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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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US bases in Japan add limits as cases rise

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE,
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Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Commanders ordered people to shelter in place and enacted other safety measures for U.S. personnel in Japan, where five active-duty service members and one dependent have tested positive for coronavirus since Thursday.

Late Saturday, the Air Force's 18th Wing confirmed that two airmen assigned to Kadena Air Base on Okinawa have been infected. Both individuals, who are not part of the same unit, recently returned from Europe, 18th Wing commander Brig. Gen. Joel Carey said in a video posted to Facebook. Their symptoms developed during a 15-day period of restricted movement.

The wing later announced a tactical pause for Monday and Tuesday.

"Commanders will use this 48-hour period to further educate their teams and their families on [the coronavirus] and

reinforce understanding and execution of current Restriction of Movement procedures as well as other measures we've put in place to protect our forces," said a message on Kadena's official Facebook page.

Friday evening at Yokosuka Naval Base — where a sailor Thursday became the first U.S. service member in Japan to test positive for the virus — personnel were told to shelter in place when two more sailors became infected. The installation is about 40 miles south of Tokyo.

The shelter-in-place order, originally planned for 48 hours, was extended Sunday afternoon.

"Only mission-essential personnel shall report to work until further notice," Yokosuka officials announced Sunday. "All personnel are directed to limit activity to their quarters until further notice and all other activities are restricted to essential movement only."

Also on Friday, U.S. Army Japan announced that a dependent tested positive at Camp Zama, about 28 miles south-

west of Tokyo.

Naval Forces Japan moved first Wednesday by restricting its sailors' travel and liberty and ordering them to stay out of civilian business establishments, with some exceptions, such as food stores, medical offices, pharmacies and take-out restaurants.

On Friday — before Camp Zama's positive case was announced — U.S. Army Japan commander Maj. Gen. Viet Luong ordered service members of all branches at Army posts in Japan to travel only between their off-base homes and their duty stations. They must confine their off-base movements to a local area.

On Okinawa, Kadena posted a set of prohibitions on the base's official Facebook page Friday, banning visitor passes except for official business, use of mass transit and visiting sit-down restaurants, bars, clubs, gyms and theaters off base. Airmen may travel around Okinawa and the adjacent islands, but only in private vehicles.

At Yokota Air Base in west-

ern Tokyo, 374th Airlift Wing commander Col. Otis Jones prohibited airmen from venturing beyond the suburbs surrounding the base. Those living off base may travel from home to work only. Base gatherings of more than 20 people are banned.

Marine Forces Japan announced restrictions Friday that mirror those of the Navy and Air Force. The order — which bans personnel from visiting the same types of off-base establishments — applies to Marines, dependents, DOD civilian employees, contractors and other personnel.

Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in southwestern Japan went a step further Friday, directing members of all service branches to follow the Marine Forces Japan guidance, according to their official Facebook page. The order does not apply to the dependents, contractors or civilians attached to the Navy, although they are highly encouraged to follow the guidance.

Balikatan exercise in Philippines canceled amid fears

BY SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

The U.S. military has canceled a major exercise in the Philippines because of the coronavirus.

"Due to concerns for the health and safety of the participating exercise forces and local populations near the planned exercise areas, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command has canceled Exercise Balikatan 2020 scheduled for May 4-15 in the Republic of the Philippines," an INDOPACOM official said in a statement Friday.

Balikatan is an annual exercise between the United States and the Philippines with participation by Australia.

Canceling the exercise follows restrictions on international travel implemented by the U.S. Department of Defense and the Philippines in response to the coronavirus pandemic, the command said.

"In light of the extraordinary circumstances surrounding COVID-19 pandemic and in the best interest of the health and safety of both countries' forces, it is prudent to cancel Balikatan 2020," Adm. Phil Davidson, INDOPACOM commander, said in the statement. "We remain deeply committed to our long-standing Alliance and friendship."

Last year, the Navy sent the amphibious assault ship USS Wasp and F-35B Lightning II stealth fighters to the Philippines

for the first time as part of the drills.

This year's exercise was expected to proceed despite a rift between the allies. In February, the Philippines notified the United States of its intention to terminate the Visiting Forces Agreement, which permits U.S. troops to deploy in the country.

Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte ordered the termination after Washington reportedly canceled a U.S. visa for Sen. Ronald Dela Rosa, a stalwart ally and former Philippines National Police chief.

Dela Rosa has been cited for human rights violations related to Duterte's bloody drug war that began when he was elected president in 2016.

Trump sees off NY-bound Navy hospital ship

The (Norfolk, Va.) Virginian-Pilot

NORFOLK, Va. — President Donald Trump visited Naval Station Norfolk Saturday to see off the USNS Comfort as it headed to New York with medical staff and hospital beds to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

“This great ship behind me is a 70,000-ton message of hope and solidarity to the incredible people of New York, a place I know very well, a place I love,” Trump said, standing in front of the gleaming white hull of the Comfort. “We’re here for you. We are fighting for you and we are with you all the way and we always will be. You have the unwavering support of the entire nation.”

The Navy hospital ship,

which is crewed by civilian mariners and gets most of its medical staff from Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, should arrive Monday.

The plan is for the ship to take patients needing hospital care that are not infected with the virus, freeing up much-needed space in the city’s hospitals. The Comfort’s sister ship, the USNS Mercy, arrived Friday in Los Angeles on a similar mission.

“For several weeks, the Department of Defense has been surging personnel capabilities and equipment to help slow the spread of the virus,” Secretary of Defense Mark Esper said in his introduction of the president. “Thousands of National Guard troops are mobilized across the country, conduct-

ing a variety of essential tasks ranging from planning to logistics to medical support. Active duty units are moving critical supplies and equipment and medical personnel to some of the nation’s most heavily impacted areas.”

More than 120 Navy Reserve volunteers, many medical professionals, reported to the Military Sealift Command’s ship on Wednesday for the mission. The Navy has yet to release how many medical personnel are headed to New York. The Mercy, like the Comfort, can carry about 1,200 medical and support staff. The Navy currently has about 800 in Los Angeles.

Trump said that the Comfort was quickly made ready to depart. A process that was sup-

posed to take weeks took just four days, he said.

“The Comfort will arrive at Pier 90 in Manhattan on Monday, three weeks ahead of schedule,” Trump said. “Its crew will begin treating patients on Tuesday. It will be met in New York harbor by Gov. Cuomo, who I just spoke with. He’s very excited.”

In his Saturday press conference, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said that he would welcome the ship “with open arms.” The Comfort contains more than 1,000 hospital beds, 12 fully equipped operating rooms, a CAT-scan, medical laboratory, pharmacy, large helicopter landing deck, two oxygen-producing plants and many other services.

New cases could jeopardize US military readiness in S. Korea

BY KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — New coronavirus cases on the main U.S. base in South Korea have prompted strict new health measures that could jeopardize military readiness on the peninsula, the commander of U.S. Forces Korea said.

Gen. Robert Abrams said that he was willing to take that risk despite the threat from North Korea after three more people tested positive on Camp Humphreys, raising the total number of infections affiliated with USFK to 12.

“This morning we went to bare bones minimum, watch teams only in the headquarters, everybody basically shelter in place, only go out for the essentials,” he told Stars and Stripes Friday in an exclusive interview.

The new restrictions were

a blow to the military community that has already been largely confined to home or base for more than five weeks as South Korea suffered from an outbreak that began in the southeastern city of Daegu.

“We’ll be under these conditions for a few days,” Abrams said in his office, wearing civilian clothes including a baseball cap and a black T-shirt with the #KilltheVirus logo that the military has adopted.

The number of people in quarantine, which had recently dipped from a high of 398 to double-digits, rose back above 100, Abrams said. People who had been near the confirmed cases were urged to self-isolate and contact the public health line.

Abrams acknowledged the challenges, particularly for platoon and company-level training on Camp Humphreys, home to most of the 28,500 service members stationed on the

divided peninsula.

The U.S. military has canceled or curtailed exercises and implemented similar restrictions throughout the force as more than 650 cases of the coronavirus have been confirmed within the Defense Department.

But the Army in South Korea is on one of the world’s most dangerous fronts. Camp Humphreys is less than 100 miles south of the heavily fortified border with North Korea.

Underscoring the threat, North Korea test-fired two short-range ballistic missiles on Sunday, the fourth such launch this month as it continues to develop its weapons program amid stalled nuclear talks with the United States.

“We call it fight-tonight readiness,” Abrams said Friday. “To protect the force is our No. 1 priority, but we have to balance that with maintaining mission readiness.”

Marines fire helicopter squad leader

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

The commander of a Marine Corps helicopter squadron on Okinawa was relieved of command Thursday, according to an official statement.

Lt. Col. Andrew Mills lost his job leading Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 466 “due to a loss of trust and confidence in his ability” to command, III Marine Expeditionary Force said Friday. He was fired by Brig. Gen. Chris McPhillips, commander of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing.

The squadron, consisting of CH-53E Super Stallion helicopters, is based at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma on a unit deployment program, the statement said.

Mills’ record includes service in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, among others.

US-led forces pull out of 3rd Iraqi base

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — The U.S.-led coalition in Iraq withdrew on Sunday from a military base in the country's north that nearly launched Washington into an open war with neighboring Iran.

The K1 Air Base is the third site coalition forces have left this month, in line with U.S. plans to consolidate its troops in two locations in Iraq.

A rocket attack on the base in late December killed one American contractor and led to a series of tit-for-tat attacks between the U.S. and Iran-backed Iraqi militia groups. The attacks culminated in the U.S.-directed killing of top Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani and a senior Iraqi militia leader, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

Coalition forces handed over the K1 base in the northern Iraqi province of Kirkuk to Iraq's military, according to a coalition statement. At least \$1.1 million of equipment was transferred to the Iraqis as 300

coalition personnel departed.

K1 has hosted coalition forces since 2017 to launch operations against the Islamic State group in nearby mountainous areas. Areas south of Kirkuk, and north of neighboring provinces of Diyala, Salahaddin and Nineveh remain hotbeds of IS activity.

The stretch of territory is also disputed between the federal Iraqi government and the autonomous Kurdish region, which has created security gaps benefiting ISIS militants. The coalition's presence had been a mediating force between the two competing authorities at times.

A senior coalition official earlier this month claimed that ISIS forces weren't as able to exploit the "security gap" between Iraqi and Kurdish forces, as the militants did in the past.

"That doesn't necessarily mean that Daesh is free to operate in the way that they wish," said the official, using the Arabic acronym for ISIS. "They're still pretty

constrained."

U.S.-led forces have already withdrawn this month from the Qayara base in Nineveh province followed by the Qaim base near the border with Syria. All were in line with plans to pull out from bases across Iraq and consolidate coalition forces in Baghdad and at the Ain al-Asad Air Base in the country's western desert.

The plan has been in the works since late last year, the senior coalition military official said, and accelerated when Iraqi forces proved that they were capable of facing the threat from the ISIS with limited coalition assistance.

Coalition officials said that they would still assist Iraqi forces with air support and surveillance, but significantly cut back on training and ground operations, as the limited withdrawal continues.

Until last month, there were some 7,500 coalition troops based in Iraq, including 5,000 U.S. forces.

Expert: US could see up to 200K deaths from virus

Associated Press

The coronavirus outbreak could kill 100,000 to 200,000 Americans, the U.S. government's top infectious disease expert warned on Sunday, as authorities urged people in and around the nation's deadliest hot spot, New York City, to limit their travel to contain the scourge.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, made the dire prediction on CNN's "State of the Union," adding that millions in the U.S. could become infected.

As of Sunday morning, the U.S. had about 125,000 infections and 2,200 deaths, according to the running tally kept by Johns Hopkins University, though the true number of cases is thought to be higher because of testing shortages and mild cases that may have gone unrecognized or unreported.

The confirmed global death toll surpassed 32,000 and new virus epicenters emerged in

U.S. cities such as Detroit, New Orleans and Chicago. Even rural America has not been immune, as virus hotspots erupt in Midwestern towns and Rocky Mountain ski havens.

Spain and Italy alone account for more than half of the world's death toll, and are still seeing over 800 deaths a day each.

Experts say, however, that virus toll numbers across the world are being seriously under-represented because of limited testing and political decisions about which bodies to count. Unlike the U.S., France and Italy do not count deaths that take place at home or in nursing homes, even though nursing homes are known coronavirus incubators around the world.

Worldwide infections surpassed 680,000, according to Johns Hopkins. The U.S. leads the world in reported cases, but five other countries have higher death tolls: Italy, Spain, China, Iran and France. Italy has more than 10,000 deaths, the most of any country.

Trump backtracks on New York quarantine suggestion

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The United States reached a grim milestone Saturday, doubling the number of coronavirus-related deaths over two days to more than 2,000 people as the rate of infected Americans surpassed every country in the world.

New York remained the hardest hit, a devastating toll compounded Saturday by President Donald Trump's day-long dance over whether he'd order a federal quarantine of the New York metro region — a proposal he ultimately retracted.

The president spent most of the day teasing a travel restriction on the New York metro area, confounding public officials who were blindsided by the suggestion. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, a Democrat, called the idea "preposterous" and equated it to imprisonment and "a declaration of war."

Then, a little after 8 p.m., the president tweeted that a quarantine wouldn't be necessary after all, and instead, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention would issue a "strong travel advisory" for the New York tri-state area, the details of which were not immediately available.

With the country now leading the world in coronavirus cases, Trump suggested earlier in the day that a mandatory quarantine on parts of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut — the nation's hit-hardest region — could be forthcoming.

Trump later clarified that if enacted, the quarantine would affect "the New York metropolitan area," but he did not specify exactly what parts of that tri-state region.

Cuomo, who said he spoke with the president early Saturday about medical supplies, hospital beds and additional aid for New York, called a regional lockdown "a civil war kind of discussion."

"I don't think it's plausible, I don't think it's legal. It would be total mayhem, I don't have another word for it," Cuomo said during a blistering interview on CNN.

Whales face more deaths by ships as waters warm

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine — Climate change is imperiling the world's largest animals by increasing the likelihood of fatal collisions between whales and big ships that ply the same waters.

Warming ocean temperatures are causing some species of whales in pursuit of food to stray more frequently into shipping lanes, scientists say.

The phenomenon has already increased ship strikes involving rare North Atlantic right whales on the East Coast and giant blue whales on the West Coast, researchers have said. The number of strikes off of California increased threefold in 2018 — to at least 10 — compared to previous years.

When whales are killed in a ship collision, they often sink and don't always wash ashore. So scientists and conservationists have said that fatal ship strikes are dramatically underreported.

Vessel strikes are among the most frequent causes of accidental death in large whales, along with entanglement in fishing gear. Conservationists, scientists and animal lovers have pushed for the International Maritime Organization to step up to protect the whales, but it won't happen without cooperation from the worldwide shipping industry.

For the right whales, which number only about 400 and have lost more than 10% of their population in just a few years, the death toll is driving them closer to extinction, said Nick Record, senior research scientist at Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences in East Boothbay, Maine.

At least three right whales died from ship strikes in 2019 — a small number, but still dangerously high for so small a population.

South Korea: North launches 2 ballistic missiles into sea

BY KIM GAMEL
AND YOO KYONG CHANG
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles into the sea off its eastern coast Sunday, South Korea's military said, the latest in a series of launches this month as the regime flouts concern about the global coronavirus pandemic.

The launch came a week after the North welcomed a letter sent by President Donald Trump offering help in fighting the virus but expressed continued frustration over stalled nuclear talks.

The missiles were launched within a 20-second interval from the eastern city of Wonsan and flew more than 140 miles, with a maximum altitude of nearly 20 miles, according to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Seoul.

A U.S. surveillance plane, the Navy's EP-3E, was spotted

at about 25,000 feet over South Korea on Sunday, the monitoring site Aircraft Spots said in a tweet. It didn't give a specific time.

It was the fourth such test in a month as the North continues to develop its weapons program amid stalled nuclear talks with the United States.

North Korea also has conducted artillery drills in what officials have said are part of its annual winter training.

The military activity resumed after the North went on lockdown for about 30 days after the virus first appeared in China late last year, said Gen. Robert Abrams, commander of U.S. Forces Korea.

"As evidenced by made-for-TV events, we've seen a beginning of relaxation of some of that," Abrams told Stars and Stripes on Friday, pointing to the artillery drills and previous missile tests. "That'll all end here pretty soon."

"They're at the end of their winter training cycle and they've got to get ready for planting season," he said during the interview at his office on Camp Humphreys. "They've got to feed their people and their military is a full participant in the spring planting season."

South Korea's military said it was closely monitoring the situation and maintaining a readiness posture.

"Such military actions by North Korea's military are very inappropriate at a time when the world has hit a rough patch due to [the coronavirus]," the joint chiefs said. "We call upon North Korea to stop such behavior immediately."

South Korean national security adviser Chung Eui-yong, Defense Minister Jeong Kyeong-doo and other senior officials also held an emergency video conference to discuss the launch, according to the presidential office.

Tornado tears through northeast Arkansas

Associated Press

JONESBORO, Ark. — A tornado ripped through northeast Arkansas on Saturday, leaving six people hurt after hitting commercial and residential areas in the college town of Jonesboro.

The six people reported injured were taken to a local hospital with minor injuries, Jonesboro E-911 Director Jeff Presley said. The tornado did major damage at the Mall at Turtle Creek and Jonesboro Municipal Airport.

Like much of the rest of the world, Jonesboro is working to fight the spread of COVID-19. Because of that, most stores in the Mall at Turtle Creek were closed Saturday to fight the coronavirus pandemic.

Severe weather could have been much worse if not for that, Presley said.

"At 5 o'clock on a Saturday afternoon that place would've been packed, and at this point there was hardly anyone in there," Presley said. "It's a blessing in disguise."

Power was out in sections of the city, which affects the city's traffic lights. Wreckage tossed about by the twister also blocked roads. The

mayor issued a 7 p.m. curfew, and authorities asked people not to drive around.

The storm also derailed a train, Presley said. Crews were examining damage and trying to determine whether it had been hauling anything hazardous.

The National Weather Service tweeted a video from the Arkansas Department of Transportation that showed a large tornado dropping from storm clouds in Jonesboro.

U.S. Rep. Rick Crawford, who represents much of eastern Arkansas, said on Twitter that a tornado tore through "the heart of town" and asked for prayers for first responders. Crawford said that his staff and family were safe.

Jonesboro is home to Arkansas State University. The university tweeted that the campus was not damaged.

Forecasters with the Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Okla., warned that a severe weather outbreak was possible later Saturday for much of the central U.S.

The National Weather Service reported other possible tornadoes Saturday in Illinois and Iowa.

Iwo Jima's carnage seared into memories

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE

Stars and Stripes

Roy Earle chuckles as he recalls his “memorable” 21st birthday laying communication lines on Iwo Jima 75 years ago. It isn’t long before the laugh turns to melancholy as the darkness of the hellacious battle fought there catches up with the 96-year-old Maine resident.

Then a private first class with the 4th Marine Division’s 1st Joint Assault Signal Company, Earle landed at Yellow Beach 1 on Iwo Jima in the fourth wave on Feb. 19, 1945. The short and agile field telephone and switchboard operator scooted up walls of black volcanic sand and ash under fire to find a large shell hole where he set up his switchboard that would link the beach with Marines on the front line.

The next day, he was ordered back down to the beach to find 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marines, which hadn’t established communications.

“We couldn’t get in touch with our right flank,” he said earlier this month in a phone interview with *Stars and Stripes*, his voice growing quiet. “I walked over and, oh my God, what a mess.”

Just as the Marines had run off their landing craft, a shell landed at their feet, killing most of them.

“A kid I served mess duty with before we left ... there he was,” Earle said. “Oh God, that I remember for a long time. What a thing. Oh God, it was awful.”

Earle found the dead men’s switchboard and carried the 75-pound device back to the shell hole. He sent word for their surviving rifle companies to get in touch so he could get them hooked up.

“By the third day we were really getting slaughtered up there,” he said. “We lost 55% of our division on Iwo.”

The island was finally declared secure March 26, 1945. The Reunion of Honor, an annual memorial service scheduled for Saturday that brings

together American and Japanese veterans of the battle, was called off because of coronavirus concerns. However, remembering the sacrifices and stories of those who fought and died on Iwo Jima is still important to many.

“Iwo Jima is a testament to what America was willing to endure to defend freedom and our way of life,” said Marine Corps History Division director Edward Nevglowski. “The 75th anniversary of Iwo Jima is about celebrating the selfless and courageous acts of thousands of American boys sent overseas ... who would ask for nothing in return.”

New improved tactics

Iwo Jima, which means “Sulfur Island,” presented a strategic problem for the allies as they neared mainland Japan at the tail end of their island-hopping campaign in 1944, said Iwo Jima Association of America historian Charles Neimeyer.

Military planners believed the key to Japan’s defeat would be sustained B-29 Superfortress bomber raids on the Japanese homeland. “Unfortunately for the bombers, it was a 14-hour roundtrip flight for them,” Neimeyer said. “And course, halfway there, they were being attacked by Japanese fighters.”

Located halfway between recently taken American airfields in the Marianas and Japan were the Volcano and Bonin islands, which included Iwo Jima.

Radar on Iwo Jima tipped off the home islands of an imminent attack, Neimeyer said.

If taken, Iwo Jima would not only improve the lethality of American bombing raids but could also host fighter escorts, serve as an emergency airfield for damaged aircraft coming back from the raids and help facilitate air and sea blockades, according to Naval History and Heritage Command.

Orders came down in October 1944 to occupy Iwo Jima, according to a National Park Service history. Naval surface ships began their bombardment the following month. On

Dec. 8, 74 straight days of aerial bombing commenced.

American assault troops would find the same determined enemy when they hit the beaches of Iwo Jima a few months later, with one key difference from previous battles.

In mid-1944, Iwo Jima got a new Japanese garrison commander, Gen. Tadamichi Kuribayashi.

He immediately ordered a shakeup in Japanese tactics, Neimeyer said. In addition to ordering 11 miles of tunnels dug around the island, he also ordered his men to hold their fortified fighting positions until their deaths, to take 10 Marines with each one of them before they were allowed to die and to stop to the wasteful practice of banzai suicide charges.

‘Bad business’

The V Amphibious Corps landing force departed the Marianas for Iwo Jima on Feb. 15 and 16 according to the park service history. At the same time, the Navy launched airstrikes against the Japanese island of Honshu to distract the Japanese from Iwo Jima. The 4th and 5th Marine Divisions landed Feb. 19 on Iwo Jima’s black sand beaches. The landing areas on the southeastern coast had been designated Green, Red, Yellow and Blue beaches.

Initially, the Marines met little resistance as they piled up on the beaches, the Navy history said.

About 40 minutes into the landing, Kuribayashi opened up with everything he had, Neimeyer said. The Marines soon discovered they had walked into a shooting gallery. The Japanese had the beaches dialed in with artillery and interlocking fields of machine-gun fire from fortified concrete blockhouses and other concealed positions.

“It was like shooting ducks in a barrel,” Neimeyer said. “The majority of the Marine Corps KIAs and casualties are going to take place at a high rate on this first two days of battle than any other time after that.”

Jack Colby, now 95 and living in Alexandria, Va., hit the beach with the 4th Marine Division. A man of few words, he struggled to describe the horrors he witnessed as a young private first class.

“It was a mess, a pure mess, that’s about the size of it; guys getting knocked down right and left,” he told *Stars and Stripes* earlier this month. “The [Japanese] had a pretty good position where they were looking down on a lot of our troops. But anyway, that’s the way it goes.”

Asked what he remembered most about the battle, Colby answered with one word: “Casualties.”

Step toward victory

As they moved north, the Marines fought through places with names like “Meat Grinder,” Hill 382; the “Turkey Knob,” which had a reinforced concrete communications center; and the “Amphitheater,” a southeastern extension of Hill 382, the Navy history said.

The 3rd Marine Division encountered the most heavily fortified position on the island in its move to take Airfield No. 2.

All those positions “had interlocking fields of fire, that hills covered other hills and cliffs covered other cliffs, so that if you moved up to take one out, the other would open up on you,” Neimeyer said.

Marine infantry was forced to get up close and personal to engage their concealed enemy, blasting them out of caves with satchel charges and burning them out with flamethrowers. Marines fought all day, lost men and gained only a couple of hundred yards.

“It’s a shame we had to lose so many of those poor guys,” said Bob Persichitti, a Navy radioman second class who watched the battle from just offshore aboard the command ship USS *Eldorado*.

Earle said: “We were glad we could do it, but we hated what it cost us. I’m glad I’m still here, but I just can’t believe I went through all of that.”

Stars and Stripes reporter Aya Ichihashi contributed to this report.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Doughnuts with doctor's face a hit

NY ROCHESTER — An upstate New York doughnut shop is featuring the likeness of the doctor leading the country's battle with the coronavirus on its sweet treats.

Donuts Delite in Rochester began selling doughnuts with Dr. Anthony Fauci's face, surrounded by white frosting and topped off with patriotic sprinkles.

The exclusive treats have been selling "like crazy" since the store put them on display, according to Nick Semeraro, franchisee of the cafe.

The shop's decision was inspired by the doctor's straightforward communication style and calm demeanor while he's been advising millions of Americans amid a pandemic.

Ice out comes early in annual contest

VT NEWPORT — A big board has officially gone through the ice on Lake Memphremagog in northern Vermont, ending the sixth annual ice out contest.

The board broke through the ice more than three weeks earlier than last year, the Caledonian Record reported. The contest is a fundraiser for the splash pad project and playground upgrades at a city park, with people buying raffle tickets to guess when the board will fall through the ice. The person who made the closest guess without going past the time this year gets a \$1,244 cash prize.

Officials: Men created blasts to rob ATMs

FL TAMPA — Two men are facing federal charges for using small explo-

sions to rob ATMs in the Tampa Bay area, authorities said.

The U.S. Attorney's Office in Tampa charged Mawdo Malick Sallah, 33, of Clearwater, and Kirk Douglas Johnson, 34, of Anderson, S.C., with conspiring to commit arson. They each face up to 20 years in prison.

Sallah and Johnson took nearly \$70,000 from several Florida ATMs between November and January and vandalized others without taking any cash, according to a criminal complaint.

Investigators believe the men injected some type of flammable fuel into the machines and used a spark to ignite it.

Teen wrestling champ body-slams kidnapper

NM LAS CRUCES — A teen wrestling champion helped stop a kidnapping and assault near Las Cruces by pinning a man to the ground until deputies arrived, authorities said.

Mayfield High School student Canaan Bower, 16, who won the District 3-5A championship in the 285-pound heavyweight division, was lauded as a hero after controlling suspect Daniel Arroyo Beltran, 22, of Phoenix, the Las Cruces Sun-News reported.

Dona Ana County deputies arrested Beltran after witnesses told authorities he tried to kidnap three children at a gas station.

Bower's dad, Troy Bower, told the Sun-News that his son told him he body-slammed the man and got him in a chokehold until deputies arrived.

Lucky few spot grizzly before park closes

WY JACKSON — Grizzly bears are emerging from their dens in Grand Teton

National Park and a handful of people were able to spot a well-known bear called Bruno a few days before the park closed indefinitely.

Photographer Jack Bayles was among those who saw the big male bear. Grand Teton and nearby Yellowstone National Park have closed to limit the spread of the coronavirus.

Bayles had heard Bruno was out of his den and went to northern Grand Teton, where he saw the bear emerge onto a road.

Governor signs plastic bag ban into law

WA OLYMPIA — A law that bans single-use plastic bags in the state was signed into law by Gov. Jay Inslee, in what he called "a victory for our environment."

The legislation, which goes into effect Jan. 1, bans retailers from giving out single-use plastic carryout bags and requires an 8-cent charge for other bags.

The fee would increase to 12 cents in 2026.

The legislation also requires paper bags to be made from 40% recycled material.

Corrections officer set fire to apartment

OH BROOK PARK — A corrections officer tried to kill his family members by setting their apartment on fire, authorities said.

Neil Osborne, 37, was charged with attempted murder and aggravated arson following a dispute in Brook Park.

Emergency responders went to the Holland Garden Apartment complex after someone reported a disturbance in one of the units. Another 911 call came in that the same apartment was on fire.

Osborne and two other peo-

ple were evacuated from the unit, and none of them were injured.

Osborne has been a corrections officer with Cuyahoga County since 2007.

Aquarium debuts right whale catalog

MA BOSTON — An aquarium in Boston has upgraded its directory of more than a million images of one of the world's rarest whales.

The New England Aquarium keeps a database of photographs and physical details called the North Atlantic Right Whale Catalog. There are only about 400 of the whales left in the world. The catalog has images of more than 750 whales and goes back to 1935.

The aquarium said the upgrade improves an interface that was 15 years old. The improved database is also more accessible to the public, aquarium representatives said.

Flood victims owed over \$300M sue state

LA BATON ROUGE — A group of Louisiana flood victims who have been owed over \$300 million for the past decade have filed a lawsuit against the state for failure to pay.

The latest lawsuit comes after residents won a lawsuit in 2003 which found the construction of a local highway blocked drainage of the Tangipahoa River. The court ruled the state failed to conduct needed studies on the river, and ordered Louisiana to pay millions in damages plus other costs and interest.

The state government has not paid the flood victims citing a lack of funds.

From wire reports

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Summer dates likely for 2021 Olympics

Associated Press

TOKYO — Tokyo Olympic organizers seem to be leaning away from starting the rescheduled games in the spring of 2021. More and more the signs point toward the summer of 2021.

Organizing committee President Yoshiro Mori suggested there would be no major change from 2020.

“The games are meant to be in summer, so we should be thinking of a time between June and September,” Japanese news agency Kyodo reported Mori saying on Saturday.

International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach, after the postponement was announced in Switzerland on Tuesday, left open the possibility of spring dates.

The postponed games were to have opened on July 24 and closed on Aug. 9. Mori suggested some decisions could be made as early as this week when the organizing committee’s executive board meets.

Any final decision will be made by local organizers and the IOC, and hundreds of spon-

sors, sports federations and broadcasters.

Athletes have been left in limbo by the postponement. Many have been forced to stop training because of the spreading coronavirus. Even those who can train have no idea about how to schedule training to reach peak fitness at the right time.

Mori and organizing committee CEO Toshiro Muto have both said the added cost of rescheduling will be “enormous.” Early estimates put those costs at between \$2 billion-\$3 billion with the several levels of Japanese governments likely to foot most of the bills.

Tokyo organizers say they are spending \$12.6 billion to stage the games. However, a government audit report said it will cost at least twice that much. All but \$5.6 billion is public money.

The Switzerland-based IOC has contributed \$1.3 billion to organize the Tokyo Olympics, according to local organizing committee documents. It has a reserve fund of about \$2 billion for such emergencies and also has insurance coverage.

Knicks owner tests positive for COVID-19

Associated Press

James Dolan, the executive chairman of Madison Square Garden Company and owner of the New York Knicks, has tested positive for the coronavirus.

The Knicks announced Dolan’s diagnosis Saturday. It is not clear when he was tested or received the diagnosis.

Dolan is the first U.S. major pro sports owner known to have tested positive for the virus. He also owns the NHL’s New York Rangers, along with other venues like Radio City Music Hall, The Hulu Theatre and The Chicago Theatre.

“The Madison Square Garden Company Executive Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Jim Dolan has tested positive for coronavirus,” the Knicks’ statement said. “He has been in self-isolation and is experiencing little to no symptoms. He continues to oversee business operations.”

New York has been a hotspot for the pandemic in the U.S.

All 50 U.S. states have reported some cases of the virus that causes COVID-19, but New York has the most, with more than 52,000 positive tests for the illness and more than 700 deaths. About 7,300 people

were in New York hospitals Saturday, including about 1,800 in intensive care.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, sometimes requiring hospitalization. The risk of death is greater for older adults and people with other health problems.

Dolan is one of the most polarizing sports figures in New York. Earlier this month, Oscar-winning writer-director Spike Lee — one of the Knicks’ best-known fans — criticized Dolan after getting into a disagreement with MSG personnel about which entrance to the arena he could use. Dolan has also publicly clashed in recent years with former Knicks forward Charles Oakley, and frustrated fans chanted “sell the team” at games this season.

The NBA has been shut down since March 11, when Utah center Rudy Gobert became the first player in the league to have a positive diagnosis for the virus revealed. The Knicks played host to Utah — which later had Gobert and Donovan Mitchell test positive — on March 4 and played host to Detroit on March 8. Pistons center Christian Wood also later tested positive for the virus.

30-somethings Gatlin, Powell hanging on for Games in 2021

Associated Press

Highlights of their very best moments are still available on compact discs, maybe even actual video tape. When teammates shout out, “Hey, old man” — well, they know that’s directed at them.

At first glance, America’s Justin Gatlin and Jamaica’s Asafa Powell might seem like relics from a bygone age of sprinting. In reality, they’re still in the mix — and not even a year-long postponement of the Tokyo Olympics is going to shut them down.

“I’m ready for this year,” Powell told The Associated Press in the wake of the IOC’s announcement that the games would be delayed due to the coronavirus. “I definitely have to be ready for next year.”

Make no mistake, they are running out of time.

Gatlin will be 39 when the Olympics fi-

nally roll around and Powell, who turns 38 in November, will be steaming toward the same number. Both men were beginning to make a name for themselves in track before a young phenom named Usain Bolt had raced his first Olympics. Bolt, by the way, is 33 and happily retired.

Both Gatlin and Powell are “Jeopardy” questions just waiting to be asked.

The last man to win an Olympic gold medal in the 100 before Bolt? That would be Gatlin.

The last man to hold the 100-meter world record before Bolt? That would be Powell.

Gatlin won the Olympics in 2004. “Feels like five years ago,” he insists.

Powell set a world record in 2007, when he ran 9.74 seconds. Bolt topped it less than a year later and eventually lowered the mark to its current standing of 9.58.

Gatlin and Powell think they could make a different kind of history in 2021. The oldest Olympic champion in the men’s 100 meters remains Linford Christie, who was 32 when he won at the 1992 Barcelona Games, according to research by Olympic historian Bill Mallon. As for the oldest Olympic medalist in the event, that distinction belongs to Gatlin, courtesy of his silver at the 2016 Rio Games.

“It’s pretty cool to know we can hang with these younger guys and still be competitive,” Powell said. “And be ones to reckon with for the gold medal.”

That’s nothing to laugh at. Gatlin won a silver medal at the world championships last year. Powell, healthy after dealing with nagging groin strains and hamstring tightness, says he’s still doing the same reps at the same tempo as when he was younger.

Ovechkin, Crosby like straight-to-playoffs idea

Associated Press

Pittsburgh Penguins captain Sidney Crosby prefers the NHL skip the rest of the regular season and head directly to the playoffs if games resume during this pandemic-interrupted spring.

Washington Capitals captain Alex Ovechkin is on the same page, saying he'd even be willing to finish two goals short of his ninth 50-goal season, which would tie the NHL record shared by Wayne Gretzky and Mike Bossy.

"Of course, you want to score 50, but right now, like everyone is saying, the most important thing is to stay safe and to get this thing done," Ovechkin said Thursday. "It (stinks) not to score 50 and to not get another milestone, but you have to think about your family, people and fans to be more safe."

The two Metropolitan Division rival stars shared their views Thursday during a video conference call hosted by the league.

"I mean, you try to get in as

many games as you can, I think. But I wouldn't mind starting right in the playoffs," said Crosby, whose Penguins were third in the division standings when the season was suspended March 12.

Crosby acknowledged the more regular season games that can be squeezed in would be better for the integrity of the playoffs. Ovechkin agreed when he appeared on the video call later.

"For, me of course, the more games we play, it's going to be better for our fans and it's going to be better for teams fighting for the playoffs," said Ovechkin, whose Capitals lead the division. "But I'd rather start the playoffs right away."

Ovechkin then broke into a smile and said, "Sorry guys," referring to the other three players on the video call. Columbus Blue Jackets captain Nick Foligno didn't take offense and said: "Don't say sorry to me. We're in a playoff spot."

The NHL has not said a timetable for when play will

resume and it has not been determined whether the league will complete the regular season. There were 189 games left on the schedule when play was stopped, and each conference featured tightly contested playoff races.

In the East, Carolina and Columbus are tied with 81 points in holding the conference's two wild-card spots, with the New York Islanders (80 points), New York Rangers (79) and Florida (78) all in contention. Teams have not played an equal number of games, with the Islanders having played 68 to Columbus' 70 and would be in over the Blue Jackets if decided by points percentage.

In the West, Winnipeg (80 points) and Nashville (78) hold the conference's two wild-card spots, with the Predators having the edge over Vancouver despite being tied in points. Nashville and Calgary — not Winnipeg — would be in if determined by points percentage.

With the season on hold, players have been told to self-isolate

until at least April 4.

Three NHL players have tested positive for the virus: two with Ottawa and the third with Colorado.

Each of the eight players spoke Thursday from their respective homes, with New Jersey Devils defenseman P.K. Subban having traveled to Los Angeles to be with his fiancée, retired Olympic skier Lindsey Vonn.

The discussion over whether to complete the regular season had at least one amusing moment in highlighting the sibling rivalry between Carolina's Jordan Staal and older brother, Marc, who plays for the Rangers.

"Yeah, screw the Rangers," Jordan said with a laugh in noting the Panthers have the slight edge in the standings.

"But it's hard," he added. "You can speculate and try to decide what's fair. But there's always going to be someone who's (ticked) off about it. Whatever we do decide, let's hope it's for the best of the game."

NCAA weighs more eligibility for sports cut by virus

Associated Press

The NCAA Division I Council is scheduled to vote Monday on whether to allow another year of eligibility for spring sport athletes such as baseball, softball and lacrosse players, who had their seasons wiped out by the coronavirus pandemic.

Providing similar relief to winter sport athletes, such as basketball and hockey players and wrestlers, will also be considered. According to a memo recently sent to college sports administrators from the NCAA, there does not appear to be support for that.

"(Winter) sports had either concluded their regular-season competition or substantially concluded their regular-season competition," said the memo, part of which was obtained by The Associated Press.

Division II has approved legislation to provide an extra season of eligibility and financial aid for its spring sport athletes, according to the memo.

Around Division I, conference-level discussions on restoring eligibility have been ongoing.

The Division I Council has representatives from all 32 conferences. After it votes, the Division I Board of Directors, made up of mostly university presidents and chancellors, will have the opportunity to weigh in and could kick it back to the council for further consideration.

While there is momentum toward giving spring athletes another year of eligibility, there are plenty of administrators with reservations.

"I know I could capably argue either side of it," Big 12 Commissioner Bob Bowlsby said Thursday during a conference call with reporters.

NCAA bylaws regarding scholarship limits would have to be worked around, which becomes especially tricky in the many sports where most players do not receive full scholarships. Paying for those extra scholarships is potentially costly for schools.

Bowlsby said with so much unknown regarding the outbreak and when sports will be able to resume, delaying a decision on giving back eligibility might be the best

option.

"I worry that with the uncertainty of our current circumstances, we might find ourselves with a disruption in the fall or winter next year due to a rebound in the coronavirus," he said. "If we have that sort of disruption again, then are we going to offer fall-sport athletes another year?" He added: "I really think as much as everybody wants to know if they're going to get another year, I think we would be well-served by waiting a period of time to make the decisions."

Sun Belt Commissioner Keith Gill said he expected the conference to finalize its position Friday during a conference call with athletic directors and university presidents.

"I think our conference is in a place where we're certainly going to look to try to provide some relief in that position. Those students have been through a lot," Gill said. "Trying to provide them an opportunity to be as whole as they can with regard to their competition opportunities is something that we are supportive of."