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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Esper defends Navy secretary in firing

New York Daily News

Defense Secretary Mark Esper said Sunday that he supported acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly's decision to fire the Navy captain who wrote a letter to his superiors regarding his growing concerns about the ongoing coronavirus pandemic aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt.

"I think acting Secretary Modly made a very tough decision, a decision that I support," Esper said on CNN. "It was based on his view that he had lost faith and confidence in the captain based on his actions. It was supported by Navy leadership."

Navy Capt. Brett Crozier was relieved of his post Thursday,

two days after his letter appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle. In the letter, Crozier implored his bosses to provide resources for the more than 5,000 people aboard the ship, which has been docked in Guam.

"This will require a political solution, but it is the right thing to do," Crozier wrote. "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."

So far, at least 155 sailors aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt have tested positive for the coronavirus, Esper said. But the crew cannot be evacuated.

"You actually cannot do that

because there's nuclear reactors to be run, you have very sensitive equipment, you have weapons on board that ship," he said on CNN. "So it's how you manage the crew, make sure you're protecting them, segregating, treating those that need treated while at the same time maintaining the readiness of the ship in case it's called upon to get to sea quickly."

Esper also insisted that the Navy took action as soon as the first case was reported.

Crozier's firing has drawn reactions from both sides of the aisle. On Saturday, President Donald Trump called the letter "inappropriate."

"I thought it was terrible what he did, to write a letter," Trump told reporters during a White

House briefing on the coronavirus. "I mean, this isn't a class on literature. This is a captain of a massive ship that's nuclear powered, and he shouldn't be talking that way in a letter. He could call and ask and suggest. I thought it looked terrible, to be honest with you."

But Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden applauded the captain.

"Captain Crozier was faithful to his duty — both to his sailors and his country," the former vice president tweeted. "Navy leadership sent a chilling message about speaking truth to power. The poor judgment here belongs to the Trump admin, not a courageous officer trying to protect his sailors."

Surgeon general tells US to prepare for the worst

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. surgeon general offered some of the starkest warnings yet Sunday as he braced Americans for the worsening fallout from the new coronavirus, warning that "this is going to be the hardest and the saddest week of most Americans' lives, quite frankly." The public was advised separately by the nation's infectious disease chief to "just buckle down" and that the virus probably won't be wiped out entirely this year.

The number of people infected in the U.S. has exceeded 300,000, with the death toll climbing past 8,400; more than 3,500 of those deaths are in the state of New York.

Much of the country is under orders to stay home, and federal officials said they have

seen signs that people are listening to the message about social distancing. But the Trump administration is also emphasizing that the worst is yet to come for many communities.

"This is going to be our Pearl Harbor moment, our 9/11 moment, only it's not going to be localized," Surgeon General Jerome Adams said on "Fox News Sunday." He added: "It's going to be happening all over the country. And I want America to understand that."

For most people, the virus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, and death.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, director

of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said the coming week is "going to be shocking to some."

"But that's what is going to happen before it turns around, so just buckle down," Fauci said on CBS's "Face the Nation."

Fauci said that the rate of new cases will determine whether the U.S. is putting the worst behind it.

"We've seen that in Italy," Fauci said. "We're going to hopefully be seeing that in New York very soon, and that's the first sign of that plateau and coming down."

Fauci also warned that unless the world gets the virus under control, it will "assume a seasonal nature."

"We need to be prepared that, since it unlikely will be completely eradicated from the

planet, that as we get into next season, we may see the beginning of a resurgence," Fauci said. "That's the reason why we're pushing so hard in getting our preparedness much better than it was."

While most states have adopted restrictions on people's movement, a few states have declined to order residents to stay home. Adams was asked on NBC's "Meet the Press" if they should join the rest of the country.

"Ninety percent of Americans are doing their part, even in the states where they haven't had a shelter in place," Adams said. "But if you can't give us 30 days, governors, give us, give us a week, give us what you can, so that we don't overwhelm our health care systems over this next week."

US bases in S. Korea try to sniff out virus

BY KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — The Army garrison in Daegu, the center of South Korea's coronavirus outbreak, is trying a new way to sniff out people who may have the respiratory disease — a smell test.

Beginning Friday, people trying to enter U.S. installations in the southeastern city were being randomly asked if they can smell apple vinegar as part of the health screening process that has been in place since the outbreak began Feb. 20.

"We are now performing random smell tests at the entrance gates of Camps Walker, Carroll and Henry to help better detect personnel who may be infected by COVID-19," the garrison said Friday on its Facebook page, using the virus' official

name. "Those personnel who cannot detect the screen will be further screened."

Officials said Sunday the test began on an experimental basis at Camp Walker this weekend and would likely be expanded to the other bases in coming days.

Medical organizations have pointed to mounting evidence that anosmia, the loss of smell or taste, may be an early indicator of the highly contagious virus, although it has so far been largely anecdotal.

Army Garrison Daegu was the first military base to implement a strict screening regimen that includes temperatures checks and a questionnaire to determine potential exposure by location.

Those procedures have been emulated on bases across the divided peninsula and in other countries since the virus has

become a global pandemic, infecting more than 1 million people and killing more than 56,000.

Daegu, a city of 2.5 million people, was hard hit with more than 60% of South Korea's 10,236 cases as of Sunday, according to the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Eight of the 18 cases affiliated with the U.S. military in South Korea were at USAG Daegu, including the first soldier to be infected who was stationed at Camp Carroll.

However, Daegu military officials believe those infections occurred off-post.

"We have not had a single transfer of the disease on our base," garrison commander Col. Edward Ballanco said Thursday in a Facebook live community update. "This will be another step that we

can take to prevent that from happening."

The smell test was modeled on a similar process employed at local hospitals, he added.

"It won't be every car. We're just going to experiment with this and see how it works and how it goes," he said, displaying a plastic cup with a sponge soaked in vinegar.

The process was adapted over the weekend, with the garrison saying it would use soaked cotton swabs that could be handed to each individual, then immediately discarded.

People who don't have a sense of smell or who are allergic to vinegar were instructed to inform the screeners about their condition.

The World Health Organization has said it is probing a possible link between anosmia and coronavirus but has not yet listed it as a symptom.

Americans could face fines for violating German rules

BY BRIAN FERGUSON
AND MARCUS KLOECKNER
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — Americans in Germany who violate restrictions aimed at stopping the spread of the coronavirus could face hefty fines from the government and disciplinary action from the military, a top Army official in Europe said Friday.

"This is serious business and you need to take it seriously," Maj. Gen. Chris Mohan, head of the 21st Theater Sustainment Command, said in a Facebook post.

"We tragically lost a teammate last weekend to this virus, so be assured, I am more determined than ever to protect our people with everything in my power," he said, referring to a longtime German employee

who died March 28 at a Kaiserslautern hospital.

Mohan last month issued a general order spelling out coronavirus restrictions for service members, Defense Department civilians, contractors and family members within the command's responsibility.

They include a curfew from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m., social distancing rules and bans on exercising or traveling more than 30 kilometers from home, or about 19 miles, except under certain circumstances.

American service members have already been hit with fines, which took effect March 23 in the state of Rheinland-Pfalz, where Ramstein Air Base and several other U.S. bases are located, including Panzer Kaserne, where the 21st TSC is headquartered.

Japan's travel ban allows some military personnel

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Some U.S. military personnel are still able to come to Japan despite a policy imposed Friday that bars entry for those arriving from the United States and 72 other countries.

Japan's travel ban comes as the nation reports its biggest daily increase in new coronavirus cases to date with 277 people, including 97 in Tokyo, testing positive Thursday, according to Kyodo News. Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare reported 2,617 cases and 63 deaths from the virus in the country as of Friday morning.

"While the [Government of Japan] has barred travelers from certain countries, they are allowing SOFA (status of forces agreement) persons to

fly into Japan," U.S. Forces Japan states on its website. A SOFA defines the legal status of the U.S. armed forces stationed in host countries.

Some travelers have had difficulty with airlines allowing them to board flights bound for Japan or with Japan's Ministry of Health allowing them to avoid quarantine in the immediate vicinity of the airport after arriving, the website states.

"Any SOFA members who are authorized to travel and will be arriving in Japan on or after April third will be quarantined in the vicinity of the airport unless they have an exemption memo issued from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," USFJ spokesman Air Force Col. Robert Firman told Stars and Stripes in an email Friday.

Stars and Stripes reporter Hana Kusumoto contributed to this report.

Navy reports first positive virus case at Sasebo base

BY JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO—Sasebo Naval Base in southwestern Japan has confirmed one case of coronavirus, its first, the installation's commander announced in a video posted to Facebook on Friday.

"So, like it or not, the COVID-19 pandemic is no longer a distant news story," said Capt. Brad Stallings, using the new coronavirus' official name. "It is here now in the Sasebo community."

The person who contracted the virus has been in quarantine "since they arrived in Sasebo" and is receiving medical care, he added.

Stallings said he could provide no further information on the individual. "I can't tell you whether the individual is assigned to the base, one of our tenant commands or one of the ships here," he said.

The Defense Department on March 27 ordered base commanders to refrain from reporting case-by-case coronavirus updates, citing a security concern. The Pentagon instead plans a "daily public update" on reporting totals of cases among service members, civilian employees and contractors.

DOD on Thursday reported 893 cases among service members and one death. The number of cases, including uniformed personnel, civilian employees, contractors and family members, was 1,550 that day. An updated figure was unavailable Friday.

Stallings said the city of Sasebo reported three cases of its own.

Stallings said the person sickened at Sasebo may interact only with caregivers. The risk of transmission from that person is low; a team is tracing the individual's previous contacts to identify any possible exposure, he said.

Clear skies tempt Europeans; UK's queen advises restraint

Associated Press

LONDON — As warm, sunny weather beckoned across Europe, Queen Elizabeth II appealed to Britons on Sunday to exercise self-discipline in "an increasingly challenging time" as the country saw a record 24-hour jump in coronavirus deaths that even outpaced the daily toll in hard-hit Italy.

As of Sunday, Britain has recorded 4,934 virus deaths overall among more than 47,000 cases. Those coming down with the virus in the U.K. include Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the health secretary, England's chief medical official and Prince Charles, heir to the throne.

There are wide fears that Johnson's Conservative government did not take the virus

seriously enough at first and that beautiful spring weather will tempt Britons and others to break social distancing rules.

In an address to the nation to be televised later Sunday, the 93-year-old queen said that the pandemic had caused enormous disruptions, bringing grief, financial difficulties and daunting challenges to everybody. It is only the fourth time since her reign began in 1953 that she has given such an address.

"I hope in the years to come everyone will be able to take pride in how they responded to this challenge," she said in pre-released remarks. "And those who come after us will say that the Britons of this generation were as strong as any."

The queen's son, Charles, on Friday remotely opened a vast

temporary hospital for corona patients in a London convention center after completing a week of isolation. Johnson still had a fever Friday, but his infected pregnant fiancée, Carrie Symonds, tweeted that she is "on the mend" after a week in bed.

As the sun shone and the temperatures rose toward 68 degrees Fahrenheit, Health Secretary Matt Hancock said that sunbathing in public places was not allowed, and the U.K. might even ban outdoor exercise if people still "flout the rules."

"The vast majority of people are following the public health advice, which is absolutely critical, and staying at home," Hancock told Sky TV. "But there are a small minority of people who are still not doing that."

Soldiers face quarantine in Hawaii after returning from Pacific Pathways drills

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — Nearly 1,400 soldiers who have trained in Thailand since February as part of Pacific Pathways will soon head home to Hawaii — and to a mandated 14-day quarantine to prevent the possible spread of coronavirus.

"Our soldiers in Thailand will be returning home in the next few weeks," Maj. Gen. James Jarrard, commander of the 25th Infantry Division, said Thursday evening during a livestream on Facebook.

"The redeployment of our soldiers will be done in the same thoughtful manner we have implemented for all of our soldiers returning throughout this crisis," he said. "It will be focused on carefully and prudently mitigating the risk of exposure to maintain the safety and well-being of all. It will also reemphasize our commitment to the state of Hawaii and the city and county of Honolulu in slowing the spread of COVID-19."

Hawaii had 351 coronavirus cases as of Saturday, with four deaths. More than three-quarters of the cases were linked to residents returning home from other areas, according to the Hawaii Department of Health.

The soldiers participated in Cobra Gold from Feb. 26 through March 6, then shifted location in Thailand for the Hanuman Guardian exercise. Pacific Pathways is an initiative aimed at keeping soldiers deployed in the Pacific for longer periods by moving them to successive exercises in the region.

About 1,440 soldiers participated in Hanuman Guardian, and roughly 1,350 of them will be returning to Hawaii in the next few weeks, said 25th ID spokesman Lt. Col. Adam Hallmark in a written response to a query from Stars and Stripes.

During daily Facebook streaming updates, Army Garrison Hawaii officials have been peppered with questions by family members about the safety of soldiers training in Thailand.

Officials have said that medical personnel in Thailand checked soldiers daily for fever and other coronavirus symptoms. Those displaying any symptoms were evaluated by medical providers.

"Both U.S. units and the Royal Thai Army have reduced the size of our formations during training, and we are attempting to maximize social distancing," Army Garrison Hawaii said in an online update.

Puerto Rico finds cache of crucial medical supplies

Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — The suspected mismanagement of essential supplies during Hurricane Maria turned out to be a boon for Puerto Rico as it fights a rise in coronavirus cases.

Health Secretary Lorenzo Gonzalez said Saturday that officials discovered a cache of urgently needed personal protective equipment at a hospital on the nearby island of Vieques that remains closed since the Category 4 storm hit the U.S. territory in September 2017.

He said that the equipment includes face masks, gloves, gowns and face shields that were in good condition and would be distributed to health institutions.

“They’re very useful at this moment,” said Gonzalez, who became the island’s newest health secretary last week, the third in the span of two weeks.

He also said that officials recently located a warehouse with medicine and medical equipment worth \$4 million donated

during Hurricane Maria, but nearly all of it had expired. He did not provide details about what specific items were found.

Puerto Rico has reported 18 deaths related to COVID-19, including that of a nurse, and more than 450 confirmed cases, including several police officers who have joined health workers in demanding more personal protective equipment.

Gonzalez said that he has ordered an investigation into why those supplies were abandoned in Vieques. The announcement comes two months after a group of Puerto Ricans discovered and broke into a warehouse filled with emergency supplies in southern Puerto Rico at a time when local officials sought urgent help for those affected by a string of earthquakes. Other similar discoveries have been made since Maria hit.

Gonzalez said the government still needs other equipment including testing kits and ventilators, noting that there are only 500 available for an island of 3.2 million people with high rates of asthma.

Cuomo: NY gets 1,100 ventilators with help from China, Oregon

Associated Press

NEW YORK — New York secured a planeload of ventilators from China on Saturday, and Oregon was sending a shipment of its own to battle the coronavirus pandemic at its U.S. core, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said. But the governor’s startling plan to force hospitals elsewhere in the state to give spare ventilators to the fight in New York City apparently hadn’t yet materialized, a day after he ordered them to surrender 20% of any unused supply to the National Guard for temporary redistribution. The state got 1,000 ventilators after the Chinese government facilitated a donation from billionaires Jack Ma and Joseph Tsai, the co-founders of the Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba, Cuomo said. He added that the state of Oregon had volunteered to send 140 more breathing machines.

The influx offered some hope after the governor repeatedly warned that the state’s supply of the vital machines would be exhausted in days if the number of critically ill coronavirus patients kept growing at the current rate.

“It’s going to make a significant difference for us,” Cuomo said.

New York is the pandemic’s U.S. epicenter, with more than 122,000 confirmed cases as of Sunday morning. More than 3,500 people statewide have died, and about 15,000 coronavirus patients are hospitalized. More than 4,100 are in intensive care — many, if not all, of them needing ventilators.

The outbreak is heavily concentrated in the New York City metropolitan area.

Cuomo’s announcement came a day after he said that he would have the National Guard collect and “redeploy” ventilators that some hospitals weren’t using.

He alluded Saturday to the plan, but details were unclear.

“We find what equipment we have, we use it the best we can,” the Democrat said Saturday, saying that he’d seek 20% of “unused and available” ventilators, a number he pegged at 500 in all.

The idea has alarmed Republican politicians and some hospital leaders upstate. They said that it would leave people in their areas vulnerable and pit the state’s regions against one another.

National Guard spokesman Eric Durr said Saturday that the collection had not yet begun.

No at-home testing available yet

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Home testing for the new coronavirus may sound like a good idea, but U.S. regulators have said that it’s still too risky.

They’ve stopped companies that quickly launched home-testing kits until they can show that their products can accurately detect the virus.

For now, the only way Americans can get tested is at hospitals, clinics or drive-thru sites, with a doctor’s order.

After a botched rollout, testing in the U.S. has ramped up thanks to high-volume testing machines and new rapid tests. Last week, federal officials said that total tests topped 1.4 million, and labs are processing nearly 100,000 tests daily. That’s the threshold many experts have said is needed to track the virus.

Still, testing continues to be constrained by shortages of medical supplies like gloves, masks and swabs.

Meanwhile, the Food and Drug Administration is aggressively pushing new options onto the market.

Genetic tests are the gold standard for detecting COVID-19 infections. New, quicker

ones are replacing the original laboratory tests that have to be manually mixed and developed.

The idea behind both tests is the same: chemical solutions are used to isolate the virus from the patient sample, grab its genetic material and then reproduce it millions of times until it’s detectable with a computer.

New rapid tests, such as the one by Abbott Laboratories, automate the process, cutting the time from four to six hours to about 15 minutes.

Abbott said that it plans to begin shipping 50,000 tests per day this month. U.S. officials said that they’d go first to remote areas with less access to labs.

Accurately testing for the coronavirus involves several steps, including carefully swabbing the nose or throat to collect a sample, placing it in a sterile tube, storing it below 46 degrees Fahrenheit and then shipping it to a lab within three days.

Health officials have warned that a number of things could go wrong if consumers try to swab, store and ship their own samples, potentially resulting in testing errors and undetected infections.

Jews celebrate Passover with alterations

Associated Press

Passover and its epic story — how the Jewish people escaped to freedom after plagues struck their oppressors — are uniquely resonant this year, as Jews find ways to honor the holiday amid the outbreak of what feels like a real-life plague.

The coronavirus has forced Jewish families to limit the celebratory Passover meals known as seders from extended families and friends to small, one-household affairs.

But the pandemic hasn't cut the connection that Jews from all backgrounds feel to one of their calendar's most important holidays — and, for many, the global crisis has deepened its meaning.

Rabbi Noam Marans, director of interreligious relations at the American Jewish Committee, described the gravity of Passover during the coronavirus by reciting a key portion of the Haggadah, the sacred text

Jews use on the holiday.

“This year we are enslaved — next year we will be free.’ That aspiration is very real this year,” Marans said, looking ahead to a future victory over the disease.

As the all-are-welcome spirit of seders is constrained by public health rules set up to help stop the virus, more liberal Jewish communities are embracing digital connections with socially distant family and friends.

Jews in all branches of the faith are also taking the opportunity to ensure those in high-risk populations have enough of the food, including the unleavened bread known as matzo, which represents their ancestors' exodus from bondage in Egypt.

The Chabad-Lubavitch movement of Hasidism has expanded its annual distribution of “seder-to-go” kits, which had typically been prepared for hospitalized or otherwise

housebound Jews, to help serve families and individuals confined to their homes during a quarantine. Chabad projects it will distribute 250,000 seder kits throughout North America.

Steve Weinstein, 62, is preparing for a seder for two this year — just Weinstein and his wife, without the extended family they typically host in Milwaukee.

“It's very sad not to have everybody together,” Weinstein said.

Although he's only started to think about the broader message of this more somber Passover, Weinstein said, “we'll find ways to be able to equate” the holiday's biblical narrative with the outbreak. The virus could be viewed in one sense, he said, as the oppressive rule that Jews eventually overcame.

With the coronavirus shaking up Passover tradition, different branches of the faith are offering their own seder guidance.

For those permitted and planning to use Zoom, FaceTime or other digital platforms for a virtual seder, the Union of Reform Judaism created a guide for creative ways to get online guests involved.

For Orthodox Jews, the six leading organizations that made a unique joint plea last month for worshippers to curb outside interactions during the pandemic released further united guidance on Passover last month.

That Orthodox guidance asks that observers only purchase “the truly ESSENTIAL” Passover items and includes a narrow exemption for households to welcome any seder guests: Outsiders must be alone or “absolutely unable to prepare” for the holiday, must undergo a two-week quarantine in advance, must maintain social distancing, and must display no symptoms of the virus alongside their hosts.

Pope celebrates Palm Sunday without public

Associated Press

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis celebrated Palm Sunday Mass without the public, since the traditional ceremony in St. Peter's Square was scrapped because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Normally, tens of thousands of Romans, tourists and pilgrims, clutching olive tree branches or palm fronds would have flocked to an outdoor Mass led by the pontiff. Instead, Francis was leading the ceremony inside St. Peter's Basilica, which seemed even more cavernous than usual because it was so empty.

Besides his aides, a few invited prelates, nuns and laypeople were present, sitting solo in the first pews and staggered yards apart to reduce the risks of contagion.

Looking pensive, Francis

blessed braided palms held by the others, then held one himself.

Palm Sunday solemnly opens Holy Week leading up to Easter, which on this year falls on April 12. The Vatican announced Francis will preside over all the traditional ceremonies without the public in keeping with lockdown measures in Italy and at the Vatican to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Among the usual events is the Good Friday Way of the Cross procession. This year, instead of the customary candlelit procession at Rome's Colosseum, the Way of the Cross will be presided over by Francis in St. Peter's Square.

The Vatican said there are seven cases of COVID-19 among the residents or employees of the tiny independent city state.

Trump hints IG firing was payback for impeachment

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump suggested that he fired the inspector general for the intelligence community in retaliation for his impeachment, saying the official was wrong to provide an anonymous whistleblower complaint to Congress as the law requires.

Trump called Michael Atkinson a “disgrace” after informing Congress late Friday night that he intended to fire him. In letters to the House and Senate intelligence committees, Trump wrote that he had lost confidence in Atkinson but gave little detail.

A day later, Trump was more blunt, telling reporters at the White House: “I thought he did a terrible job, absolutely terrible.” The president added: “He took a fake report and he took it to Congress with an emergency,

OK? Not a big Trump fan, that I can tell you.”

The whistleblower report was not fake, but a detailed complaint written by an anonymous intelligence official who described Trump's pressure on Ukraine to investigate Democrat Joe Biden and his son. Atkinson determined that the complaint was urgent and credible, and he was therefore required by law to disclose it to Congress, but he was overruled for weeks by the acting director of national intelligence, Joseph Maguire.

On Saturday, Trump questioned why Atkinson didn't speak to him about the complaint, though Atkinson's role is to provide independent oversight.

“Never came in to see me, never requested to see me,” Trump said. He added: “That man is a disgrace to IGs.”

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Thieves steal another Red Cross supply trailer

CA RIVERSIDE — A second Red Cross trailer loaded with emergency supplies was stolen from a Southern California office of the organization, police said.

Two men in a pickup drove into a Red Cross parking lot in Riverside, pried a lock, connected the trailer to their truck and left, a police statement said.

The trailer was used for establishing emergency shelters and was filled with cots, blankets and some masks worth about \$4,000.

Red Cross spokeswoman Brianna Kelly told The Press-Enterprise the supplies were not related to the coronavirus.

Man tries to set wife on fire over check

NM ALBUQUERQUE — A New Mexico man faces charges after police said he became enraged because he didn't qualify for a COVID-19-related stimulus check and tried to set his wife on fire.

The Albuquerque Journal reported Joe Macias was arrested following an argument with his disabled wife, where he allegedly doused her with gasoline.

The wife told police Macias was "upset because he did not qualify for the stimulus check."

According to police, Macias, 63, threw gas on his wife and their mobile home.

The wife told officers Macias then pulled out a cigarette and attempted to light it several times, but was unsuccessful due to the lighter having gasoline on it.

Exotic animals seized during narcotics search

TX MERCEDES — Authorities seized animals including a white Bengal tiger, bobcat, kinkajou, porcupines, llamas, emus and deer after finding them at a South Texas residence while executing a search warrant.

Drug Enforcement Administration Special Agent Sammy Parks said that the search warrant served at the home in Mercedes was related to a narcotics investigation.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department said that game wardens had to euthanize the bobcat and two deer because they were being held illegally without permits, and their origin was unknown. The statement said it wouldn't have been safe to reintroduce them into the native population.

Parks said the other animals were taken to the Austin Zoo for medical evaluation and rehabilitation if needed.

Miles of herring spawn measured in survey

AK SITKA — The Alaska Department of Fish and Game measured miles of herring spawn in Sitka Sound, an official said.

A fish and game official said more than 4 miles of spawn was measured in an aerial survey on the Kruzof Island shoreline, The Daily Sitka Sentinel reported.

About 83% of the herring returning this year are expected to be age 4, which is generally considered below marketable size.

But the returning biomass is expected to be one of the largest in the fishery's history, the department said.

Eggs from invasive moths found on ship

MD BALTIMORE — Agriculture specialists discovered eggs from a nonnative species of moth known to harm plant life onboard a cargo ship that docked at the Port of Baltimore last month, U.S. Customs and Border Protection announced.

U.S. Department of Agriculture experts determined the eggs were laid by an Asian gypsy moth, a "voracious pest" that can pose a "major threat" to forests in North America, according to the department's Invasive Species Information Center.

Inspectors found the eggs under a hatch door on a coal freighter, Customs and Border Protection said in a statement. The ship was confirmed to have made trips in China and Japan during the summer of 2019 and had arrived in Baltimore from the United Kingdom, the agency said.

SEC orders fraudulent concert promoter to pay

ME FREEPORT — The Securities and Exchange Commission said it has obtained a judgment against a Maine concert promoter who it charged with operating a financial fraud related to Christian music events.

The commission charged Jeffrey Wall of Freeport and his business, The Lighthouse Events, a year ago. The judgment against Wall finds that he and Lighthouse are liable for fraudulently raising more than \$3 million in unregistered offerings from some 145 investors, the commission said.

Wall promised the investors their money would go toward the promotion of and hosting of Christian music events, but

he used the money for other purposes.

A court has ordered Wall and Lighthouse to pay disgorgement of ill-gotten gains as well as interest and civil penalties, the commission said.

Church removes statue during restoration work

UT SALT LAKE CITY — The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints plans to temporarily remove the Angel Moroni statue from its Salt Lake Temple during restoration work.

The work will include the removal of stones on temple spires that were displaced during a March 18 earthquake, church spokesman Daniel Woodruff said.

The Angel Moroni statue on top of the temple lost its trumpet in the 5.7 magnitude earthquake that struck last month.

Feds: Glider in crash was lacking equipment

VT MORRISTOWN — A glider that crashed in a heavily wooded section of Vermont's Sterling Mountain in 2018, killing the pilot and two passengers aboard, was overloaded and underequipped, according to federal investigators.

The plane showed no signs of mechanical failure in other parts of the aircraft, according to a report released last week by the National Transportation Safety Board.

Investigators note in the report that the glider weighed around 50 pounds over the plane's allowable maximum, the Burlington Free Press reported.

The plane apparently stalled and spun out of control during what was supposed to be a 30-minute sightseeing tour.

From wire reports

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Kobe, Duncan, Garnett headline Hall class

Associated Press

Kobe Bryant's resume has yet another entry to validate his greatness: He's now, officially, a Hall of Famer.

And he's got plenty of elite company in the 2020 class, one that may be as glitzy as any.

Bryant, who died in a helicopter crash on Jan. 26, and fellow NBA greats Tim Duncan and Kevin Garnett headlined a nine-person group announced Saturday as this year's class of enshrinees into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame.

"An amazing class," Duncan said.

They all got into the Hall in their first year as finalists, as did WNBA great Tamika Catchings. Others had to wait a bit longer for the good news: Two-time NBA champion coach Rudy Tomjanovich finally got his call, as did longtime Baylor women's coach Kim Mulkey, 1,000-game winner Barbara Stevens of Bentley and three-time Final Four coach Eddie Sutton.

They were the eight finalists who were announced in February, and the panel of 24 voters who were tasked to decide who merited selection wound up choosing them

all. Also headed to the Hall this year: former FIBA Secretary General Patrick Baumann, selected as a direct-elect by the international committee.

"He was the head of FIBA and this was a way to honor him," Hall of Fame Chairman and enshrinee Jerry Colangelo said. "It was a special thing done through that committee."

Bryant died about three weeks before the Hall of Fame said — as if there was going to be any doubt — that he was a finalist. Duncan and Garnett were also widely perceived to be locks to be part of this class; they were both 15-time NBA All-Stars, and Bryant was an 18-time selection.

Bryant's death has been part of a jarring start of the year for basketball: Commissioner Emeritus David Stern died on Jan. 1, Bryant and his daughter Gianna were among nine who died in the crash in late January, and the NBA shut down March 11 as the coronavirus pandemic began to grip the U.S.

"Obviously, we wish that he was here with us to celebrate," Vanessa Bryant, Kobe's wife, said on the ESPN broadcast of

the class announcement. "But it's definitely the peak of his NBA career and every accomplishment that he had as an athlete was a steppingstone to be here. So we're incredibly proud of him."

Bryant was also a five-time champion with the Los Angeles Lakers, just as Duncan was with the San Antonio Spurs.

"This is an incredibly special class, for many reasons," Colangelo said.

Garnett is the only player in NBA history with at least 25,000 points, 10,000 rebounds, 5,000 assists, 1,500 blocks and 1,500 steals. He also was part of Boston's 2008 NBA title.

"This is the culmination," Garnett said. "All those hours ... this is what you do it for, right here. To be able to be called 'Hall of Famer' is everything."

Duncan spent the entirety of his career with the Spurs.

"It's kind of the end of the journey here," Duncan, on the broadcast, said of his enshrinement. "It was an incredible career that I enjoyed so much. To call it a dream come true isn't even doing any justice to it. I never dreamt I'd be at this point."

2020 Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame biographies

A look at the newest members of the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, announced on Saturday:

Kobe Bryant

Key stats: 25.0 points, 5.2 rebounds, 4.7 assists per game in 20 NBA seasons with the Los Angeles Lakers.

Career accomplishments: Five-time NBA champion (2000, 2001, 2002, 2009, 2010), 18-time All-Star, 2008 NBA MVP, No. 4 scorer in NBA history, 15-time All-NBA player, scored career-high 81 points vs. Toronto on Jan. 22, 2006, four-time All-Star Game MVP, two-time NBA Finals MVP, two-time Olympic gold medalist (2008, 2012), 2018 Academy Award winner for "Dear Basketball."

Tim Duncan

Key stats: 19.0 points, 10.8 rebounds, 3.0 assists, 2.2 blocks per game in 19 NBA seasons with the San Antonio Spurs.

Career accomplishments: Five-time NBA champion (1999, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2014), 15-time All-Star, two-time NBA MVP (2002, 2003), 15-time All-NBA player, 1998 NBA rookie of the year, 1997 NCAA player of the year at Wake Forest, one of three players in NBA history to be part of more than 1,000 regu-

lar-season wins.

Kevin Garnett

Key stats: 17.8 points, 10.0 rebounds, 3.7 assists per game in 21 NBA seasons with the Minnesota Timberwolves, Boston Celtics and Brooklyn Nets.

Career accomplishments: 2008 NBA champion, 15-time All-Star, 2004 NBA MVP, 2008 NBA defensive player of the year, 2000 Olympic gold medalist, is only player in NBA history with at least 25,000 points, 10,000 rebounds, 5,000 assists, 1,500 blocks and 1,500 steals.

Tamika Catchings

Key stats: 16.1 points, 7.3 rebounds, 3.3 assists, 2.4 steals per game in 15 WNBA seasons with the Indiana Fever.

Career accomplishments: 2012 WNBA champion and WNBA Finals MVP, 2011 WNBA MVP, 10-time All-Star, five-time defensive player of the year, seven-time steals champion, four-time Olympic gold medalist (2004, 2008, 2012, 2016), two-time world champion (2002, 2010), 1998 NCAA champion at Tennessee.

Rudy Tomjanovich

Key stats: 527-416 record in parts of 13 NBA seasons as coach of Houston Rockets and Los Angeles Lakers; 17.4 points, 8.1 rebounds.

2.0 assists per game in 11 seasons as player with Rockets.

Career accomplishments: Two-time NBA champion coach with Houston (1994, 1995), 2000 Olympic gold medal as coach, five-time NBA All-Star as player, career rebounding leader at Michigan, No. 2 pick in 1970 NBA draft.

Eddie Sutton

Key stats: 806-326 record in parts of 37 seasons at Creighton, Arkansas, Kentucky, Oklahoma State and San Francisco.

Career accomplishments: Two-time AP national coach of the year (1978, 1986), took three teams to the Final Four (Arkansas in 1978, Oklahoma State in 1995 and 2004), one of 12 coaches recognized by the NCAA for more than 800 Division I victories, nine regular-season conference titles, eight conference tournament titles.

Kim Mulkey

Key stats: 604-101 record in 20 seasons as Baylor women's coach.

Career accomplishments: Three-time NCAA champion coach with Baylor (2005, 2012, 2019), two-time national champion player at Louisiana Tech (AIAW in 1981, NCAA in 1982), two-time AP national women's coach of the year (2012, 2019), combined career record as a Louisiana Tech player,

Louisiana Tech assistant and Baylor coach of 1,164-175 (.869 winning percentage), now a member of eight Halls of Fame.

Barbara Stevens

Key stats: 1,058-291 record in 43 seasons at Clark, Massachusetts and Bentley.

Career accomplishments: Coached 2014 NCAA Division II national champions at Bentley with a 35-0 record, five-time WBCA Division II national coach of the year (1992, 1999, 2001, 2013, 2014), 16-time Northeast-10 coach of the year, coached Bentley for final 28 of its Division II-record 33 consecutive winning seasons and for Division II-record five consecutive 30-win seasons (1988-89 through 1992-93).

Patrick Baumann

Key stats: Secretary general of FIBA from 2003 through his death in 2018.

Career accomplishments: A player, referee and coach before joining the global basketball governing body FIBA, member of the International Olympic Committee, chair of the IOC Coordination Commission for the 2028 Los Angeles Games, viewed as major proponent of the growth of the 3x3 game and its inclusion in the Olympic program.

Trump pushes for quick return of pro sports

Associated Press

President Donald Trump met by phone with many U.S. pro sports leaders Saturday to discuss how that industry has been affected by the global coronavirus pandemic, saying he was looking forward to the resumption of competitions “as soon as we can.”

The NBA, NHL, NFL and Major League Baseball were all represented on the call by their commissioners — Adam Silver, Gary Bettman, Roger Goodell and Rob Manfred, respectively.

“I want fans back in the arenas,” Trump said later in a briefing at the White House. “I think it’s ... whenever we’re ready. As soon as we can, obviously. And the fans want to be back, too. They want to see basketball and baseball and football and hockey. They want to

see their sports. They want to go out onto the golf courses and breathe nice, clean, beautiful fresh air.”

A person with direct knowledge of what was discussed on the call said Trump believes the NFL season — scheduled to begin Sept. 10 — will start on time with fans in seats.

A second person with knowledge of the call said that some commissioners, Silver among them, stressed to Trump that they are working on multiple plans to resume their seasons but cautioned that none of those plans can be enacted without clearance from public health officials. The people spoke to AP on the condition of anonymity because no discussion points from the call were to be revealed publicly.

Others on the call included PGA Tour Commissioner Jay

Monahan, Indianapolis Motor Speedway owner Roger Penske, UFC President Dana White, World Wrestling Entertainment’s Vince McMahon, MLS Commissioner Don Garber, WNBA Commissioner Cathy Englebert, LPGA Commissioner Mike Whan and Breeders’ Cup president Drew Fleming.

The NBA was the first of the major U.S. sports leagues to shut down on March 11, doing so after Utah Jazz center Rudy Gobert tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. Other leagues quickly followed, and hundreds of games have already been lost.

NASCAR gave teams a tentative schedule to resume racing on May 24 with the Coca-Cola 600 at Charlotte Motor Speedway. North Carolina’s stay-at-home order is through April 30. Penske has rescheduled the In-

dianapolis 500 to Aug. 23.

Trump even addressed Little League players on Saturday, tweeting to tell them, “hang in there! We will get you back out on the fields, and know that you will be playing baseball soon. We will get through this together, and bats will be swinging before you know it. In the meantime, take care of mom and dad, and know that this will not be forever!”

Trump even said the need for social distancing is affecting his 14-year-old son Barron. The president described his son as a good athlete and soccer fan.

Trump said his son is happy, but would be happier if he were able to enjoy sports again.

“We have to get back,” Trump said. “We have to get back. Remember that. We have to get back and we have to get back soon.”

Saban: More teaching time instead of longer fall camp

Associated Press

Alabama coach Nick Saban doesn’t believe extending pre-season camp for college football teams around the country is necessarily the best way to get them ready for the season.

Saban said Thursday that he’d prefer some “teaching sessions on the field” over the summer to prepare for camp, even if it is in shorts and T-shirts. The coronavirus pandemic led to the cancellation of spring sports, including football practices, across the nation.

Saban isn’t sold on the idea of extending fall camp.

“If you look at statistics historically on concussions, injuries, the most concentrated time that you practice and not play is in fall camp,” Saban said on a conference call with reporters. “You have more practices, you have to spend more time on the field. So I don’t know that increasing that is going to be beneficial in getting people ready to play.

“I think if you could do simulated training programs in the summertime that wouldn’t involve that much contact, or even any contact, that would be just as beneficial at that point.”

In the meantime, he’s still doing the 7:30 a.m. meetings with staff — just online. Parts of the afternoon are devoted to video conferences and phone calls with recruits.

Saban said he didn’t want to address speculation whether there would be a season.

“I never really answer hypothetical questions,” he said. “I’m sure that everybody’s going to want me to speculate on what’s going to happen in the future, and nobody really knows. It’s very uncertain. It’s uncertain times.”

“I think we have to fight through the process of what we need to do on a day-to-day basis to make good choices and decisions, to the right thing at the right time regardless of the circumstance.”

Olympic Athletes Village could house virus patients

Associated Press

TOKYO — The under-construction Athletes Village for the Tokyo Olympics could be used as a temporary hospital for coronavirus patients.

Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike has been talking about the possibility of occupying the massive development on Tokyo Bay, which is to house up to 11,000 Olympic and 4,400 Paralympic athletes and staff during the games.

The complex, which will eventually include 24 buildings, is expected to remain unoccupied with the Olympics delayed for 16 months.

Koike said the Athletes Village was “one of the options, but the village is not finished yet. We are talking about places that are available even today or tomorrow and checking a possibility one by one.”

As another alternative, Koike said on Friday that the Tokyo city government would buy a hotel to house patients.

Through Thursday, Japan had reported about 3,300 cases of coronavirus with 74 deaths, according to the health ministry. Tokyo reported 97 new cases on Thursday with officials looking for more beds in the capital as totals rise.

The coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people and can include a fever, coughing and mild pneumonia. The risk of death is greater for older adults and people with other health problems.

The 5,600 units in the Athletes Village will be renovated after the Olympics and sold. Almost 1,000 are now for sale, or have been sold.

The Athletes Village is a joint venture involving 10 major companies and the city of Tokyo. The complex will be known as Harumi Flag and the developers include Mitsui Fudosan Residential Co., Nomura Real Estate Development Co., and Sumitomo Realty & Development Co.