 71, heir to the British throne, is showing mild symptoms of COVID-19 and is self-isolating at a royal estate in Scotland, his office said, adding that his wife, Camilla, has tested negative.

Charles "has been displaying mild symptoms but otherwise remains in good health and has been working from home throughout the last few days as usual," it said.

India, where the massive lockdown is underway, has only about 450 cases due to limited testing. Prime Minister Narendra Modi warned that if he didn't act now, however, it could set the country back decades.

His unprecedented move is aimed at keeping the virus from overwhelming its fragile health care system, as it has done in parts of Europe and

threatens to do in U.S. hotspots like New York. Everything but essential services like supermarkets were closed.

Italy has been the hardest-hit nation in Europe with more than 69,000 infections and 6,800 deaths. Authorities are investigating if a hotly contested Champions League soccer game in Milan in February poured rocket fuel on the crisis that is overwhelming Italian hospitals. Italian doctors are being forced to choose who will receive desperately needed ventilators and who won't.

There are signs that drastic measures to keep people away from one another can push back the spread of the illness and flatten the infection curve. China's Hubei province, where the outbreak was first spotted late last year, finally started lifting its lockdown.

Some train stations and bus services reopened in Hubei, and people who passed a health check were allowed to travel for the first time since January. A similar easing in the hard-hit epicenter of Wuhan is planned for April 8.

US condemns attack on temple in Kabul

BY PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — At least 25 people were killed when a lone gunman attacked a Sikh temple in Kabul's old town Wednesday morning, starting an hourslong firefight with Afghan special forces, local officials said.

Women and children were among those who died in the attack, the Interior Ministry said, adding that all of the victims were members of Afghanistan's small Sikh minority, which numbers in the thousands.

The gunman was killed in a firefight with the special forces that lasted until late afternoon,

Interior Ministry spokesman Tariq Arian said.

The U.S. Embassy in Kabul condemned the "fanatics and criminals who target a house of worship to harm innocents" and expressed condolences.

Afghan forces helped worshippers who were inside the temple when the attack began at 8 a.m. to escape, the Interior Ministry said. Several people who were wounded in the attack are being treated in hospitals.

The Taliban were quick to deny involvement in the assault. The SITE Intelligence Group, which tracks global terrorist activity, said that the Islamic State affiliate in Afghanistan has claimed responsibility.

Leave after boot camp halted for new Marines

*The (Hilton Head, S.C.)
Island Packet*

HILTON HEAD, S.C. — New Marines won't go home after boot camp at Parris Island as a coronavirus precaution.

The 10-day leave following graduation from Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C., has been suspended through at least May 11, the base announced. Marines will instead report directly to their next stop to continue training.

"While we understand this is challenging for new Marines and their families, this policy protects Marines, their families, Civilian Marines and the community at-large from additional exposure," Marine Capt. Bryan McDonnell said in the

statement.

Recruit training is continuing with no plans to suspend it as of Tuesday afternoon, McDonnell said. He said that the base had taken steps to "harden our health protection posture against the impacts of COVID-19."

The announcement suspending leave follows a decision to close graduation ceremonies to the public and suspend family activities. Graduation events will be streamed live on Parris Island's Facebook page during the ceremony, and the video will be available later on the Depot's website.

The policy will be reviewed again after May 11. Marines will be able to use the 10-day leave at a later time.

As cases surge in Calif., link to teen's death unclear

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Los Angeles County health officials backtracked Tuesday on their announcement that a child died from coronavirus, saying it's possible the death was caused by something else.

During their daily briefing, the county health department said the unidentified child from Lancaster was among four new deaths.

Hours later, after Gov. Gavin Newsom had cited the death of the teenager as evidence the virus can strike anyone, the county issued a new statement.

"Though early tests indicated a positive result for COVID-19, the case is complex and there may be an alternate explanation for this fatality" and the case will need evaluation by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the statement said.

Lancaster Mayor R. Rex Parris said a 17-year-old boy had been hospitalized with respiratory problems and died from septic shock. Parris said the boy's father also has coronavirus and worked in a job where he had close contact with the public.

High NY infection rate risky for health workers

NEW YORK — A "cacophony of coughing" in packed emergency rooms. Beds squeezed in wherever there is space. Overworked, sleep-deprived doctors and nurses rationed to one face mask a day and wracked by worry about a dwindling number of available ventilators.

Such is the reality inside New York City's hospitals, which have become the war-zone-like epicenter of the nation's coronavirus crisis.

Faced with an infection rate that is five times that of the rest of the country, health workers are putting themselves at risk to fight a tide of sickness that's getting worse by the day.

"You're on 100% of the time — no matter what," said Dr. Jolion McGreevy, medical director of The Mount Sinai Hospital emergency department. "It's

been a month of full force, and that's certainly very stressful."

Patients initially showed up with fairly mild symptoms, concerned they contracted coronavirus. That shifted over the past week, McGreevy said, and now hospitals are receiving far sicker patients in need of life-saving intervention.

Ala. unemployment claims skyrocket

MONTGOMERY — Thousands of Alabamians are filing for unemployment benefits, sometimes overwhelming the state application system, as the coronavirus pandemic causes workplaces to temporarily close or reduce operations.

Nearly 17,000 people filed unemployment claims over just two days — Sunday and Monday — according to preliminary numbers given by Alabama Department of Labor spokeswoman Tara Hutchison.

Health officials have acknowledged the economic cost of mandatory closures, but say they're crucial to slow the outbreak as caseloads grow exponentially, threatening to overwhelm hospitals.

Republican Gov. Kay Ivey said she was following the lead of President Donald Trump, and expressed reluctance on Tuesday to join other governors in issuing a statewide order shutting down nonessential activities.

SC schools likely to close through April

COLUMBIA — South Carolina schools will likely be closed through at least April because of the new coronavirus, the governor announced Tuesday.

State health officials reported two additional deaths from COVID-19.

Gov. Henry McMaster didn't issue an order closing schools through April, but said he and state Education Superintendent Molly Spearman see little choice but to keep schools closed for four more weeks for the safety of students, teachers and the public.

Schools were first closed

March 16. School districts are now having students access lessons online or sending packets of work to homes on school buses.

1st Alaskan victim was in high-risk group

JUNEAU — Alaska has recorded its first death from the coronavirus, state officials said Tuesday evening.

Dr. Anne Zink, the state's chief medical officer, said the elderly person in a high risk group contracted the virus and died in Washington state.

The person had not recently traveled to Alaska and had been in Washington for a while. No other details about the person, including age or gender, were released.

Even though the death was in Washington state, Zink said the death is counted for Alaska under rules from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention since the person was an Alaska resident.

Ariz. mayors slam edict regarding golf courses

PHOENIX — Municipal leaders criticized Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey on Tuesday over his decision to classify some businesses like golf courses as "essential" during the coronavirus pandemic.

Mayors of five different cities, including Tucson and Flagstaff, sent Ducey, a Republican, a letter saying his executive order should not have included golf courses and payday lenders in the definition of "essential services" that cannot be shut down in response to the outbreak. They also requested a statewide moratorium on evictions and foreclosures.

Ducey agreed to pause evictions for 120 days for renters who are quarantining or struggling from the economic fallout. To qualify, renters must provide documentation that they've been ordered to quarantine, have a health condition that leaves them vulnerable or suffered a substantial income loss. They'll also have to acknowledge in writing that their lease terms haven't changed.

Ind. health chief warns cases will increase

INDIANAPOLIS — Top Indiana officials warned Tuesday that the state's rapid jump in coronavirus illnesses is just the beginning and that obeying a new stay-at-home order is necessary, even as President Donald Trump suggested restrictions around the country could be relaxed in little more than two weeks.

The order from Gov. Eric Holcomb takes effect Wednesday. Indiana saw its number of confirmed COVID-19 cases grow to 365 on Tuesday — more than 12 times what state health officials reported a week earlier. Indiana's coronavirus-related deaths have gone from two to 12 during that time.

Dr. Kristina Box, the state health commissioner, said the state's hospitals were seeking additional sources of protective equipment for health care workers along with monitoring intensive care unit bed and ventilator capacity at major hospitals for the coming weeks.

"We're still in the very early parts of this outbreak," Box said. "We will continue to see more cases."

Trump OKs disaster declaration for La.

BATON ROUGE — President Donald Trump on Tuesday evening granted a federal disaster declaration exists in Louisiana and ordered assistance to supplement recovery efforts in the areas affected by COVID-19.

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards on Tuesday asked the White House to declare a major disaster in his state to free up more direct federal aid to cope with the surging coronavirus outbreak, warning that the New Orleans area could run out of hospital beds by early April. Edwards' request came as the number of people in Louisiana confirmed to have COVID-19 surged to nearly 1,400. Forty-six residents have died from the disease, according to the state health department.

Criminals capitalize on global fear, panic

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Thieves steal surgical masks. A clinic sells fake COVID-19 tests. Hate groups encourage sick members to infect law enforcement officers. Imposters pose as public health officials. Con artists peddle fake cures and financial scams.

As the coronavirus pandemic spreads, so too do the crimes related to it — transgressions that capitalize on fear, panic and the urge to lay blame, and add to the burden on law enforcement agencies trying to protect vulnerable citizens.

“It is really disheartening in a time like this that someone would take advantage of the community and take them in a time of need,” Tucson, Ariz., Police Sgt. Pete Dugan said.

Everyday life has essentially stopped in many countries in a bid to slow the virus, and some crimes have been declining. But reports of virus-related fraud are on the rise, along with concerns about hate crimes.

President Donald Trump and others have taken to calling the virus the “Chinese coronavirus,” even as scientists have said that the disease has nothing to do with Asian ethnicity. But the president dismissed the idea that his comments could fuel hate crimes.

“It’s not racist at all,” Trump has said.

In Los Angeles, a 16-year-old boy of Asian descent said that other students bullied him and accused him of carrying the virus. In New York, a man on the subway sprayed an Asian passenger with Febreze and verbally abused him. State Attorney General Letitia James set up a hotline for New Yorkers to report hate crimes in the country’s outbreak epicenter.

The Anti-Defamation League, which tracks hate groups, blames the virus for elevating racist and anti-Semitic messages, including suggesting that Jews are somehow responsible for the pandemic. Some hate groups have suggested tainting door-knobs or other surfaces with the virus so that FBI and police officers fall ill.

“If any of you get this, I expect you to spend as much time as possible with our enemies,” one wrote.

Hundreds of masks have been stolen in Portland, Ore., amid shortages for health care workers. A Missouri man who was coughing told two store clerks he had a high fever. He was arrested after police said that he threatened to give the employees coronavirus. People in Pennsylvania and Illinois were accused of similar crimes. Texas prosecutors brought charges against someone who falsely claimed on social media to have tested positive for COVID-19.

In a memo issued Tuesday, Deputy Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen told prosecutors that they could charge people who threaten to spread the new coronavirus under U.S. terrorism statutes because the Justice Department considers it a “biological agent” under the law. In such cases, suspects could be charged with a number of offenses, including possessing or developing a biological agent as a weapon, he said.

“Threats or attempt to use COVID-19 as a weapon against Americans will not be tolerated,” Rosen wrote in the memo to U.S. attorneys across the country and the heads of all Justice Department agencies, including the FBI.

Meanwhile, police in Bowie, Md., are investigating reports of a man wearing an orange vest and blue surgical mask who approached people at two homes claiming to be inspecting for the coronavirus. He actually entered one home before a resident confronted him. A similar scam was sweeping through Germany.

The World Health Organization and other authorities are also working to debunk spurious claims about possible cures. They include false assertions that silver, bleach, and garlic could protect against the coronavirus, or that bananas prevent it.

Aid group: Lockdowns hinder humanitarian efforts

Associated Press

CAIRO — An international aid group said Wednesday that closures aimed at containing the coronavirus pandemic are preventing it from reaching 300,000 people in conflict zones across the Middle East, after authorities in Libya’s capital reported the first case in the war-torn country.

The Norwegian Refugee Council said that it was unable to reach people in Syria, Yemen and the Gaza Strip, where authorities have imposed strict measures to halt the spread of the virus. All have fragile health care systems that could be overwhelmed by an outbreak, and only Yemen has yet to report any cases.

The group said that virus lockdowns have also limited access to parts of Africa and Asia.

“While governments are taking tough, much-needed measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus, millions of refugees and displaced people still depend on humanitarian assistance,” said Jan Egeland, head of the aid group.

“If supermarkets and pharmacies can remain operational during this crisis, then so should the delivery of humanitarian

aid,” he added.

Countries across the Middle East have imposed sweeping measures to prevent its spread, including closing their borders, canceling flights and in some cases imposing round-the-clock curfews that confine people to their homes.

The Israeli government on Wednesday approved new restrictions, including the closure of all synagogues. Authorities across the region have already shuttered major holy sites sacred to Christians, Muslims and Jews.

Many in Israel’s insular ultra-Orthodox communities have defied restrictions on public gatherings, despite the pleas of rabbis and local authorities. That has led to tensions with authorities and, in at least one case, scuffles with police.

The order to close the synagogues reportedly came over the objection of Israel’s health minister, himself an ultra-Orthodox Jew.

Twenty-nine percent of those who contracted the virus in Israel were infected in a synagogue or a yeshiva, according to an analysis by the National Information and Knowledge Center for the Fight Against

the Coronavirus, which has been advising the Health Ministry.

The new restrictions in Israel will bar most people from venturing more than 328 feet from their homes. More than 2,100 Israelis have been infected, with 37 in serious condition. Five elderly Israelis with pre-existing medical conditions have died.

The Palestinian Authority, which governs parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank, has ordered a full lockdown and halted travel between cities, towns and villages. Sixty cases have been reported in the West Bank and another two in Gaza.

Late Tuesday, hundreds of people in the northern West Bank town of Jenin, including dozens of armed men, defied the restrictions when they held a rally to celebrate the release of a Palestinian prisoner from an Israeli jail.

Also late Tuesday, the Palestinian Authority ordered all Palestinian workers to return to the West Bank from Israel, which had allowed around 65,000 to stay and work during the crisis.

In Libya, officials said that a 73-year-old man who entered from neighboring Tunisia on March 5 tested positive.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police: Man bit off part of girlfriend's finger

NM ARTESIA — A New Mexico man faces charges after police said he bit off a piece of his girlfriend's finger following an argument over a cellphone in bed.

Court records show Isiah Thompson, of Artesia, was arrested for aggravated battery against a household member, the Carlsbad Current-Argus reported.

According to a criminal complaint, when Artesia Police responded to a report of a finger bitten off, an officer found nearly a quarter-inch of Aliah Encinias-Martinez left ring finger missing.

Encinias-Martinez told officers she asked Thompson, 26, to put down his cellphone and go to sleep for the night. After taking the phone from Thompson, Encinias-Martinez said she threw the phone and Thompson then bit her left finger.

Officials warn to flush only toilet paper

VA NORFOLK — Toilet paper has become a scarce commodity as the coronavirus spreads. But sanitation officials in southeastern Virginia are still warning people to flush only toilet paper and nothing else.

The Virginian-Pilot reported that local officials were anticipating possible backups or overflows at treatment facilities from people flushing items other than toilet paper.

Lacie Wever, a spokeswoman for Hampton Roads Sanitation District, said this is not the time for people to flush personal hygiene wipes or cleaning cloths. She said that even if a package says a product is flushable, do not flush it.

Bicentennial book highlights black heritage

AL MONTGOMERY — Alabama's bicentennial is over, but a new book will highlight 200 years of African American history in the state.

A coffee table book titled "The Future Emerges from the Past: Celebrating 200 Years of Alabama African American History and Culture" is being published by the Alabama Bicentennial Commission.

The book will look at the period of slavery through the Civil War and into the modern civil rights movement.

The book costs \$19.95, and the commission said proceeds will go to the United Negro College Fund Birmingham.

Highways set to debut digital messaging signs

NV LAS VEGAS — More than 40 messaging boards were set to begin operation on Las Vegas' busiest highways.

The Las Vegas Review Journal reported that the 42 digital traffic boards along Interstate 15 and U.S. Highway 95 were launched this week.

The LED signs will give real-time driver information. The digital signs will allow for fluctuations of speed limits in hopes of reducing traffic congestion.

Grand jury indicts 9 in vehicle title fraud case

AZ PHOENIX — An Arizona grand jury indicted nine people accused of running an illegal operation that produced tens of thousands of titles for vehicles being sold in 42 states.

Prosecutors said the nine people indicted were accused of conspiring since 2015 to fraudulently obtain Arizona car

dealership licenses and of consigning those dealership licenses to paying subscribers via an online membership service.

Over 1,500 subscribers purchased thousands of vehicles in 42 states and the indicted defendants were accused of fraudulently titling more than 30,000 vehicles. Prosecutors say the amount of illegal proceeds associated with the scheme is alleged to be at least \$6.8 million.

Gas leak may have sparked home explosion

MI DETROIT — A 65-year-old man was killed and two other people injured following a house explosion in Detroit that may have been sparked by a gas leak and lit crack cocaine pipe.

A woman "claimed she was lighting a crack pipe when the explosion happened," Detroit Deputy Fire Commissioner Dave Fornell told The Detroit News. The 46-year-old woman suffered burns to her face, arms and legs and was in critical condition at a hospital. A 42-year-old man suffered burns and abrasions and was in serious condition at a hospital.

Aquarium, park to undergo renovation

NJ ATLANTIC CITY — A maritime park and aquarium in New Jersey will undergo an approximately \$3.6 million renovation as early as this fall, officials said.

The renovations of Gardner's Basin and the Atlantic City Aquarium are part of the city's efforts to make the park more of a tourist destination beyond the boardwalk and casinos, city officials said.

The park's renovations will include restroom updates, parking improvements and electric vehicle charging stations. The aquarium, which hasn't under-

gone any major repairs in nearly 20 years, will have several improvements, including a new roof, replaced windows and a renovated gift shop.

Man says he regrets defacing synagogue

LA MANDEVILLE — A man charged with spraying anti-Semitic graffiti on a Louisiana synagogue said he regrets his actions and wants to apologize to the congregation.

Authorities arrested Caine Zander Brown about two weeks ago in connection with the September 2018 defacing of the Northside Jewish Congregation in the New Orleans suburb of Mandeville. He was charged with felony hate counts of hate crimes and criminal damage to property.

Brown told The Times-Picayune/The New Orleans Advocate in an interview that he now rejects the neo-Nazi views he embraced at the time.

Policy will allow the sale of alcohol to-go

KS TOPEKA — Kansas bars, breweries and restaurants with liquor licenses will be temporarily allowed to sell bottled beer and wine to-go during the pandemic as long as the beverages are opened before leaving the premises and sealed in a proper to-go bag.

After strict restrictions due to the coronavirus effectively ended dine-in service at most establishments, Debbi Beavers, director of Alcoholic Beverage Control, announced the new policy, The Kansas City (Mo.) Star reported.

The policy applies to restaurants with liquor licenses, bars, clubs, farm wineries, micro-breweries, micro-distilleries and liquor stores.

From wire reports

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Brady to Bucs tip of changing landscape

Associated Press

Major changes are everywhere in the NFL. They won't likely end soon.

A free agency frenzy that has seen steady player movement — yes, players beyond Tom Brady have changed addresses — has been the focal point. With little to nothing else going on in sports, the NFL has grabbed headlines with business deals between players and teams.

Those transactions have changed the league landscape. But so have many other moves involving the draft, offseason programs and perhaps the upcoming season itself as the new coronavirus pandemic affects every aspect of our lives.

Here's a look at all of those elements in America's most popular and lucrative sport.

Free agency

Awkwardness might be the keyword. The NFL barred players from visiting teams courting them and banned club personnel from traveling to meet with the free agents — both wise and necessary moves.

Physicals on which contract agreements are reliant could

only be performed locally or by doctors mutually agreed upon between franchises and players. Signed contracts must be registered with the league before anything becomes official and players can get paid on their new deals.

That led to dozens of leaks of deals without teams being able to confirm them when the NFL business year began last Wednesday.

Through all that, million-dollar pacts emerged everywhere — some of them still unannounced by teams.

Brady leaving New England has been the mind-blowing move, naturally. Suddenly, a franchise that hasn't seen the postseason in a dozen years has some cachet. And the most dominant team of the past two decades, with Brady leading the Patriots to six championships in nine Super Bowl trips, has lost its essence.

And the other relocations through free agency and trades will require some studying up by fans. The biggest moves so far, and with several big names still on the market, seem to be:

■ All-Pro receiver DeAndre Hopkins dealt to Arizona by Houston.

■ QBs Teddy Bridgewater to

Carolina and Philip Rivers to Indianapolis as free agents.

■ Standout cornerback Darius Slay leaving Detroit for Philadelphia, which released star safety and leader Malcolm Jenkins, who returned to New Orleans.

■ WR Stefon Diggs dealt by the Vikings to the Bills, who haven't had such an accomplished receiver in years.

■ Todd Gurley, merely the league's best running back from 2015-17 but now with knee issues, cut by the Rams and landing in Atlanta.

■ Calais Campbell, one of the best edge rushers around, dealt by Jacksonville to Baltimore.

The draft

With the huge extravaganza the draft has become scrapped, the NFL soon will announce its altered format.

Look for something resembling a studio TV show with much of the information (and misinformation) flow fans are accustomed to. There's even chatter about prospective picks being asked to allow camera crews in their homes for reactions to being selected.

By far the biggest effect of the pandemic on the draft is the

elimination of pro days at various schools. While some see those as outings manufactured and managed by the collegians and their representatives, many NFL teams find significant value in them.

As for Las Vegas, it will get another draft, perhaps the 2022 selections that are unspoken for right now. Next year will be in Cleveland, 2023 in Kansas City.

The schedule

The schedule might not be in flux for the regular season set to begin on Sept. 10, probably in Kansas City. But the preseason, from when training camps can open and what restrictions exist — caused by the new coronavirus or by the labor agreement that went into effect this month — to actually playing exhibition games could be in question.

We've already seen how shoddy September contests can be with so many regulars sitting out August games. What if the NFL needs to cancel preseason games?

Then again, many fans might applaud that, eager for the real stuff, no matter how sloppy it might be early on.

US Soccer Federation sets goal of settling lawsuit

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The newly installed president and chief executive officer of the U.S. Soccer Federation used their first news conference to state that settling a lawsuit filed by women's national team players is a top priority.

"A lot of damage has been done, and I think we are going to have to rebuild that trust and rebuild the relationship. It is not going to happen overnight," President Cindy Parlow Cone said Tuesday. "It's going to take a lot of effort and time and energy from the U.S. Soccer side to rebuild that trust, not only with our U.S. women's

national team players, but with our fans and everyone engaged in the sport."

Players claim they have not been paid equally to the men's national team and asked for more than \$66 million in damages under the Equal Pay Act and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. A trial is scheduled for May 5 in federal court in Los Angeles.

"The solution here is clear, simple, and unequivocal: equal pay," responded Molly Levinson, spokeswoman for the players.

In legal papers filed this month ahead of the trial, the USSF claimed the women's

team didn't have the physical abilities or the same responsibilities as the men's team. That sparked a furor that included an on-field protest by players wearing their warm-up jerseys inside out to hide the USSF crest. The outcry led to the resignation of USSF President Carlos Cordeiro and caused the federation to change its lead law firm.

Chief legal officer Lydia Wahlke has been placed on administrative leave, which was first reported Tuesday by ESPN. Parlow Cone said an outside firm has been retained to review USSF decision-making that led to the briefs "to

see where that process broke down." She hopes to schedule settlement talks.

"I don't think a trial is good for either party or for soccer," Parlow Cone said.

A 41-year-old World Cup and Olympic champion, Parlow Cone had been the USSF vice president before Cordeiro quit on March 12.

"The comments and the language in the last filing," Parlow Cone said, "I think not only hurt our relationship with our women's national team, but hurt women and girls in general, and as a former national player, they were personally hurtful to me."

Delay brings athletes new challenges

Associated Press

Would-be Olympians and their coaches have gone from days and weeks of mulling one sort of uncertainty raised by the coronavirus pandemic — Are the Tokyo Games going to be held as scheduled? — to a whole other set of questions now that an indefinite postponement is official.

To begin with: When, exactly, are these Summer Olympics going to be staged? All that's known for sure as of now, based on Tuesday's announcement by the International Olympic Committee and local organizers, is that instead of July 24 to Aug. 9, 2020, they will be sometime — any time at all — in 2021 (although, oddly enough, they're still going to be known as the 2020 Games).

What will the qualifying rules be? Some sports already finished that process. Others are in a total state of flux.

Will the delay force athletes to contemplate abandoning the Olympics altogether, because retirement beckons? And, if so, what will they decide?

"More than anything, it pushes back what life was going to offer," said Cat Osterman, who turns 37 next month and is the oldest player on the U.S. softball team.

"My husband and I have

talked about the possibility of having a kid after July of 2020," said Osterman, a pitcher who is one of two holdovers from the team that collected a silver medal at the 2008 Olympics, "and now that has to go into effect after 2021."

Or as Belgian cyclist Greg Van Avermaet, the 2016 Olympic road race champion who turns 34 in May, put it, "The postponement means I will be another year older, which isn't ideal, but I know I will be as motivated as ever."

American fencer Kat Holmes was an Olympian four years ago and was on her way to earning a spot this time, with an eye on starting medical school in New York in the fall. She had everything lined up, too: Holmes was going to catch a flight from Japan to Newark Airport right after the closing ceremony so she could make it to her first day of school orientation.

Now everything becomes more complicated, including the prospect of missing a bunch of class time if the Tokyo Olympics are shifted to May 2021, for example.

"I have to postpone the rest of my life for a year and kind of confront what the rest of a qualification means. We don't know," Holmes said.

"I didn't come this far not to give 100 percent at the Olym-

pics. ... And it's kind of the same thing with med school," she said. "I finally got into med school just like two or three weeks ago. It seems like a decade ago."

U.S. swimmer Allison Schmitt might need to reconsider her plans. Schmitt — who owns eight medals, including four golds — has dealt with depression and left her sport for two years after the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games. But she returned to training under coach Bob Bowman in hopes of making her fourth Olympic team this year.

She'll turn 30 in June and said it's too soon to make a choice.

"I know that our goals have not changed just because the date of the Olympics has changed," Schmitt said. "Yes, this is time filled with emotion. I don't think it would be smart to make an immediate decision with these emotions."

To be sure, there also are those who could benefit from the delay, because it offers extra months to let injuries heal.

Basketball stars Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving come to mind, as do such reigning Olympic champions as South African 400-meter runner Wayde van Niekerk and British tennis player Andy Murray. Others have financial concerns.

Baseball is returning to the Olympics for the first time since 2008, and former New York Mets minor leaguer Jeremy Wolf was set to play outfield for Israel. Now the 26-year-old Wolf will try to get a non-baseball job this summer and has no idea if he will be able to play in 2021.

"It changes a lot of things for a lot of guys," Wolf said. "Who can still play, who can afford it ('cause we're not being paid), who will still be in game shape? A year-and-a-half is an eternity in baseball time."

The overwhelming initial sentiments Tuesday seemed to be a mix of disappointment and understanding.

"My first thought was I was relieved. Now there's more of a chance that we can beat this and can do what we need to do to save as many lives as possible," said Michael Phelps, the retired swimmer who collected a record 23 golds. "I was happy to see them logically making a smart decision. It's just frustrating it took this long."

Three-time beach volleyball gold medalist Kerri Walsh Jennings called the postponement the "responsible choice."

"Can you imagine making this decision after how many years and how much blood and sweat on a global level?" Walsh Jennings said.

Syndergaard needs surgery, won't pitch this season

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Mets right-hander Noah Syndergaard became the latest big-name pitcher to need Tommy John surgery, joining the Yankees' Luis Severino and Boston's Chris Sale.

New York said Tuesday that Syndergaard needs reconstruction of his ulnar collateral ligament and will miss the season that's been put on hold because of the coronavirus outbreak. Mets medical director Dr. David Altchek will operate on the right-hander on Thursday.

"After experiencing discomfort in his elbow before spring training was suspended due to the pandemic, Noah and our health and performance department have been in constant contact," Mets general manager Brodie Van Wagenen said in a statement. "Based on the persistence of his symptoms, Noah underwent a physical examination and MRI that revealed the ligament tear."

Syndergaard, the hardest-throwing starting pitcher in the major leagues last season, received a second opinion from Los Angeles Dodgers

head team physician Dr. Neal ElAttrache.

Altchek operated Feb. 25 on the right-handed Severino. The Red Sox said last Thursday that Sale, their hard-throwing left-handed ace, will have Tommy John surgery.

Nicknamed Thor, Syndergaard was projected as the No. 2 starter in a strong rotation behind two-time NL Cy Young Award winner Jacob deGrom.

New York has for now sufficient starters to make up for Syndergaard's absence, with Marcus Stroman, Michael Wacha, Rick Porcello and Ste-

ven Matz.

Syndergaard turns 28 in August and currently is eligible to become a free agent after the 2021 season. He agreed in January to a \$9.7 million, one-year contract.

Syndergaard was acquired in the December 2012 trade that sent NL Cy Young winner R.A. Dickey to Toronto. An All-Star in 2016 when he went 14-9 with a 2.60 ERA, Syndergaard has an ERA that has climbed to 2.97 in 2017, 3.05 in 2018 and 4.28 last year, when he was 10-8 in 32 starts.