

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Acting Navy secretary resigns

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly resigned Tuesday amid mounting criticism for his disparaging comments about the commander of the USS Theodore Roosevelt, Capt. Brett Crozier, who he fired over a leaked letter requesting aid for the coronavirus outbreak aboard the ship.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper said Tuesday in a statement that he had accepted Modly's resignation.

"He resigned on his own accord, putting the Navy and the sailors above self so that the USS Theodore Roosevelt, and the Navy as an institution, can move forward," Esper said.

Acting Army Undersecretary James McPherson has been appointed as the acting Navy secretary.

During President Donald Trump's daily coronavirus news briefing at the White House, he said that he played no role in Modly's resignation, despite telling reporters a day

before that he might intervene in the dispute regarding Crozier's removal.

Esper is now considering "what to do" with Crozier and looking for a solution within regular Navy channels, Trump said.

Modly's resignation comes after calls from several Democrat lawmakers asking Esper to fire the Navy secretary for comments he made about Crozier to the Roosevelt crew, saying that he was "too naïve or too stupid to be the commanding officer of a ship like this."

"Acting Secretary of the Navy Thomas Modly's remarks to the crew show that he is in no way fit to lead our Navy through this trying time. Secretary Esper should immediately fire him," Rep. Elaine Luria, D-Va., a Navy veteran, said in a statement.

Modly announced Crozier's firing Thursday at the Pentagon after the letter that the captain emailed requesting immediate assistance for the aircraft carrier's virus outbreak was published two days earlier in the

San Francisco Chronicle.

The Roosevelt has 230 positive COVID-19 cases as of Tuesday, according to the Navy.

Modly traveled to the Roosevelt — now in port in Guam — where he disparaged the fired captain in a speech to the crew of nearly 5,000 sailors, according to a recording of his remarks leaked Monday.

Modly defended his words Monday, but apologized hours later, saying he did not think Crozier is naïve or stupid.

"I believe, precisely because he is not naïve and stupid, that he sent his alarming email with the intention of getting it into the public domain in an effort to draw public attention to the situation on his ship," he said in his apology statement. "I apologize for any confusion this choice of words may have caused."

Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, supported Modly's resignation.

"It is my understanding that acting Secretary Modly removed Capt. Crozier against

the advice of senior Navy uniformed leadership and without completion of a proper investigation," he said Tuesday in a prepared statement. "Also troubling was the manner in which [he] addressed the crew of the USS Theodore Roosevelt and made disparaging comments about their former commander, Capt. Crozier."

McPherson, a retired admiral who served for 26 years, is a "smart, capable and professional leader who will restore confidence and stability in the Navy during these challenging times," Esper said in his statement.

Modly had been the acting Navy secretary since November when former Navy Secretary Richard Spencer was fired by Esper for loss of confidence due to his handling of the case of Navy SEAL Chief Petty Officer Edward Gallagher, who was accused of committing war crimes. Gallagher was acquitted of murder but found guilty of posing in a photo with the dead body of an Islamic State fighter.

Pacific newspaper delivery suspended

To our Stars and Stripes community,

The mission of Stars and Stripes is to provide news and information to the U.S. military community, including active-duty and reserve service members, Department of Defense civilians, veterans, contractors and their families. While our online services have become a large part of our operations, our printed newspaper remains an essential part of this mission.

The impact of the corona-

virus continues to be felt by individuals and communities around the world. Given the rapidly changing environment, we are taking measures to do our part in slowing its spread. At this time, we have made the difficult decision to temporarily suspend delivery of the Stars and Stripes print edition in the Pacific theater effective April 10. This measure will help protect our employees and help prevent the spread of the virus in the communities we serve.

When we are confident there is no longer a risk to health and safety, we will resume delivery of the paper in your area.

It is still our top priority to provide the necessary information you need. We encourage you to visit stripes.com and follow us on social media to stay updated on current developments impacting the military community. We are updating our online outlets 24/7 with the latest information available and will continue to do so without

interruption. You can also sign up for our free newsletters at www.stripes.com/newsletters to stay up to date on the coronavirus pandemic.

Thank you for your understanding, but most importantly, stay healthy and be safe during this unprecedented time. If we can assist you in any way, please contact us at memberservices@stripes.com.

Thank you,
Max Lederer, Publisher

Marines to get better-fitting body armor

Stars and Stripes

The Marine Corps has begun issuing better-fitting protective vests that are more streamlined and significantly lighter than the current model.

The Plate Carrier Generation III vest can be easily adapted for different missions, and removed and reassembled in seconds, Marine Corps Systems Command said in a statement released Tuesday. When

coupled with protective plates, the system guards against bullets and fragmentation, the statement said.

Tests of a prototype of the new vest, which is around 25% lighter than the legacy system, showed that it also significantly reduces fatigue in the field, the statement said.

“When you lighten the load, Marines can get to their destinations faster and they’re going to have more endurance, which

increases their lethality,” said Lt. Col. Andrew Konicki, program manager for infantry combat equipment at MCSC.

By eliminating excess bulk and cutting out the shoulders to allow for a better fit for rifle stock, the new system also improves Marines’ ability to shoot and move, said Lt. Col. Bryan Leahy, of the individual armor team at MCSC.

Nearly 15,000 more Marines, both male and female, will be

able to fit into the new body armor, which is available in more sizes than the legacy system, the statement said.

A closer fit to the body provides increased protection, while reducing the risk of injury due to improper fit, it said.

Infantry units are among the first to get the new body armor, which is expected to be available to all Marines by approximately October 2022.

Halt on PCS travel could be extended through mid-July

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon stand-down on all travel — including for military moves — could be extended into mid-July, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David Goldfein said in a virtual town hall meeting on the official Air Force Facebook page Monday.

Service members and their families have been barred from domestic travel, including permanent change of station moves, since a Defense Department stop-movement order went into effect March 16. Overseas travel was included in that restriction March 25.

The order is currently set to expire May 11, but defense officials are considering enacting a 60-day extension as the world battles the coronavirus pandemic, the Air Force’s top officer said in the town hall.

“We are probably going to see an extension to the stop movement for some period of time,” Goldfein said.

On Monday, Defense Secretary Mark Esper tasked his undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness with determining whether to extend the department-wide travel restriction or “turn that determination over to services May 12,” Goldfein said during the town hall.

“The question that everyone

is asking is, ‘What happens on May 12?’” Goldfein said in the livestream.

Coronavirus predictive models indicate that the pandemic is ultimately not expected to be “that much better than where we’re sitting at here today” by May 12, he said. April and May will continue to be “very tough” in the United States as infection rates are expected to climb, Goldfein added, citing his study of predictive models.

“I think we’re about to have a couple of our toughest weeks here in the country,” he said. “June seems to be about where we’re going to level, and then July and August look to be — potentially — recovery months.”

“I could be totally off, but that’s what we’re planning for right now,” he added.

Decision makers are also taking school schedules into consideration as they develop a possible new timeline, Goldfein said in the livestream.

“If families are going to move, we want to get families in place before school starts,” Goldfein said. “Sixty days will take you from May until July — does that get families in place based on what we think the [infection rate] curve is going to look like?”

Esper is expected to make a decision on stop movement “this week or next,” he said.

Pentagon: 2K troops tested positive, 8 DOD-linked deaths

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Eight people tied to the Defense Department have died of complications related to the coronavirus, the Pentagon announced Wednesday in data that also showed more than 2,000 troops had tested positive for the disease.

The latest death included in the Defense Department’s daily tally of coronavirus cases was that of a defense contractor who worked at Robins Air Force Base in Georgia. That person was the second defense contractor to die after contracting the virus. Five DOD civilian workers and one New Jersey Army National Guardsman have also died.

Officials at Robins AFB announced the contractor’s April 3 death on Monday. It was not immediately clear Wednesday why that death was not included in the Pentagon data until almost a week later. However, Pentagon officials have acknowledged challenges amassing information for daily release from across the DOD’s worldwide operations.

Air Force officials declined to provide additional information about the contractor, including the person’s age, citing federal medical privacy law.

Pentagon officials have taken precautions in an effort

to protect troops, including this week ordering people who cannot maintain six feet of space from others to don protective face coverings. But they have also repeatedly said the force is largely young and fit, making them likely to recover if they contract the virus.

The Pentagon’s latest data also showed at least 2,120 military troops had tested positive for the virus by Wednesday. Among them, 144 had recovered from the disease and 61 were hospitalized. DOD reported a total of 1,641 cases among its troops on Tuesday.

The Navy remains the hardest hit service with 513 active cases of the virus — including 286 among the crew of the stricken aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt, according to CNN. The Army on Wednesday reported 470 active cases, the Air Force reported 351 and the Marines reported 140. The data also showed 249 cases among National Guard troops.

Pentagon officials acknowledged a discrepancy of 252 active cases between the Pentagon’s data and information compiled by the services, but they did not offer an explanation for the difference.

Another 1,040 military-linked individuals had tested positive for the virus as of Wednesday, according to the Pentagon.

Lawmaker says White House should seek DOD help with kits

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON—The White House should enlist more help from the Pentagon as it battles the spreading coronavirus pandemic that has left Americans largely homebound, the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee said Tuesday.

Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., said that the Pentagon should be involved in mass-producing components of testing kits, especially the critical swabs that are in short supply. He blasted President Donald Trump's handling of the pandemic, which has killed more than 12,000 people in the United States, calling his response to the crisis "pathetically slow."

"If you look at what's happened and where this is going, it's going to require a massive amount of testing before we can safely allow people to get back to work," Smith said in a telephone news briefing. "The truly pathetic part of this is on testing. We are testing fewer people today than we were a

week ago ... [because] we are running out of swabs."

The Defense Department with its existing relationships with industrial partners and its expertise in logistics is uniquely positioned to oversee the mass production of such swabs and other components of testing kits, Smith said. But, so far, Trump has not ordered the Pentagon's involvement in producing such supplies.

Smith blamed the Pentagon for not being "forward leaning" on leading efforts to build more kits, but he laid blame squarely on Trump's shoulders, saying that it appeared the president had no interest in asking for the military's expertise.

Neither Pentagon nor White House officials responded to requests Tuesday for responses to Smith's comments.

The House committee chairman did levy praise on Defense Department leadership for what they have been asked to do. That includes sending thousands of uniformed medical personnel to hot spots throughout the nation to support civilian

health workers. Nearly 27,000 National Guard members have been activated in their home states to aid in response efforts, as well. The Pentagon is also involved in efforts to develop a coronavirus vaccine.

The Pentagon has a long history of quickly mobilizing efforts to mass produce products needed in a crisis.

Smith cited the development of the Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected series of tactical vehicles as an example. The hulking, large-wheeled, heavily armored trucks were quickly developed, built and deployed in the mid-2000s as American troops faced devastating threats from roadside bombs in Iraq and Afghanistan.

If the Pentagon was able to produce enough testing material for its own personnel, it would free up other testing kits for civilians. Smith said that it could be critical as the government attempts to slow the virus primarily by containing it.

Sanders drops 2020 bid

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Sen. Bernie Sanders, who saw his once strong lead in the Democratic primary evaporate as the party's establishment lined swiftly up behind rival Joe Biden, ended his presidential bid on Wednesday, an acknowledgment that the former vice president is too far ahead for him to have any reasonable hope of catching up.

The Vermont senator's announcement makes Biden the presumptive Democratic nominee to challenge President Donald Trump in November.

Sanders initially exceeded sky-high expectations about his ability to re-create the magic of his 2016 presidential bid, and even overcame a heart attack last October on the campaign trail.

But he found himself unable to convert unwavering support from progressives into a viable path to the nomination amid "electability" fears fueled by questions about whether his democratic socialist ideology would be palatable to general election voters.

The senator began his latest White House bid facing questions about whether he could win back the supporters who chose him four years ago as an insurgent alternative to the party establishment's choice, Hillary Clinton.

Sanders, 78, used strong polling and solid fundraising — collected almost entirely from small donations made online — to more than quiet early doubters.

Like the first time, he attracted widespread support from young voters and was able to make new inroads within the Hispanic community, even as his appeal with African Americans remained small.

Trump grants National Guard access to federal health coverage

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

National Guard troops deployed on federal orders in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic can now access military health coverage, according to an executive order signed by President Donald Trump on Tuesday night.

The directive followed weeks of anxiety for thousands of troops exposing themselves to the highly contagious virus, unable to enroll in Tricare health insurance. The coverage is only available to Guard members on federal orders for more than 30 days and Trump's new order authorized troops to deploy for up to 31 days.

"Under those orders, Guard soldiers and airmen could go to military treatment facilities if they are hurt or fear they are infected with the coronavirus, but most are not serving near such

a facility," retired Brig. Gen. J. Roy Robinson, president of the National Guard Association, said in a statement. "Only Tricare enables them to go to local doctors and hospitals without using their private insurance or digging into their pockets."

However, the medical coverage — and the other federal benefits afforded National Guard members working in a federal capacity — are not available to all Guard members activated in response to coronavirus. Only troops in states and on missions approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency are on the federal status, known as Title 32, which provides federal money to states for those service members, but allows the state's governor to maintain control over them.

Chinese city at heart of virus ends lockdown

Associated Press

LONDON — After 76 days in lockdown, the Chinese city at the heart of the global pandemic reopened Wednesday, and tens of thousands immediately hopped on trains and planes to leave. Elsewhere, the economic, political and psychological toll of fighting the virus grew increasingly clear and more difficult to bear.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson spent a second night in intensive care with his country in the grips of its biggest crisis since World War II. The 55-year-old Johnson, the first major world leader confirmed to have COVID-19, was stable and responding to treatment, spokesman James Slack said.

Across the Atlantic, New York City endured one of its darkest days yet, with the death toll surging past 4,000, hundreds more than the number killed on 9/11. New York state recorded 731 new coronavirus deaths Tuesday, its biggest one-day jump yet, for a statewide total of nearly 5,500.

“Behind every one of those numbers is an individual. There’s a family, there’s a mother, there’s a father, there’s a sister, there’s a brother. So a lot of pain again today,” Gov. Andrew Cuomo said.

Across the U.S., the death toll reached about 13,000, with approximately 400,000 confirmed infections. Some of the deadliest hot spots were Detroit, New Orleans and the New York metropolitan area.

More pain was seen on the economic front. Japan, the world’s third-largest economy, could contract by a record 25% this

quarter, the highest since gross domestic product began to be tracked in 1955. The dismal prediction by two economists said exports are expected to dive 60% in the April-June period. The Bank of France said the French economy has entered recession, with an estimated 6% drop in the first quarter compared with the previous three months, while Germany, Europe’s economic powerhouse, is also facing a deep recession. Experts said its economy will shrink 4.2% this year.

European governments have been scrambling to put together hundreds of billions of euros to save lives and prevent bankruptcies. The countries worst hit by the virus are among those that can least afford the costs, like Italy and Spain. But they disagree over how to tackle the challenge.

The finance ministers of countries using the euro failed Wednesday to agree on how to help their nations through the crisis, after marathon all-night talks. They will resume on Thursday.

With European health workers toiling round the clock in a desperate bid to save lives, the psychological toll is becoming unbearable. Weeks into Italy’s outbreak, two nurses have killed themselves and more than 70 doctors and 20 nurses have died from the virus. Hospitals are making therapists available to help staff cope with the effects of seeing so much death. Italy is the hardest-hit country overall, with over 17,000 deaths. In Spain, nurse Diego Alonso said he and colleagues have been using tranquilizers to cope.

“The psychological stress from this time

is going to be difficult to forget. It has just been too much,” he said.

Spain’s Health Ministry on Wednesday reported 757 new deaths, bringing the total to more than 14,500, and 6,180 new infections. Both figures were slightly higher than Tuesday’s, when the first increase in five days was explained by a backlog of test results and unreported weekend fatalities.

Spanish authorities have acknowledged that laboratory bottlenecks and a shortage of testing kits are giving an incomplete picture of the disaster.

In Wuhan, the Chinese city of 11 million where the pandemic began, residents waved flags and the city staged a light show with skyscrapers and bridges radiating images of health workers helping patients.

Restrictions in the city where most of China’s more than 82,000 virus cases and over 3,300 deaths were reported have been gradually eased in recent weeks as new cases declined.

“I haven’t been outside for more than 70 days,” said Tong Zhengkun. “Being indoors for so long drove me crazy.”

In Europe, Britain and France appeared to be at different stages of the crisis than Italy, where new infections and virus deaths were declining daily. Deaths in Britain reached nearly 6,200 after a one-day increase Tuesday of 786, its highest figure yet, while in France, the number of dead climbed to more than 10,300.

Worldwide, more than 1.4 million people have been confirmed infected and over 80,000 have died, according to Johns Hopkins University.

Dems want additions to Trump \$250B emergency aid

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Congressional Democratic leaders proposed Wednesday adding hundreds of billions of dollars for health care, state and local governments, and food stamps to \$250 billion in fresh emergency aid President Donald Trump wants to help small businesses weather the coronavirus epidemic.

Trump requested an additional \$250 billion for a just-launched small-businesses payroll program and is looking to secure congressional passage this week. For that he will need Democratic support.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer outlined their own priorities in a Wednesday statement.

They say they will approve the \$250 billion in assistance to small businesses, but want \$125 billion of that channeled through

community-based financial institutions that serve farmers, families, women, minorities and veterans.

They’re also calling for an additional \$100 billion for hospitals and community health centers to provide testing supplies and protective equipment like masks and gowns. They are seeking another \$150 billion for state and local governments to manage the coronavirus crisis.

They also want a 15% increase to the maximum Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program food stamp benefits, a proposal that could draw GOP opposition.

“The heartbreaking acceleration of the coronavirus crisis demands bold, urgent and ongoing action from Congress to protect Americans’ lives and livelihoods,” the leaders said in a joint statement. “The American people need to know that their government is there for them in their time of great need.”

In March, Congress passed a sweeping \$2.2 trillion economic rescue package that’s now law. But one of the programs in that package — the \$350 billion Paycheck Protection Program — has been swamped as businesses rush to apply for up to \$10 million in forgivable loans to keep paychecks flowing amid the stay-home shutdown.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin requested the additional \$250 billion in a private calls to Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. Democrats largely support it as a component of a broader new aid package.

McConnell wants to swiftly pass it through Congress this week. The House and Senate are all but shuttered, and it’s unclear how the Democrats’ new request will affect the prospect of holding a vote with just 48 hours’ notice.

Congress is also racing to craft the next coronavirus rescue package.

Ark. governor opposes stay-at-home orders

Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — Arkansas' governor, who has resisted issuing a broad stay-at-home order for his state to combat the coronavirus, on Tuesday opposed even allowing such restrictions at the local level.

Gov. Asa Hutchinson, who is among a handful of governors who haven't issued stay-at-home orders, said that those restrictions need to be dealt with on a statewide basis. Hutchinson said that a number of mayors have talked with him about the issue.

Little Rock Mayor Frank Scott said that he has asked the governor for a stay-at-home order for his city, which has already implemented a nighttime curfew.

Scott on Monday expanded the city's restrictions to include a ban on vehicle caravans after large crowds gathered over the weekend at an intersection and nearby parking lots.

Hutchinson has argued that a broader stay-at-home order would put many people out of work and that the state is keeping the number of infections below projections with targeted restrictions such as bans on large gatherings and closing certain types of businesses.

The Health Department on Tuesday said that the number of cases in Arkansas had risen to at least 997 from 927 the night before. Two more people died from COVID-19, the illness caused by the coronavirus, bringing the state's death toll to 18.

Arizona

PHOENIX — Advocates for inmates have asked Arizona's top public health official to order inspections of state prisons to help guard against the coronavirus there, saying that corrections officials aren't consistently following COVID-19 prevention guidelines and have done an inadequate job of keeping the public informed on those efforts.

A coalition of advocacy groups said in a letter Tuesday

to Department of Health Services Director Dr. Cara Christ that corrections officials have called for weekly deep cleaning of housing areas, when guidelines from the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention call for daily cleanings of shared surfaces.

They raised questions about whether enough soap was being given to inmates to adequately clean housing areas and practice good hygiene, and whether health care checks of employees were being consistently conducted at all prisons.

Christ's office didn't have an immediate comment on the letter.

California

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Gavin Newsom said Tuesday that he is working with the Legislature on a stimulus package for immigrants in the country illegally and others not covered by the federal stimulus package approved by Congress.

The federal government is dividing up about \$30 billion to roughly 14 million California households this month, part of the federal CARES Act. But the checks only go to those who file their taxes using a Social Security number.

Those who use an individual Taxpayer Identification Number, including most living in the country illegally, are excluded.

About 2 million people in California are suspected of living in the country illegally, according to the California Latino Legislative Caucus. The group has asked Newsom to create a "Disaster Relief Fund" for cash payments to those immigrants until the state's emergency proclamation is lifted or they are able to return to work.

Florida

TALLAHASSEE — Pressure mounted on Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis on Tuesday to make jobless benefits retroactive as the state's newly unemployed continued to be mired in an unemployment system riddled with glitches and uncertainty amid the coronavirus

outbreak.

Amid rampant filing troubles, it remained unclear how quickly the state could begin issuing checks to hundreds of thousands of Floridians left without income because of stay-at-home orders and the economic downturn.

Meanwhile, congressional Democrats called on Gov. Ron DeSantis, a Republican, to extend unemployment benefits beyond the current 12-week limit and raise the \$275 a week cap.

Georgia

ATLANTA — An Atlanta hospital Tuesday announced the early opening of part of an expansion to provide more intensive care beds during the coronavirus pandemic as the state's death toll neared 350.

Three floors of the new Marcus Tower at Piedmont Atlanta Hospital will now open on April 13 instead of Aug. 1, Piedmont Healthcare said in a statement. The new space will provide 132 additional beds, including 64 ICU beds, the statement said.

News outlets reported that state officials are also exploring the possibility of using other locations, including the Georgia World Congress Center — a sprawling convention center in downtown Atlanta — to house patients.

Nearly 1,900 people in the state have been hospitalized and at least 348 have died because of the virus, according to the latest data Tuesday from the Georgia Department of Public Health.

Montana

HELENA — Gov. Steve Bullock extended the state's stay-at-home, school closures and business restrictions through April 24 in an effort to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, while the Department of Justice confirmed Tuesday what is believed to be the first positive virus case in a jail inmate.

Bullock also extended his other directives Tuesday, including restrictions for on-premises food and beverage

businesses, consumer protections against evictions and the cancellation of utilities, a prohibition of gatherings larger than 10 people and a continuing of a mandatory 14-day quarantine for people entering the state on non-work-related travel.

He also recommended that residents wear a cloth face mask consistent with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines in settings where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.

New Jersey

TRENTON — New Jersey is set to open its second and largest field hospital as part of the effort to confront the COVID-19 outbreak.

Gov. Phil Murphy and other state and military officials were set to tour the 500-bed facility in Edison at the New Jersey Convention and Exposition Center.

The field hospitals are expected to serve only non-coronavirus patients, taking pressure off of other facilities so that they can address those with COVID-19, according to the governor.

New Jersey is among the hardest-hit states in the country. More than 1,200 have died so far and 44,000 residents have tested positive, according to state health officials.

Oregon

PORTLAND — Oregon Gov. Kate Brown extended an order Tuesday prohibiting dine-in service at restaurants and bars as state officials reported four more deaths from the coronavirus.

Oregon's State Emergency Coordination Center said that the total number of deaths had reached 33 as of Tuesday, while confirmed cases increased to over 1,180 statewide.

Brown's original order banning dine-in service was set to expire next week, but now aligns with her Stay Home, Save Lives order. Both will remain in effect until lifted by Brown. Businesses can continue takeout or delivery service.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Soldier charged after trying to visit family

GA NEWNAN — A Georgia soldier was arrested and accused of violating stay-at-home orders, fleeing from state troopers and driving drunk while attempting to visit his family in Alabama, authorities said.

Christian Lee Robinson, 20, was charged with reckless conduct for violating a statewide stay-at-home order issued by Gov. Brian Kemp.

Robinson also was charged with DUI, obstruction of officers, possession of alcohol by a minor and fleeing or attempting to elude a police officer, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported.

Robinson told authorities he was a soldier and was absent without leave from Fort Gordon in Augusta, Coweta County Sheriff's Cpl. Scott Tarpley said.

Man shot in dispute over unleashed dog

FL GAINESVILLE — A dispute over an unleashed dog prompted two Florida men to pull out their weapons and exchange gunfire. One man ended up hospitalized, and both were arrested on charges of gun possession by a convicted felon.

Joseph Tyrone Scott, 39, and Dewayne Mavins, 35, were jailed last week, The Gainesville Sun reported. Mavins was also charged with aggravated battery.

Alachua Sheriff's Sgt. Frank Kinsey said the argument began over Mavins walking his large dog while unleashed. The dog did not approach Scott, nor act aggressively toward him, authorities said, but the county has a law requiring that all

dogs be leashed while off the owner's property.

Authorities: Officer run over trying to stop car

MS MARSHALL COUNTY — Mississippi authorities said an officer was hospitalized after being run over by two suspects in a stolen car.

It happened when the K-9 officer was attempting to lay spike stripes on a road to stop a vehicle that was being pursued by a deputy, Marshall County Sheriff Kenny Dickerson told The Clarion Ledger.

Dickerson said the officer partially went under the car and got hit around the waist and back.

The suspect, Robert Darnell Watkins, was arrested and charged with attempted murder, WMCTV reported. The passenger riding with Watkins, 36, has not been charged with a crime.

Confederate flag draws criticism

KY BENTON — A Confederate flag recently put up outside a Kentucky courthouse is drawing criticism amid calls for its permanent removal, echoing national debate over the divisive Civil War-era symbol.

Members of the local chapter of the Sons of Confederate Veterans paid for the flag and raised it in front of the government building in Benton, the seat of that western Kentucky county, Marshall County Commissioner Justin Lamb told news outlets.

He said it was being flown solo to recognize April as Confederate History Month, but it could eventually become part of a permanent Civil War monument that may also include a

Union flag, The Paducah Sun reported.

Forest owners receive their biggest donation

ME NEW GLOUCESTER — An organization of small woodland owners in Maine said it received the largest land donation in its 45-year history.

Maine Woodland Owners said it received more than 2,000 forest acres in New Gloucester from a family. The donation pushed the group's total conserved acres in the state to more than 10,000, the group said.

Maine Woodland Owners is a group that provides support to small woodland owners in the state, which is the most forested in the U.S. It said it received the 2,000-acre donation from the Chandler family, which has owned and managed forested land in New Gloucester since the 1700s.

Officials: Christian College closing in spring

NE PAPHILLION — Nebraska Christian College has too few students to sustain operations so it must close at the end of this semester, officials said.

The college moved to the Omaha suburb of Papillion in 2006 after opening in 1944 in the northeast Nebraska city of Norfolk. The college merged in 2016 with Hope International University in Fullerton, Calif.

Students enrolled at the Nebraska school already are Hope International students by virtue of the merger, Hope International President Paul Alexander said in a news release.

Students may choose to transition to Hope International's California campus or complete their degrees online. Ministry

students participating in residencies can continue at their host churches.

Cardboard cutouts pose as guests for wedding

MI DOWAGIAC — Cardboard cutout wedding guests made for a not-so-cookie-cutter wedding as a Michigan couple tied the knot during the coronavirus pandemic.

After Amy Simonson and Dan Stuglik's wedding plans were disrupted amid the outbreak, a packaging company donated more than 100 cardboard cutouts to pose as stand-ins for the family and friends who couldn't attend the April 4 wedding because of Michigan's stay-at-home order.

Menasha Packaging Co. in Coloma made cutouts to resemble guests tall and short, young and old, with long hair, short hair and ponytails.

Kids eat THC candy from donated food bag

UT SALT LAKE CITY — Two Utah children were released from the hospital after ingesting THC-infused candy that was in donated bags of food, police said.

Dozens of families picked up the bags filled with several items at a Baptist church in Roy, about 30 miles north of Salt Lake City, KUTV reported.

The candy containing the main psychoactive component in marijuana was packaged like Nerds ropes, distinguishable only by the word "medicated" above the candy logo, authorities said. The children who were hospitalized after eating it are expected to make a full recovery.

From wire reports

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Reporting
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and Military News

Army football adapting to coronavirus

Associated Press

Army football coach Jeff Monken sees a teaching point in all the disruption caused by the novel coronavirus.

“I think this is great training for Army officers, for our players, for all of our students,” he said on a teleconference Tuesday.

“When our Army officers train themselves and they train their units and soldiers, they don’t often know what the kickoff time is, what the date that kickoff is going to be, who the opponent will be. We have that in sports. We can prepare for that. When our guys join the Army, they’re not going to know,” he said.

One thing never changes at West Point no matter what’s going on in the world. The password for the teleconference was “beatnavy.” In the midst of the pandemic, that had to suffice for the norm.

“Nothing’s normal right now.

People call it a new normal. This will never be the normal,” Monken said. “Hopefully, that normal is coming back at some point, but right now we’re making the best of the situation we’re in.”

Monken said the team meets remotely a couple of times a week, mostly to just interact so the staff can check on their emotional, mental and physical well-being as well as well as go over a few Xs and Os.

“They love football and we’re still spending some time with them talking about some football. I think they look forward to that,” Monken said. “We’re meeting regularly as a staff and that maintains that sense of team and camaraderie amongst our coaches and our staff, which is important. As much as possible we’re doing the normal things, just not doing them in a very normal way. That’s kind of how we’re managing.”

One of the biggest challenges at the academy isn’t physical.

A grueling academic schedule is part of the daily routine, and now that’s also in a completely different place.

“They’re having to experience education at West Point remotely,” Monken said. “You think it’s challenging to do that here in a classroom? Here you’ve got access to professors and tutorial help, the group study times that they have. That’s really hard to do when you have 4,400 cadets in 4,400 different places.”

Monken said the players were spending most of their days attending classes online and working out with whatever training apparatus is available at home — tires, concrete blocks, resistance bands, “even some old buy-off-the-TV-1-800-number-equipment that nobody has ever used.”

“There’s a lot more on their plate right now than there would typically be at West Point, even with football,” he said. “Trying to keep those guys motivated to

have a positive attitude and tremendous work ethic is all that we’re concentrating on.”

The Black Knights were getting ready to start spring ball when the NCAA called off all athletic competition in March, cutting short 15 days of practice and meetings.

Monken said the goal is to get everybody “as up to speed as possible from a mental standpoint” so that when the team returns the players have as good of an understanding as possible of their jobs, assignments, and the fundamentals that go along with their positions so the staff can figure out the starting lineup on both sides of the ball as quickly as possible.

“We’ve lost spring practice. That’s a lot of missed time,” he said. “There are some teams who already have completed spring practice, so there will be some inequities when we return. How those are managed I don’t know.”

Navy focusing on team bonding while scattered

The Washington Post

The updates rolled in one after another, brief reports from Navy football players who leaned toward the cameras on their computers at home and reassured their coaches and teammates that they were safe and their family was doing well. In Navy’s first virtual full-team meeting March 27, Coach Ken Niumatalolo asked that every player provide a status report. Then, they divided into position groups and were tasked with finding out new facts about one another, as if they were doing icebreakers at summer camp.

They were only partway through the meeting when rising senior slotback Keoni-Kordell Makekau wondered whether they were going to get around to talking about football.

“The coaches and everybody, they’re really just not

focused on football. I feel like that’s kind of last on our list. It is weird,” Makekau said with a chuckle. “But at the end of the day, life is more important. I’m really grateful for Coach Ken right now.”

Like most other college students, the Mids were instructed to stay home amid the novel coronavirus pandemic when their spring break ended last month. Since then, Navy’s approach to this year’s alternate version of spring football — which runs on thrice weekly virtual meetings and adaptable conditioning workouts — has been to go rather light on the actual football part.

Strengthening the team’s culture has become Niumatalolo’s priority over strengthening his players’ on-field acumen. The 13th-year coach, who is with his family in Hawaii after deciding not to fly back to Annapolis following a spring-break

visit home, eschews strategic talk for team bonding activities such as virtual scavenger hunts during team meetings. On Friday, he had the team divide into groups, do a little research and create five-minute public service announcements about the coronavirus.

Niumatalolo is keenly aware that his players aren’t just missing out on football, they’re missing out on military training. They’re also adjusting to a lifestyle change that may be more drastic than the average college kid’s — every hour of the day at the Naval Academy is scheduled. Now, players are making their own routines.

“The culture that you start building in January — if you don’t have that installed, then in times like this you’re in trouble anyways,” Niumatalolo said in a phone interview after pausing to quiet his 18-month-old granddaughter, who was

babbling in the background. “Maybe other teams are doing more football-wise than we are. But I feel really good about our guys. They’re very disciplined. I try to create a balance. My first thought wasn’t, ‘Oh no, we’re not going to be able to run; we’re not going to be able to lift; what are we going to do?’ Whenever it is we come back, we’ll figure it out.”

While Niumatalolo and his coaches are most concerned about their players’ mental health, football is still a part of daily life. Players meet with coaches virtually three times per week — including one virtual meeting that is with the entire team rather than just a position group — and receive handouts to keep plays fresh in mind. They have daily workout plans courtesy of strength and conditioning coach Bryan Fitzpatrick.

Dayton's Toppin wins Wooden Award

Associated Press

BRISTOL, Conn. — Obi Toppin of Dayton won the John R. Wooden Award as the nation's outstanding college basketball player.

Toppin, along with Saddiq Bey of Villanova, Luka Garza of Iowa, Myles Powell of Seton Hall and Peyton Pritchard of Oregon, also won positional awards from the Basketball Hall of Fame.

The winners were announced Tuesday on ESPN's "SportsCenter" broadcast. They are usually honored at the College Basketball Awards in Los Angeles, which was scheduled for Friday, but got canceled

because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Toppin is the first player from Dayton to win the Wooden Award and the first Atlantic-10 Conference player to do so since Jameer Nelson of St. Joseph's in 2004. Toppin averaged 20 points, 7.0 rebounds and shot 60% from the field. He led the nation in dunks with a school-record 107 and his 190 career slams also set a school mark.

Wooden Award voting took place from March 16-23.

Toppin also received the Karl Malone Power Forward of the Year.

Bey received the Julius Erving Small Forward of the Year award. He averaged

16.1 points, 4.7 rebounds, 2.4 assists and shot 45% from three-point range.

Garza was named the Kareem Abdul-Jabbar Center of the Year. He averaged 23.9 points, 9.8 rebounds and 1.8 blocks.

Powell earned the Jerry West Shooting Guard of the Year. He averaged 21 points, 4.3 rebounds and 2.9 assists.

The Bob Cousy Point Guard of the Year went to Pritchard, who averaged 20.5 points, 5.5 assists and shot 82% from the free-throw line. Each award's namesake headed his own selection committee to evaluate candidates throughout the season. Fans also were able to vote.

Players, managers intrigued by MLB's all-Arizona option

Associated Press

Boston's Chris Sale, out for the season following Tommy John surgery, thought about the prospect of his teammates sequestered in the Phoenix area for an extended period if Major League Baseball and its players adopt an all-Arizona start to the season.

"I don't know if I could look at my kids just through a screen for four or five months. Same thing goes with my wife," the pitcher said Tuesday. "That's a long time. But people have done it in harsh scenarios, I guess. I think there's a lot of figuring out to do."

Putting all 30 teams in the Phoenix area this season and playing in empty ballparks was among the ideas discussed Monday during a call among five top officials from MLB and the players' association that was led by Commissioner Rob Manfred, people familiar with the discussion told The Associated Press.

Kansas City manager Mike Matheny said he would feel privileged to help the country return to a semblance of normalcy and provide an escape for fans.

"Just jump in and trust that we may not know when we'll

reconnect with our families, and trust that when health officials decide it's OK we'll be able to do that," Matheny said. "But in the meantime, do something that would really help the healing process."

Starting the season in Arizona presents plenty of complications:

Some like it hot

Temperatures average a high of 105 in Phoenix in June and the thermometer would just start to dip at 5 p.m., when presumably many games would start in order to be in prime time on the East Coast. Chase Field's retractable roof and air conditioning could make it a site of doubleheaders and even tripleheaders.

Expanded rosters

Given the heat and the compacted schedule, active rosters could be expanded from 26. With teams isolated and the status of minor leagues uncertain, extra players also could be kept in the group.

Money matters

How much would it cost to put teams and the personnel

that travel with them in hotels for double the usual time (no true home games, except for the D-Backs)? There presumably would be savings with not needing charter flights for road trips, but what percentage of that cost was committed in advance? In addition, the absence of ticket revenue would be damaging for many teams. Would player salaries be cut? Who gets to sell stadium signage?

Home-field advantage

Would the 15 spring training tenant teams in Arizona always get the home clubhouses? Would they have an advantage from playing in the ballparks during the exhibition season?

The tube

Playing in empty ballparks would keep the money flowing from regional sports networks and the national television contracts with Fox, ESPN and Turner. There might even be expanded national broadcasts.

Testing

Players, team staff and ballpark, transportation and hotel personnel would have to be tested frequently for coronavirus.

NASCAR names Hall nominees

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Dale Earnhardt Jr., Jeff Burton and Carl Edwards were among the new nominees for NASCAR's next Hall of Fame class announced Tuesday under a revamped voting protocol.

Voters for 11 years elected five members per class first from a list of 25 candidates; it was trimmed to 20 beginning with the 2015 class. The new process starting this year splits the nominees into three ballots; Modern candidates, Pioneer candidates and Landmark candidates. Two entries from the 10 Modern candidates will be elected, along with one entry apiece from the five-candidate Pioneer and Landmark categories.

Janet Guthrie, the first woman to run in the Indianapolis 500, Daytona 500 and Coca-Cola 600, returns as a nominee to the Landmark category after a one year absence.

Burton, Earnhardt, Edwards, Jake Elder and Banjo Matthews are all first-time nominees for the Hall of Fame. Burton and Earnhardt both moved to the NBC Sports broadcasting booth after successful careers.