

STARS AND STRIPES[®]

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Carrier seeks to isolate crew ashore

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Facing a growing outbreak of the coronavirus, the captain of the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt is asking for permission to isolate the bulk of his roughly 5,000 crew members on shore, which would take the warship out of duty in an effort to save lives.

The ship is docked in Guam. In a memo to Navy leaders, the ship's captain, Capt. Brett Crozier, said that the spread of the disease is ongoing and accelerating, and removing all but

10% of the crew is a "necessary risk" in order to stop the spread of the virus.

U.S. Navy leaders on Tuesday were scrambling to determine how to best respond to the extraordinary request as dozens of crew members tested positive.

"We are not at war. Sailors do not need to die. If we do not act now, we are failing to properly take care of our most trusted asset our sailors," Crozier said in a memo obtained by The Associated Press.

A U.S. Navy official said that Crozier alerted commanders on

Sunday evening of the continuing challenges in isolating the virus. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations, said Crozier wants more isolated housing for the crew and that Navy leadership is reviewing options to ensure the health and safety of the crew.

In Asia, a carrier presence is central to what the Pentagon has identified as a fundamental shift from fighting insurgent and extremist conflicts in the Middle East to a return to "great power competition." That means, principally, a big-

ger focus on China, including its militarization of disputed areas of the South China Sea.

The carrier, like other Navy ships, is vulnerable to infectious disease spread given its close quarters.

The massive ship is more than 1,000 feet long; sailors are spread out across a labyrinth of decks linked by steep ladder-like stairs and narrow corridors. Enlisted sailors and officers have separate living quarters, but they routinely grab their food from crowded buffet lines and eat at tables joined end-to-end.

NY makes plea for help as world infections climb

Associated Press

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo begged for health care reinforcements, saying that up to 1 million more workers were needed to fight the coronavirus, as the world total climbed to more than 800,000 cases.

The plea came a day after President Donald Trump warned, "Challenging times are ahead for the next 30 days." During the Rose Garden press conference, the president said that the nation should prepare for a coronavirus death toll that could exceed 100,000.

In New York, the epicenter of the American outbreak, Cuomo and health officials warned that the crisis unfolding there is just a preview of what other U.S. cities and towns will soon face. New York state's death toll climbed by more than 250 people in a day to over 1,200, most of them in the city.

"We've lost over 1,000 New Yorkers," Cuomo said. "To me, we're beyond staggering already."

New York City's Health De-

partment recorded the city's first death of a person under 18 years old, though details about the person's exact age were not disclosed. About 9,500 people are hospitalized with the disease statewide. More than 66,000 people statewide have tested positive for the virus, including more than 38,000 in New York City.

Even before the appeal, close to 80,000 former nurses, doctors and other professionals were stepping up to volunteer in New York, and a Navy hospital ship had arrived with 1,000 beds to relieve pressure on the city's overwhelmed hospitals.

Spain and Italy are still struggling to avoid the collapse of their health systems, with Spain saying that hospitals in at least half of its 17 regions are at or very near their ICU bed limits, and more than 13,000 medical workers are among the country's reported 94,417 infections.

Dozens of hotels across Spain have been converted into recovery rooms for patients in less-serious conditions, and au-

thorities are building makeshift field hospitals in sports centers, libraries and exhibition halls. So far they have added 23,000 beds.

Overnight, Spain recorded 849 new deaths, the highest daily toll since the pandemic hit the southern European country. It has now claimed the lives of 8,269 people in Spain, forcing Madrid to open a second temporary morgue this week after an ice rink pressed into service last week became overwhelmed.

Deaths climbed rapidly in the U.S., which was poised to overtake China's reported virus death toll of 3,309. But experts have said that all numbers reported by governments and states in this pandemic are faulty in different ways, due to the lack of testing, mild virus cases that are missed or the determination of some governments to try to shape their pandemic narrative.

"This is going to be a long-term battle and we cannot let down our guard," cautioned Dr. Takeshi Kasai, the World

Health Organization's regional director for the Western Pacific.

Hard-hit Italy and Spain now account for more than half of the 40,636 COVID-19 deaths reported worldwide, and the U.S. has the most confirmed cases at 174,467, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

A 12-year-old girl became the youngest person to die in Belgium, which has counted 705 deaths so far, including 98 in the last day. It was not disclosed whether she suffered from any underlying condition. The country of about 11.5 million people has reported more than 12,775 infections.

National crisis-center coronavirus spokesman Emmanuel Andre said Belgian authorities expect the disease to reach its peak in coming days, and that "we will arrive at a point where we're close to saturation point at our hospitals."

China on Tuesday reported just one new death from the coronavirus and 48 new cases, claiming that all new infections came from overseas.

DOD orders bases keep virus data mum

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department has ordered commanders at all of its installations worldwide to stop announcing new coronavirus cases among their personnel, as the Pentagon said Monday that more than 1,000 U.S. military-linked people had been sickened by the virus.

The order issued by Defense Secretary Mark Esper on Friday is meant to protect operational security at the Defense Department's global installations, Jonathan Hoffman, the Pentagon's chief spokesman, said in a statement Monday. He said Defense Department leaders worried adversaries could exploit such information, especially if the data showed the outbreak impacted U.S. nuclear forces or other critical units.

"Unit level readiness data for key military forces is information that is classified as a risk to operational security and could jeopardize operations and/or deterrence," Hoffman said in the statement.

He pledged the Pentagon would continue to release near-daily updates of total cases among troops, DOD civilian workers, military dependents and defense contractors, which officials with Esper's public affairs office have done for nearly three weeks. Those numbers have grown steadily with each release.

As of Monday morning, the Pentagon reported 633 service members were among 1,087 total cases within the Defense Department community. Among those troops, 64 had recovered by Monday, while 26 were hospitalized. The latest data shows a dramatic increase in cases among troops since Friday, when the Pentagon reported 343 cases among service members.

The individual military services remain authorized to report coronavirus cases within their ranks to the public, Hoffman said.

"While services will not release the numbers of cases at each base, we will continue to work closely with the local communities

to ensure the health and well-being of all," he said.

The policy change came after Esper hinted last week during an interview with the Reuters news agency that he would soon begin withholding "disaggregated numbers" related to the virus. But the defense secretary did not specify what information would be withheld, Reuters reported.

On Sunday, Army officials in Stuttgart, Germany, announced they could no longer provide the public updated information about cases in their local area. At that time, Stuttgart, which houses headquarters for U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command, had reported at least 80 infections among its personnel.

Meanwhile, officials at Camp Humphreys in South Korea on Monday confirmed a fifth case of the virus among personnel assigned to that base, the largest U.S. base in that country. It was not immediately clear why that information was released to the public given the new policy.

Navy recruits delayed after first case at Great Lakes

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Navy has rescheduled sending new recruits to basic training after the service's Recruit Training Command Great Lakes, Ill., announced its first positive case Sunday.

A recruit tested positive Sat-

urday and is being treated at the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center in Chicago, the command announced on its official Facebook page.

People who had been in close contact with the recruit are being notified and areas, including the barracks, are being thoroughly cleaned, according

to the social media post.

New recruits have been rescheduled to arrive next week in order to give the command time to do a contact investigation and clean the barracks, according to a Navy official.

Recruit Training Command Great Lakes started restricting movement for 14 days on March 26 for incoming recruits. The

policy requires them to practice social distancing. The recruit who tested positive arrived a week prior to the start of the new policy, according to the Facebook post.

Before arriving at basic training, new recruits are asked health screening questions about the virus and have their body temperatures checked.

Marines stop recruits from going to SC boot camp

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A coronavirus outbreak at Parris Island has forced the service to temporarily stop new Marine recruits from heading there for boot camp.

The increase in illnesses at the base happened over the weekend, according to Capt. Bryan McDonnell, a spokesman for Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C. The uptick in cases comes after act-

ing Navy Secretary Thomas Modly announced last week that two Marine recruits tested positive at Parris Island.

Base officials conducted an investigation and isolated everyone who was in contact with the two Marines, McDonnell said. Additionally, two other Marines stationed at the base have tested positive for the virus, though they work separately from recruit training.

The suspension on shipping new recruits is a precautionary measure intended to pro-

tect more recruits, the training personnel and the installation community from the virus, according to a Marine Corps statement Monday.

The statement did not say how many new recruits would be affected by the temporary suspension. Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island is one of two locations for training new recruits, with the other at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego in California.

McDonnell said that the base is planning to have a 14-day

isolation period before recruits begin their training once recruit arrivals resume.

He could not give a date for when recruit arrivals would begin again, other than to say it was "conditions based."

Recruits now at Parris Island will continue their training "with continued emphasis on personal and environmental cleanliness and social distancing," according to the Marine Corps.

Restraints force Army to halt ACFT transition

BY IMMANUEL JOHNSON
Stars and Stripes

The Army has halted its long-planned transition to the Army Combat Fitness Test after on-base gym closures made it difficult for many soldiers to train with the strength equipment the test requires.

The ACFT, which was set to become the service standard in October, includes dead lifts, a standing power throw, push-ups, the sprint-drag-carry, leg tuck and a two-mile run.

The new test will be “suspended until further notice” following gym closures and social distancing restrictions put in place because of the coronavirus, Army spokeswoman Lt. Col. Robin Ochoa told Military.com.

Army officials were not immediately available for comment Tuesday.

The Army Physical Fitness Test, introduced in 1980, will remain the service’s primary assessment for the time being. Leaders have long said that the test, which includes two min-

utes of pushups, two minutes of situps and a two-mile run, has failed to adequately predict which soldiers could accomplish physical tasks necessary in war.

The Army began field-testing the ACFT in late 2018 and introduced standards about a year later. In late January, the service began distributing ACFT gear to more than 1 million active duty, Reserve and National Guard soldiers, a Jan. 22 Army memo said.

Some soldiers said that the equipment rollout left little time to train to the new standards and to get familiar with the equipment, which includes kettlebells, medicine balls, pull-up bars, a dead lift bar, weights and an exercise sled.

Sgt. Awad Mohamed, a senior human resource sergeant with the 82nd Airborne Division in Fort Bragg, N.C., welcomed the ACFT’s delay.

“Finally, the Army is using common sense,” he said in an online chat Tuesday. “Some soldiers barely got instructions on how the test will be.”

NJ National Guard member is military’s 1st virus death

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

A member of the New Jersey National Guard died Saturday after a weeklong battle with the coronavirus, service officials announced Monday. He is the first service member to die from the virus.

Army Capt. Douglas Linn Hickok was a drilling Guardsman and physician’s assistant originally from Jackson, N.J., Gov. Phil Murphy said Monday in a news conference. Though Hickok was a member of the New Jersey National Guard, the father of four resided in Pennsylvania and died at a hospital there, Murphy said.

“Today is a sad day for the Department of Defense as we

have lost our first American service member — active, Reserve or Guard — to coronavirus,” Defense Secretary Mark Esper said in a statement. “The news of this loss strengthens our resolve to work ever more closely with our interagency partners to stop the spread of [coronavirus].”

Information provided from the Defense Department and the governor did not state Hickok’s age or whether he was activated with the National Guard at the time he contracted the virus.

In a call with Hickok’s wife, Murphy said that she asked him to “make the point when we say stay at home, we mean stay at home.”

Taliban team arrives in Kabul to monitor prisoner release

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — A three-member Taliban technical team arrived Tuesday in the Afghan capital to monitor the release of their prisoners as part of a peace deal signed by the Taliban and the U.S., a spokesman for the insurgent group said.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid confirmed the team’s arrival in a tweet. It marked the first time a Taliban delegation has been in Kabul since the group was driven out by the U.S.-led coalition in November 2001.

There was no immediate comment from the Afghan government on the team’s arrival.

On Monday, Jawed Faisal, spokesman for the Afghan National Security Adviser’s office, said Afghan officials and the Taliban agreed during a video

conference that the insurgent group should send a technical team to Kabul for face-to-face discussions on the release of Taliban prisoners. The International Committee of the Red Cross agreed to assist the team in getting to Kabul.

The prisoner release is part of a peace deal signed last month by the Taliban and U.S. which calls for the government’s release of 5,000 Taliban and the Taliban’s release of 1,000 government personnel and Afghan troops.

The peace deal calls for the eventual withdrawal of all 13,000 U.S. soldiers from Afghanistan in exchange for guarantees from the Taliban that they will fight other militant groups, including Islamic State. The deal has been touted as Afghanistan’s best chance for ending its relentless wars.

Marines delay deployment of 2,500 troops to Australia

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

The Marine Corps is delaying the deployment of thousands of Marines to northern Australia for a six-month rotation starting in April due to travel restrictions associated with the coronavirus, U.S. officials said Monday.

The Marines had planned to push ahead with the mission, known as Marine Rotational Force-Darwin, by isolating troops in their barracks during their first 14 days Down Under.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper, however, issued orders last week barring nearly all official movement overseas for De-

fense Department personnel.

“In cooperation with the Australian government, the MRF-D 2020 rotation is delayed at this time due to concerns over COVID-19, and we agree that force protection must be a top priority for both countries as we continue to fight the virus,” Marine Corps Forces Pacific commander Lt. Gen. Lewis Craparotta said in a statement Monday.

The deployment was to have involved 2,500 Marines. Some elements arrived in Darwin in March, Australian officials said in an email Friday.

The Marine Corps said that it is prepared to conduct the deployment later this year if the situation permits.

Cruise ship with sick, dead aboard begs Fla. to dock

Associated Press

MIAMI — As a cruise ship stranded at sea with dozens sick and four dead makes for Florida, passengers who have been confined to their rooms for more than a week are anxious for relief, hoping Gov. Ron DeSantis will change his mind and allow them to disembark despite confirmed coronavirus cases aboard.

Hundreds of passengers and crew members from the Zaandam have not stepped on dry land for 15 days as the virus prompted authorities around the world to seal borders, implement checkpoints and force people into quarantine. Passengers were asked to keep their rooms dark and leave their drapes closed when they passed through the Panama Canal on Sunday after days of wrangling with local authorities.

The Zaandam's plans to dock as early as Wednesday in Florida are still up in the air but have already been rebuked by local officials and DeSantis, who says health care resources are stretched too thin. The governor said he has been in contact with the Coast Guard and the White House about diverting the ship.

Broward County officials will meet Tuesday to decide whether to let the ship dock at its Port Everglades cruise ship terminal, where workers who greet passengers were among Florida's first confirmed coronavirus cases.

Dozens on board the Holland America Line ship have reported flu-like symptoms and four people have died, with at least two of the deaths blamed on the coronavirus by Panamanian authorities. The company said eight others have tested positive for COVID-19 but 2,300 passengers and crew members are in good health.

Louisiana

BATON ROUGE — Gov. John Bel Edwards said Monday that he will extend Louisiana's "stay at home" order through the end of April, in line with President Donald Trump's most recent

guidance, as the number of Louisiana residents who have died from COVID-19 jumped significantly overnight.

Louisiana's health department reported that 185 residents had died from the disease caused by the new coronavirus, 34 more than the number reported on Sunday. Edwards has said Louisiana has the second-highest COVID-19 death rate per capita among states, and he's warned that the New Orleans region is running low on ventilators, which the hardest-hit patients need.

The Democratic governor's stay-home order was supposed to end April 13, but he said he would extend it to April 30.

Texas

ORANGE — Texas extending a mandatory self-quarantine to drivers crossing from neighboring Louisiana, one of the hot spots in the coronavirus outbreak in the U.S., began Monday with few clear signs of how the order was being enforced as traffic moved freely across state lines.

Republican Gov. Greg Abbott's order Sunday ratcheted up attempts to isolate travelers coming from areas of the country where coronavirus cases are rising fastest. Abbott said Texas state troopers would increase patrols near the Louisiana border and require drivers who are stopped to fill out forms indicating where they would isolate.

But how troopers would conduct those patrols was unclear on the first day the order went into effect.

Massachusetts

BOSTON — The superintendent of a Massachusetts veteran's home was removed from his duties Monday after 11 residents died, including at least five who had tested positive for coronavirus and another five whose results are pending.

Bennett Walsh was placed on paid administrative leave following the deaths at the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke, The Boston Globe reported.

Another surviving 11 residents have tested positive for the virus at the home, as have five staff members, according to the state Department of Veterans Services.

Missouri

KANSAS CITY — The number of confirmed coronavirus cases in Missouri surpassed 1,000 on Monday and the state's death toll rose to 13.

Health officials said that as of Monday afternoon, 1,031 cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in Missouri. That is an increase of 128 from Sunday.

One of the deaths announced on Sunday was William "Al" Grimes, the Henry County Democratic Party chairman. He died in Clinton, said state Chairwoman Jean Peters Baker.

Minnesota

MINNEAPOLIS — Minnesota students experienced some glitches as they began learning from home Monday, a new normal that may last the rest of the school year as the state tries to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Minnesota had 576 confirmed cases as of Monday, up 73 from Sunday. The state's death toll from COVID-19 rose by one, to 10. Health officials said 56 patients were hospitalized Monday, including 24 in intensive care.

Gov. Tim Walz gave the closing order two weeks ago to allow administrators and teachers time to figure out how to make distance learning work for the state's nearly 900,000 public and charter school students. They're not scheduled to return to their classrooms until at least April 30.

Troubles with the popular Schoology learning management system were so numerous that it was trending on Twitter in Minnesota.

California

LOS ANGELES — California is recruiting thousands of retired health care workers along with medical and nursing

students to help as emergency hospitals that could include sites like the Los Angeles Coliseum and other sports arenas handle an anticipated flood of coronavirus patients, Gov. Gavin Newsom said Monday.

Newsom signed an executive order to temporarily expand the health care workforce to staff the facilities that will supply the 50,000 hospital beds he estimated could be needed when the surge peaks. State models now estimate the peak occurring in mid-May.

Hawaii

HONOLULU — Hawaii Gov. David Ige further tightened travel restrictions to limit the spread of the coronavirus on Monday by ordering people moving between islands to adhere to a 14-day self-quarantine.

The order, which takes effect Wednesday, won't apply to essential workers like health care workers traveling to other islands.

The order comes a week after Ige ordered people arriving from other states or overseas to follow the same two-week quarantine. He's also ordered all residents to stay at home for the next month.

Michigan

LANSING — Gov. Gretchen Whitmer on Monday signed onto a \$150 million funding package to fight the coronavirus pandemic while vetoing \$167 million she said should be saved as Michigan confronts what are expected to be plummeting tax revenues amid the pandemic's economic fallout.

Just weeks ago, the Democratic governor and Republican-led Legislature had agreed to additional mid-year spending to fund their priorities after a budget impasse last fall.

"The world has changed since those negotiations, and we must react and change along with it," Whitmer told reporters while also announcing directives to restrict state departments' discretionary spending and to suspend hiring.

Administration rolls back mileage standard

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration rolled back ambitious Obama-era vehicle mileage standards Tuesday, raising the ceiling on damaging fossil fuel emissions for years to come and gutting one of the United States' biggest efforts against climate change.

The Trump administration released a final rule Tuesday on mileage standards through 2026. The change — after two years of Trump threatening and fighting states and a faction

of automakers that opposed the move — waters down a tough Obama mileage standard that would have encouraged automakers to ramp up production of electric vehicles and more fuel-efficient gas and diesel vehicles.

“We are delivering on President Trump’s promise to correct the current fuel economy and greenhouse gas emissions standards,” Andrew Wheeler, head of the Environmental Protection Agency, said in a statement Tuesday marking the release.

He said the final rule “puts in place a sensible” national program that “strikes the right regulatory balance that protects our environment, and sets reasonable targets for the auto industry. This rule supports our economy, and the safety of American families.”

Opponents contend the change — gutting his predecessor’s legacy effort against climate-changing fossil fuel emissions — appears driven by Trump’s push to undo regulatory initiatives of former President Barack Obama and say

even the administration has had difficulty pointing to the kind of specific, demonstrable benefits to drivers, public health and safety or the economy that normally accompany standards changes.

The Trump administration says the looser mileage standards will allow consumers to keep buying the less fuel-efficient SUVs that U.S. drivers have favored for years. Opponents say it will kill several hundred more Americans a year through dirtier air, compared to the Obama standards.

FBI reaches out to senator over his stock sales

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The FBI has reached out to Sen. Richard Burr about his sale of stocks before the coronavirus caused markets to plummet, a person familiar with the matter said Monday.

The outreach suggests federal law enforcement officials may be looking to determine whether the North Carolina Republican exploited advance information when he dumped as much as \$1.7 million in stocks in the days before the coronavirus wreaked havoc on the economy.

Burr has denied wrongdoing but has also requested an ethics review of the stock sales.

The Justice Department’s action, first reported by CNN, was confirmed by a per-

son familiar with the matter who was not authorized to discuss it and spoke on condition of anonymity. The Justice Department declined to comment.

In a statement, Alice Fisher, an attorney for Burr, said, “The law is clear that any American — including a Senator — may participate in the stock market based on public information, as Senator Burr did.”

“When this issue arose, Senator Burr immediately asked the Senate Ethics Committee to conduct a complete review, and he will cooperate with that review as well as any other appropriate inquiry. Senator Burr welcomes a thorough review of the facts in this matter, which will establish that his actions were appropriate,” the statement said.

Burr, whose stock sales were first re-

ported by ProPublica and The Center for Responsive Politics, is one of several senators whose financial dealings have generated scrutiny in recent weeks.

Senate records show that Burr and his wife sold between roughly \$600,000 and \$1.7 million in more than 30 transactions in late January and mid-February, just before the market began to nosedive and government health officials began to sound alarms about the virus. Several of the stocks were in companies that own hotels.

Burr has acknowledged selling the stocks because of the coronavirus but said he relied “solely on public news reports,” specifically CNBC’s daily health and science reporting out of Asia, to make the financial decisions.

Judges slow abortion bans in Texas, Ohio, Alabama

Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Federal judges on Monday temporarily blocked efforts in Texas and Alabama to ban abortions during the coronavirus pandemic, handing Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers a victory as clinics across the U.S. filed lawsuits to stop states from trying to shutter them during the outbreak.

A new Ohio order is also unconstitutional if it prevents abortions from being carried out, a separate judge ruled Monday. The ruling instructed clinics to determine on a case-by-case basis if an abortion can be delayed to maximize resources — such as preserving personal protective equipment — needed to fight the coronavirus. If the

abortion is deemed necessary and can’t be delayed, it’s declared legally essential.

The rulings indicated judges were pushing back on Republican-controlled states including abortion in sweeping orders as the outbreak grows in the U.S. In Texas, the ruling came down after state Attorney General Ken Paxton, a Republican, said abortion was included in a statewide ban on nonessential surgeries.

But U.S. District Judge Lee Yeakel said the “Supreme Court has spoken clearly” on a woman’s right to abortion. One abortion provider in Texas, Whole Woman’s Health, said it had canceled more than 150 appointments in the days after the Texas order went into effect.

“There can be no outright ban on such a procedure,” Yeakel wrote. Paxton said the state would appeal.

The rulings happened Monday as lawsuits were also filed in Iowa and Oklahoma, after governors in those states similarly ordered a stop to non-emergency procedures and specifically included abortion among them.

The lawsuits were filed by Planned Parenthood, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Center for Reproductive Rights and local lawyers in each state. Their aim, like abortion providers in Texas, is to stop state officials from prohibiting abortions as part of temporary policy changes related to the coronavirus pandemic.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Gun in waistband accidentally discharged

NH COLEBROOK — Police in New Hampshire said that they are investigating the unintentional discharge of a firearm by a man who was carrying an unholstered gun in his waistband.

State police said that Tyler Rancloes, 25, of Columbia, was brought to the hospital Sunday with injuries that were believed to be non-life-threatening. He was at a gathering with several others in Columbia when the gun went off.

Police said that they are investigating whether circumstances surrounding the unintentional discharge warrant criminal charges.

Suspect dies of medical emergency after pursuit

VA MARION — A Virginia sheriff's office said that a suspect died of an unspecified medical emergency after being taken into custody following a bizarre chase.

The Smyth County Sheriff's Office said in a news release that the case began when it received a call Saturday night about someone driving the wrong way on a road. Another emergency caller said that the driver had crashed through the utility gate of a business.

Deputies found the pickup truck, which then led investigators on a pursuit, according to the news release. Authorities said that during the pursuit, the suspect struck several police vehicles.

After an officer forced the truck off the road, the driver tried to set it on fire. The sheriff said officers forced their way into the vehicle and removed the combative driver.

Once in custody, the man suffered a medical emergency,

according to the news release. He was given CPR and taken to a hospital where he was pronounced dead. The news release doesn't define the medical emergency.

Arson charges filed in fire at school

ME GRAY — A man has been charged with setting fire to an elementary school in Maine, officials said Sunday.

Robert MacKenzie, 22, was arrested and charged with arson Saturday.

MacKenzie is accused of setting a pile of leaves on fire in the entryway of Russell School, an elementary school in Gray, according to a spokesman for the state Department of Public Safety.

The fire reportedly damaged a table and a few other items in the entrance and released smoke throughout the school. There was minimal damage to the building.

Cemetery crash leading to possible drug charges

DE REHOBOTH BEACH — State troopers in Delaware arrested a man on drug charges after they said he drove into a cemetery and over headstones.

The Delaware State Police said in a news release that troopers responded to a single vehicle collision Saturday morning. The release said the driver ran a red light, crashed through a brick wall and drove over several headstones at the Midway Presbyterian Church cemetery in the Rehoboth Beach area. Witnesses told officers the suspect got out of the vehicle and fled on foot.

The suspect, a 32-year-old from Rehoboth Beach, was found nearby and taken into

custody. Authorities said heroin and drug paraphernalia were found in his vehicle.

The man was arrested on charges including driving under the influence and drug possession.

More charges for man found with explosives

NY NIAGARA FALLS — A man in western New York who police said had nine explosive devices in his home is facing additional charges.

Jose M. Gandia, 47, of Niagara Falls, has been charged with unlawful possession of a destructive device and unlawful possession of a shortened shotgun, according to U.S. Attorney James P. Kennedy Jr. He faces a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison. Gandia is already facing other charges, including assaulting a police officer and menacing.

State police troopers responded to reports of a man pointing a shotgun with a red laser out of a pickup truck on the New York State Thruway on Wednesday morning, police said. A trooper found the vehicle and tried to handcuff Gandia. Gandia got out of his car and tried to fight the trooper, authorities said.

Gandia was arrested, and police reportedly found several weapons and a pipe bomb in his car. Authorities also recovered nine "possible" destructive devices from inside Gandia's home, officials said.

Police: Sheriff showed up at standoff drunk

NM RIO RANCHO — The New Mexico Attorney General's Office is reviewing a case involving a sheriff who police said showed up drunk to a SWAT standoff and tried to order officers away.

Attorney General spokes-

man Matt Baca told The Associated Press late Friday that a complaint naming Rio Arriba County Sheriff James Lujan had been referred to the office and the prosecutors began reviewing it.

A criminal complaint filed Thursday said that Lujan, in plain clothes, attempted to take over the scene involving a barricaded subject in Espanola, N.M., on Saturday. Espanola Police Chief Richard Jimenez wrote that officers reported Lujan smelled of alcohol and ignored commands to leave the "kill zone" in front of the house of the barricaded subject.

Lujan told the Santa Fe New Mexican that the accusations in the criminal complaint are false.

Sea Turtle Center puts lessons for kids online

GA JEKYLLE ISLAND — Georgia's hospital for sick and injured sea turtles is holding online lessons for children.

The Georgia Sea Turtle Center on Jekyll Island has been streaming live educational videos featuring insights from its turtle experts daily since March 19. The series aims to help children keep learning while schools are closed during the coronavirus pandemic.

Lessons so far have included segments on the different sea turtle species found in coastal Georgia and a virtual field trip to the marshes of Jekyll Island.

Called "Scute School" after the name for the bony plates that form turtle shells, the series is being streamed on the Facebook pages of the Georgia Sea Turtle Center and Jekyll Island. New installments are scheduled through at least April 10.

From wire reports

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MLB players have concerns on extended season

Associated Press

As Major League Baseball and the players' union contemplate ways to create a schedule for whenever the coronavirus pandemic subsides, Cincinnati Reds catcher Tucker Barnhart raised a concern that is surely shared by others around the sport: Could trying to cram in games, and maybe extend the season into late November or December, lead to injuries?

"The player safety piece is a big thing," Barnhart, a union representative, said Monday during a conference call with reporters.

That involves how many off-days are salvaged in 2020, how many times teams are told to play in any given week and how 2021 could be affected if there is a shorter-than-usual offseason.

"Moving forward, I don't think you can do things that are going to compromise the integrity of next season, as well. What I mean by that is forcing the issue of getting so many games in that you risk injury, and you risk major injury to

players, because you are trying to get in as many games as you can," Barnhart said.

"This is all assumptions and thoughts from me specifically — it's not from the union — but you're going to have to protect us as players," he continued. "And if you can't do that, I think that would be where I personally would kind of draw the line."

That's also top of mind for Pittsburgh Pirates pitcher Jameson Taillon, who already has been ruled out for 2020 while recovering from a second reconstructive surgery on his right elbow. He's brought up the idea of trying to return if the season goes into November, but said that's been "shut down pretty quickly."

Speaking more generally about the effect an altered season could have on guys around the majors, Taillon said: "This is a unique situation. We're going to have to be careful health-wise."

No one knows when baseball and other suspended sports will resume, because no one knows when life might return

to normal in the aftermath of the COVID-19 outbreak. More than 800,000 people around the world have become infected and over 39,000 have died, according to a running count kept by Johns Hopkins University, counts that include more than 164,000 infections and more than 3,100 deaths in the U.S.

Spring training was halted on March 12; opening day was supposed to be last week and won't happen any earlier than mid-May.

"At this point, it's hard to say what can or should be done. MLB is exhausting all of (its) brainpower and manpower, along with the 30 clubs, to come up with some ideas and what's the best way to play a regular season in as many games as possible and get to a playoff scenario," said Washington Nationals general manager Mike Rizzo, whose team has turned over the grounds of its spring facility to public testing for the coronavirus.

"As the commissioner said, we're going to need to get creative," Rizzo added. "But beyond that, we're just specu-

lating on all of these things."

MLB and its players are hoping to complete initial discussions on scheduling by April 10, and among the proposals under consideration: pushing back the end of the season, even if it involves using neutral sites and domes to avoid colder weather in many cities; increasing doubleheaders to get more games in per week than usual; playing games without spectators; changing the postseason format.

"We've been told," said Taillon, "there's no such thing as a bad idea right now."

Barnhart is realistic what will drive the ultimate decisions.

"It goes without saying that, as players, we want to play as many games (as possible), not only because we love playing, but also we want to make as much money as possible. That's the God's honest truth about it," he said. "And the same goes with ownership and all of that. So everybody wants to make money."

MLB extends support for minor leaguers

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Major League Baseball is extending its financial support to minor league players through May while suspending their contracts because of the new coronavirus pandemic.

MLB announced March 19 that it was giving minor leaguers \$400 weekly allowances through April 8, the day before the minor league season was scheduled to start. The commissioner's office said Tuesday that minor leaguers will continue to receive those allowances and health benefits through May 31 or the minor league opening day, whichever comes first.

Minor league contracts have a provision allowing them to be suspended "during any national emergency." MLB said

Tuesday it had told the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, the minor league governing body, that it was unable to supply players to minor league affiliates because of the emergency.

Major and minor league seasons are on hold due to the new coronavirus. Weekly minimum salaries on full-season minor league teams range from \$290 at Class A to \$502 at Triple-A over the five-month season, meaning many players are making more during this hiatus than they do in-season.

The allowances are meant to help players cover costs for housing, food and training. Most players were instructed to leave their spring training complexes just over two weeks ago, sending them scrambling to make ends meet because

they hadn't received a paycheck from teams since the end of the 2019 season. Exceptions were made for players from Venezuela and other high-risk areas, many of whom remained at the spring camps.

MLB reached an agreement last week with the Major League Baseball Players Association, which covers players in the minors who have big-league contracts. The teams are providing \$170 million in advance salaries to that group.

MLB's minor league initiative also does not cover players on the restricted, voluntary retired, disqualified or ineligible lists; and those already receiving housing or food from teams. In addition, each team will make arrangements for players on Dominican Summer League rosters.

Boston's Sale has surgery on left elbow

Associated Press

BOSTON — Red Sox starter Chris Sale had Tommy John surgery on his left elbow on Monday, his 31st birthday, waiting 11 days after doctors said he needed the operation because of difficulty in scheduling during the coronavirus pandemic.

Dr. Neal ElAttrache replaced Sale's ulnar collateral ligament at the Kerlan-Jobe Institute in Los Angeles; the Red Sox said the surgery was a success. Sale is expected to miss 14-15 months, which would bring him back in the middle of the 2021 season.

NCAA gives spring athletes extra eligibility year

Associated Press

The NCAA will permit Division I spring-sport athletes — such as baseball, softball and lacrosse players — who had their seasons shortened by the coronavirus pandemic to have an additional year of eligibility.

The NCAA Division I Council voted Monday to give spring-sport athletes regardless of their year in school a way to get back the season they lost, but it did not guarantee financial aid to current seniors if they return to play next year.

Winter sports, such as basketball and hockey, were not included in the decision because many athletes in those sports had completed all or most of their regular seasons, the council decided.

The council is made up of college sports administrators representing all 32 D-I conferences, plus two members of the student-athlete advisory committee. Earlier in the day, 60 SAAC members released a letter calling for the council to provide the extra eligibility to all athletes whose seasons were impacted by the COVID-19 related shutdown.

Voting is weighted to give the Power Five conferences

more say. Chairwoman Grace Calhoun, who is Penn's athletic director, declined to reveal the final vote.

"At the end we really did coalesce around all of the decisions that we made today," Calhoun said. "They were strongly supported."

How much scholarship money will be made available to each athlete whose college career would have ended this spring will be determined by the athlete's school.

The added scholarships could cost a school hundreds of thousands of dollars more than it would usually spend on spring-sport athletes. The extra expenses come at a time when athletic departments could be facing cutbacks. The pandemic forced the cancellation of the NCAA men's basketball tournament, which cut the association's distribution to members by \$375 million this year.

"We had long discussions around the fact that this does not avoid substantially difficult circumstances, but what we felt was important was to localize that decision-making and to ensure that we were as permissive as possible," Calhoun said. "At the end of the day, each in-

stitution is going to have to figure out what it can do."

Schools will be able to use the NCAA's Student Assistance Fund to pay for scholarships for students who take advantage of the additional eligibility in 2020-21.

Roster and scholarship limits for teams will be adjusted next season to fit returning seniors and incoming freshman. Similar changes have already been approved in Division II.

Nebraska-Omaha softball player Hailey Bartz was planning to graduate in December and move on from school. Now she's not so sure.

"I've been speaking with my family about it and trying to figure out pros and cons. Do I want to take advantage of that year? Do I not?" Bartz said. "Some of my teammates have their schooling set up, full-time jobs. You have your life planned out and then this kind of pushes everything back another year. At the same time it's really hard to pass up because it's a game of love."

NCAA Division I rules allow athletes to have four seasons of competition in a five-year period. Schools will be allowed to apply for waivers to restore one

of those seasons for any athlete who competed while eligible in the spring season shortened by COVID-19 in 2020. After the 2021 spring season, scholarship and roster limits will apply to athletes granted the waiver.

"This has a four- or five-year effect depending on how you want to count it," said Marquette athletic director Bill Scholl, whose school fields track, lacrosse, tennis and golf teams in the spring. "So the roster management piece is just something our coaches, we're going to have to figure out and work our way through."

Calhoun said the council did not consider the possibility of the fall sports season, including football, being interrupted. Football generates billions of dollars, especially for Power Five conferences. Losing that would be potentially devastating to schools that play major college football.

"There was an acknowledgment that we don't know the future and if other seasons are canceled (or) other things happen in the future we'll have to take that up with the individual merits of the case at time," Calhoun said.

Football coaches try to fill void without spring practice

Associated Press

Since taking over as Florida State coach in December, Mike Norvell has spent seemingly endless hours laying the foundation of his program.

Winter is time for coaches to deliver a consistent message, build the culture they want and get players to buy into a way of going about their business whether they are in the weight room, a meeting room or classroom.

Norvell has seen plenty of positive signs. Spring practice is the first opportunity to see how it translates to the field. The Seminoles got in three practices before the coronavirus outbreak shut down college sports and upended nearly everything else.

"You spend so much time teaching them why we do things. And you're hopeful to get the chance to show them some of the payoff of that through spring practice," Norvell said.

Normally, college football teams all over the country would be preparing for the upcoming season. Installing new schemes. Working on fundamentals. Developing less experienced players and expanding the skills of veterans. Building a cohesive team, players and coaches connecting.

That's gone now and coaches are trying to figure out how to recreate some of what has been lost.

"Your football team is under construction," Notre Dame coach Brian Kelly said. "A new group of players that require time. Those hours mean a lot. You begin to develop the DNA of your football team."

Kelly said his top concern was making sure players stay on top of their now online academics. Notre Dame normally offers no online classes.

Miami coach Manny Diaz doesn't have Kelly's luxuries. The Hurricanes have a new offense under coordinator Rhett

Lashlee and a new quarterback in Houston transfer D'Eriq King.

"You can really hone in on the techniques, fundamentals (during spring practice)," Diaz said. "That's the time the players are introduced to the new scheme and then they get a chance in the summer to grasp it on their own before we get back together again for training camp in August."

Spring practice across major college football is typically done by the end of April. The Atlantic Coast Conference and the Southeastern Conference have canceled all athletic-related activities through the academic year. The Big 10 has pushed back "all organized team activities until May 4 while the Big 12 and Pac-12 have pushed back activities until May 31.

Coaches are hopeful the time they have lost in the spring might be given back in the summer.