

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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FDA approves emergency use of virus drug

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. regulators on Friday allowed emergency use of the first drug that appears to help some COVID-19 patients recover faster, a milestone in the global search for effective therapies against the coronavirus.

The Food and Drug Administration cleared Gilead Science's intravenous drug for hospitalized patients with "severe disease," such as those experiencing breathing problems requiring supplemental oxygen or ventilators.

President Donald Trump announced the news at the White House alongside Gilead CEO Daniel O'Day and

Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Stephen Hahn.

The FDA acted after preliminary results from a government-sponsored study showed that the drug, remdesivir, shortened the time to recovery by 31%, or about four days on average, for hospitalized COVID-19 patients.

Those given the drug were able to leave the hospital in 11 days on average vs. 15 days for the comparison group. The drug may also help avert deaths, but that effect is not yet large enough for scientists to know for sure.

The FDA said preliminary results from the government study warranted Friday's decision, though regulators ac-

knowledged "there is limited information known about the safety and effectiveness of using remdesivir." Information about dosing and potential safety issues will be provided to physicians and patients, the FDA said.

Remdesivir, which blocks an enzyme the virus uses to copy its genetic material, has not been tested on people with milder illness.

The FDA authorized the drug under its emergency powers to quickly speed the availability of experimental drugs, tests and other medical products during public health crises. In normal times, the FDA requires "substantial evidence" of a drug's safety and effectiveness, usu-

ally through one or more large, rigorously controlled patient studies. But during public health emergencies the agency can waive those standards and require only that an experimental treatment's potential benefits outweigh its risks.

Gilead has said it will donate its currently available stock of the drug and is ramping up production to make more. It said the U.S. government would coordinate distribution of remdesivir to parts of the country that need it most. No drugs are currently FDA-approved for treating the coronavirus, and remdesivir will still need formal approval.

Stabilizing states begin restarting economies

Associated Press

GRETNA, La. — More than a dozen states let restaurants, stores or other businesses reopen Friday in the biggest one-day push yet to get their economies up and running again, acting at their own speed and with their own quirks and restrictions to make sure the coronavirus doesn't come storming back.

People in Louisiana could eat at restaurants again but had to sit outside at tables 10 feet apart with no waiter service. Maine residents could attend church services as long as they stayed in their cars. And a Nebraska mall reopened with plexiglass barriers and hand-sanitizing stations but few shoppers.

"I feel like I just got out of jail!" accountant Joy Palermo exclaimed as she sat down with a bacon-garnished bloody mary at the Gretna Depot Cafe

outside New Orleans.

President Donald Trump said Friday that he's hoping the total number of COVID-19 deaths in the United States will be below 100,000, which he acknowledged is a "horrible number." Trump's predictions of the expected U.S. death toll have changed over time, with his earlier 60,000 projection now being eclipsed. But he said at a White House event that "maybe millions of lives" have been saved by shutting down the economy.

With the crisis stabilizing in many places in the U.S., states are gradually easing their restrictions amid warnings from health experts that a second wave of infections could hit unless testing for the virus is expanded dramatically.

In much of Colorado, people could get their hair cut and shop at stores again, though stay-at-home orders remained

in place in Denver and surrounding counties. Wyoming let barbershops, nail salons, gyms and day care centers reopen. In Maine, golf courses, hairdressers and dentists opened.

Hotels near South Carolina beaches opened, and state parks unlocked their gates for the first time in more than a month. But in Myrtle Beach, the state's most popular tourist destination, hotel elevators will be restricted to one person or one family — a potential inconvenience at the area's 15- and 20-story resorts.

Texas' reopening got underway with sparse crowds at shopping malls and restaurants allowing customers to dine in, though only at 25% capacity in most places. A video posted on social media showed a city park ranger in Austin getting shoved into the water Thursday while asking people in a crowd to keep 6 feet apart from each

other. Police charged a 25-year-old man with attempted assault.

At Gattuso's Restaurant in Gretna, La., Kent and Doris Alimia and their daughters, Molly and Emily, celebrated Molly's 22nd birthday at one of the outdoor tables, which were screened by plants in wooden planters 5 feet high.

"It's a nice change of scenery to actually get out of the house," Molly Alimia said.

Restrictions were still in place in Arizona, but warnings from officials didn't stop Debbie Thompson from serving food Friday inside her Horseshoe Cafe in Wickenburg. Thompson was not arrested, but she later received a call from the state Department of Health Services telling her to stop violating the governor's stay-at-home order.

Kim's factory visit quiets health rumors

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un made his first public appearance in 20 days as he celebrated the completion of a fertilizer factory near Pyongyang, state media said Saturday, ending an absence that had triggered global rumors that he may be seriously ill.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency reported that Kim attended the ceremony Friday in Suncheon with other senior officials, including his sister Kim Yo Jong, who many analysts predict would

take over if her brother is suddenly unable to rule.

State media showed videos and photos of Kim wearing a black Mao suit and constantly smiling, walking around facilities, applauding, cutting a huge red ribbon with a scissor handed by his sister, and smoking inside and outside of buildings while talking with other officials.

Seemingly thousands of workers, many of them masked, stood in lines at the massive complex, roaring in celebration and releasing balloons into the air. A sign installed on a stage

where Kim sat with other senior officials read: "Suncheon Phosphatic Fertilizer Factory: Completion Ceremony: May 1, 2020."

There were no clear signs that Kim was in discomfort. He was shown moving without a walking stick, like the one he used in 2014 when he was recovering from a presumed ankle surgery. However, he was also seen riding a green electric cart, which appeared similar to a vehicle he used in 2014.

It was Kim's first public appearance since April 11,

when he presided over a ruling Workers' Party meeting to discuss the coronavirus and reappoint his sister as an alternate member of the powerful decision-making Political Bureau of the party's Central Committee. That move confirmed her substantial role in the government.

Speculation about his health swirled after he missed the April 15 birthday celebration for his late grandfather Kim Il Sung, the country's most important holiday, for the first time since taking power in 2011.

200 airmen, 4 B-1 bombers deploy to Guam

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

Four B-1B bombers and about 200 airmen from Texas arrived in Guam on Friday to conduct training and operations with allies and partners, the Air Force said.

The Lancers and airmen flew in from the 9th Bomb Squadron, 7th Bomb Wing, at Dyess Air Force Base, Texas, the service said in a statement Friday.

They were deployed to support Pacific Air Forces in training allies and partners and to reinforce the "rules-based international order" in the Indo-Pacific region through strategic deterrence missions, the statement said.

The Air Force did not disclose the length of the deployment.

Three of the bombers flew directly to Andersen Air Force Base on Guam, while the fourth flew east of Japan to train with the U.S. Navy before joining the others, the statement said.

"Deployments like this allow our Airmen to enhance the readiness and training necessary to respond to any potential crisis or challenge across the globe," wing commander Col. Ed. Sumangil said in the statement. "It also provides a valuable opportunity to better integrate with our allies and partners through joint and combined operations and exercises."

Two weeks ago, the Air Force abruptly

ended its longtime practice of rotating bombers through Andersen for six-month intervals, opting instead for a less predictable means of deploying the aircraft throughout the globe.

The Air Force had used those Guam-based bomber missions to patrol over the East and South China Seas as a means of projecting U.S. airpower and resolve to North Korea, China and Russia.

B-1s were last deployed to the Indo-Pacific region in 2017, the Air Force said.

The B-1 is valued for its capability to carry a larger conventional payload of both guided and unguided weapons than the B-52.

Marine recruit dies during physical fitness test

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON—Pfc. Tyrell J. Audain was in the midst of a physical fitness test more than two weeks ago at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., when he collapsed.

The Marine, a 19-year-old former high school athlete, was rushed to a hospital where he

was later pronounced dead, Brig. Gen. Roger Turner, the commanding general at Twentynine Palms, wrote at the time in a statement on the base Facebook page, without naming Audain. On Friday, the Marine Corps confirmed Audain was the Marine who died April 15 at Twentynine Palms after his death was listed in the Naval Safety Center's mishap summaries report. His death is

under investigation, but it was not related to the coronavirus, according to Capt. Samuel Stephenson, a Marine spokesman. Audain was attending the Marine Corps communications-electronics school at the time of his death, according to his service record. On his Facebook page are photos of him racing for the track team at Minisink Valley High School in Middletown, N.Y., which he graduated

from in 2019. His death is the latest in a string of Navy Department personnel who have collapsed during a physical fitness test and later died. In February, a Midshipman 3rd Class, who collapsed during a physical readiness test at the U.S. Naval Academy, died. The sophomore was taken to a nearby medical center where he was pronounced dead, according to the school.

Reopened meat plants may not be cure-all

Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — Signs Friday that several big meatpacking plants will soon reopen might appear to support President Donald Trump's assertion that he had "solved their problems" in keeping grocery stores' coolers stocked during the coronavirus crisis. But the reality isn't likely to be so easy.

Though meatpackers have been moving to shift operations to make employees less vulnerable to coronavirus infection, they still have a workforce depleted by illness, with at least 4,900 employees nationwide infected. Many others may be unwilling to risk entering plants that have been rife with infections. Even plants that keep the production

lines moving will have to do so more slowly, renewing concerns about whether Americans can count on seeing as much meat as they're used to.

A Smithfield Foods pork processing plant in South Dakota where more than 850 workers tested positive will partially reopen Monday after shuttering for more than two weeks, a union that represents plant workers said Friday. And Arkansas-based Tyson Foods said its Logansport, Ind., pork processing plant where nearly 900 employees tested positive will also resume "limited production" on Monday.

As Trump touted his executive order Wednesday that requires meat plants to stay open, he suggested it would solve the

breakdown in the food supply chain that threatens the availability of meat in grocery stores while farmers face the prospect of euthanizing hundreds of thousands of healthy pigs.

"We solved their problems," the president said Wednesday after getting off a call with meatpacking executives. "We unblocked some of the bottlenecks."

But the clearing of those "bottlenecks" depends on thousands of people who work physically-demanding jobs that must be performed by hand and can take weeks to learn. In the latest sign of the strain on workers, Missouri health officials said Friday that nearly 300 employees at a Triumph Foods pork plant in St. Joseph have tested

positive for the virus.

"I think it's ridiculous that (Agriculture Secretary) Sonny Perdue can think all of a sudden he can wave a magic wand and all of a sudden these plants are going to operate at capacity," said Mark Lauritsen, who directs the meatpackers division at the United Food and Commercial Workers union.

According to a CDC report released Friday, more than 4,900 workers at meat and poultry processing facilities have been diagnosed with the coronavirus, including 20 who died. The illnesses occurred among 130,000 workers at 115 facilities in 19 states, according to the CDC. Some states didn't provide data, so the actual count is believed to be higher.

Commissaries to limit meat sales amid shortages

By ROSE L. THAYER

Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — Stateside commissary shoppers will face limitations on the amount of fresh meat that they can buy because of an anticipated shortage in the supply chain, the Defense Commissary Agency announced.

As of Friday, customers in the United States, including Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico, can only purchase two packages of fresh beef, chicken, pork and turkey, according to the news release from the DCA, which manages a worldwide chain of grocery stores on military bases to provide military personnel, retirees, select veterans and their families food and household

products.

The limits on meat purchases stem from a rash of processing plant closures related to the coronavirus pandemic.

More than 20 meatpacking plants have closed temporarily, because of outbreaks of the coronavirus among workers, The Associated Press reported. Others have slowed production as workers have fallen ill or stayed home to avoid getting sick.

"There may be some shortages of fresh protein products in the coming weeks," retired Rear Adm. Robert J. Bianchi, Defense Department special assistant for commissary operations, said in a statement. "Enacting this policy now will help ensure that all of our customers have an opportunity to purchase these products on

an equitable basis."

Depending on supply, each store can increase or decrease as needed, according to the news release. Each affected store will post quantity limits to inform customers, similar to signs indicating limits for toilet paper, sanitizers, canned food items and other items in high demand because of the pandemic. Limits on those items began March 14 and vary based on location.

Placing shopping limits on fresh meat will particularly keep commissaries that don't receive daily meat deliveries from having their meat inventory wiped out because of panic buying, Bianchi said. These limits will be removed once supply chain operations return to normal.

White House blocking Fauci testimony to House panel

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A spokesman for a key House panel said Friday that the White House has blocked Dr. Anthony Fauci from testifying next week at a hearing on the coronavirus outbreak.

House Appropriations Committee spokesman Evan Hollander said the panel sought Fauci — the highly respected di-

rector of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases — as a witness for a subcommittee hearing on the government's response to the pandemic, but was denied. Hollander said the panel was informed by an administration official that Fauci's testimony was blocked by the White House.

The White House said Fauci is busy dealing with the pandemic and will appear before Con-

gress later. In fact, Fauci is set to appear the week after next at a Senate hearing, a spokesperson for the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committee said. The Senate is held by President Donald Trump's Republican allies while the House is controlled by Democrats.

"While the Trump Administration continues its whole-of-government response to

COVID-19, including safely opening up America again and expediting vaccine development, it is counter-productive to have the very individuals involved in those efforts appearing at Congressional hearings," said White House spokesman Judd Deere. "We are committed to working with Congress to offer testimony at the appropriate time."

Western Europe eases virus restrictions

Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain — Spaniards filled the streets Saturday to exercise outside in gorgeous spring weather for the first time in seven weeks, while German children rushed to playgrounds as countries in Western Europe moved ahead with the gradual relaxation of coronavirus lockdown restrictions.

Russia and Pakistan, however, reported their biggest one-day spikes in new infections, in a sign the pandemic is far from over.

Concern was growing in Moscow about the possibility that hospitals might become overwhelmed after Russia recorded a new one-day high of 9,633 new infections, a 20% increase over Friday's count which, itself, was a new daily record.

Russia has now reported 124,054 total cases, with 15,013 recoveries and 1,222 fatalities. True numbers are believed to be higher because not everyone is tested and Russian tests are reported to be only 70% to 80% accurate.

Moscow's mayor said this week that officials are considering establishing temporary hospitals at sports complexes and shopping malls to deal with the influx of patients. Infection cases have reached the

highest levels of government, with both the prime minister and the construction minister reporting they had contracted the virus.

At the same time, Spain, one of the worst-hit countries in the world with 24,543 deaths and more than 213,000 cases of COVID-19, was rolling back such emergency measures that helped bring the outbreak under control and save hospitals from collapse. A huge field hospital the military helped set up at a Madrid convention center was closed on Friday, and the capital has already closed a makeshift morgue the army had established at an ice rink in a shopping mall.

Since Spain's lockdown started March 14, only adults have been able to leave home, for shopping for food, medicine and other essential goods, and to walk dogs close to home. The lockdown is credited with succeeding in reducing daily increases of infections from more than 20% to less than 1%.

As restrictions were relaxed Saturday, people ran, walked, or rode bicycles under a brilliant sunny sky in Barcelona, where many flocked to the maritime promenade to get as close as possible to the still-off-limits beach.

"I feel good, but tired. You sure notice that it has been a month and I am not in shape," 36-year-old Cristina Palomeque said in Barcelona. "Some people think it may be too early, as I do, but it is also important to do exercise for health reasons."

The government has set up time slots for age groups and activities, and social-distancing measures are still in place.

Spain has detailed a complex rollback plan that will vary by province. Those with the fewest cases and with health care resources in place to handle a rebound of the virus will be the first to enjoy a further loosening of the measures.

The virus has killed more than 238,000 people worldwide, including more than 65,000 in the United States and more than 20,000 each in Italy, Britain, France and Spain, according to a count kept by Johns Hopkins University. Health experts warn a second wave of infections could hit unless testing is expanded dramatically.

In Italy, which has seen 28,000 deaths, people looked enviously on at Spain as they awaited their own relaxation of restrictions now that the number of new cases has leveled out. On Monday, people will be allowed out to walk or jog, though most stores need to remain closed.

Economic anxiety fuels spreading protests

The Washington Post

Protests against covid-related government restrictions continued to spread on Friday as a coalition of gun activists, vaccine opponents and anxious business owners used the organizing power of social media to build increasingly visible and vocal opposition movements in several states.

Crowds waving signs, honking horns, and demanding an immediate relaxation of measures imposed to slow the pandemic gathered in Chicago, Raleigh, N.C., Los Angeles and Sacramento, Calif., on Friday. More protests were planned for the weekend, including in the state capitals of Kentucky, Oregon and New Hampshire, despite polling consistently showing that most Americans support public-health restrictions by governors and mayors even as the economic toll mounts.

The protests at first were mostly small and scattered, often organized by a few ardent gun-rights activists, but the events drew mainstream attention and support this week, and dozens more are planned for the coming days. Hundreds of protesters in Michigan — many of them carrying

guns and wearing military gear and some shouting at officers wearing protective face masks — entered the state Capitol in Lansing on Thursday.

"What an incredibly beautiful and freedom-invoking vision," said Karen Kirkpatrick Hoop, 49, a consultant in the insurance industry who drove two hours to attend the protest in Lansing with her two children, demonstrating alongside members of militia groups dressed in army fatigues and carrying rifles. "This is an international movement of people that are fed up with an increase in government control."

Images of that protest and others — some of them doctored to make the crowd appear bigger or alter the messages of the protesters — spread around the world through news reports, as well as links on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, underscoring the social media savvy of the protesters and their potential to create similarly vivid new scenes around the nation.

The growing political stakes were heightened overnight as Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a Democrat, hours after the protest, extended stay-at-home restrictions until May 28, prompting President Donald Trump to tweet Friday morning that she

should "give a little, and put out the fire."

Many of the protesters are motivated by the deepening economic crisis caused by the pandemic and frustration with the stay-at-home orders issued by governors and mayors across the country. In Washington, truckers parked near the White House on Friday, honking their horns, to protest low rates for freight during the pandemic.

"We're compassionate people, and we care about lives. Our whole movement is because we care about lives. Not only people directly affected by covid, but for the millions of people who have filed for unemployment and are lining up a food banks, and the business owners who have worked for years to build their business," said Jeremy Wood, a home supply business owner who is a spokesman for the "The Great 48!," a private Facebook group of Arizona business owners that has more than 25,000 members and is organizing a protest for Sunday.

Others active in the burgeoning movement question the legality of the restrictions and whether they are an overreaction to a pandemic that has killed more than 64,000 Americans since the end of February and infected more than 1.1 million.

New York nursing home reports 98 deaths

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A New York City nursing home on Friday reported the deaths of 98 residents believed to have had the coronavirus — a staggering death toll that shocked public officials.

“It’s absolutely horrifying,” Mayor Bill de Blasio said. “It’s an inestimable loss, and it’s just impossible to imagine so many people lost in one place.”

It is hard to say whether the spate of deaths at the Isabella Geriatric Center, in Manhattan, is the worst nursing home outbreak yet in the U.S. because even within the city facilities have chosen to report fatalities in different ways. A state tally of nursing home deaths released Friday listed only 13 at the home.

But officials at the 705-bed center confirmed that through Wednesday 46 residents who tested positive for COVID-19 had died as well as an additional 52 people “suspected” to have the virus. Some died at the nursing home and some died after being treated at hospitals.

The number of bodies became so overwhelming the home ordered a refrigerator truck to store them because funeral homes have been taking days to pick up the deceased.

Alabama

MONTGOMERY — A lawsuit filed Friday challenges Alabama’s election procedures by arguing that restrictions on absentee ballots and a lack of other voting methods jeopardize the health of voters — especially older voters, black voters, and voters with disabilities — during the coronavirus outbreak.

The lawsuit filed by the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program alleges that Alabama’s rules will require people to choose between voting and protecting their health.

Alabama absentee voters are currently required to submit

photocopies of their photo identification as well as sign the absentee ballot before a notary or two witnesses. The lawsuit asks a federal judge to waive those mandates and also force the state to offer curbside voting.

The lawsuit notes that many people do not have a way to photocopy their ID or lack ID completely. The existing requirements create a particular barrier for older voters, black voters and disabled voters who are also the groups most at risk for COVID-19 complications, the plaintiffs said.

California

LOS ANGELES — A week after Californians weary of stay-at-home orders packed beaches, authorities pleaded for weekend visitors to follow social distancing rules: no bunching, keep walking or swimming, and leave the umbrellas at home.

Lifeguards and police will be out in force Saturday even in cities that are battling Gov. Gavin Newsom’s new order that took effect Friday and singled out Orange County beaches for closure.

In Huntington Beach, Police Chief Robert Handy said officers would start with warning people who hit the sands and move on to citations but would end with “arrests if we have to.”

In neighboring Newport Beach, the city put out barricades and spoke with surfers to advise them of the closure, and said people were quick to comply.

Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb announced Friday the steps toward relaxing business and activity restrictions imposed to slow the coronavirus spread for much of the state, allowing more manufacturers, retailers and shopping malls to open their doors, starting Monday, under health and social distancing guidelines.

The Republican governor’s

plan aims to gradually ease rules with the goal of allowing nearly all activities to resume on July 4, potentially opening the way for major summer events such as the rescheduled Indianapolis 500 on Aug. 23.

Kansas

TOPEKA — Kansas began releasing inmates this week as a way to check the spread of coronavirus in its prison system but stopped when an outbreak mushroomed and created a danger of returning infected offenders to their communities, Gov. Laura Kelly said Friday.

Kelly said during an Associated Press interview that the Department of Corrections released only six inmates and put them under house arrest for the rest of their sentences. But confirmed coronavirus cases at the Lansing Correctional Facility outside Kansas City have skyrocketed among inmates and staff, and the prison is under quarantine.

Minnesota

MINNEAPOLIS — Staffing has become such a challenge at some Minnesota care facilities due to the coronavirus outbreak that a few aren’t sure how they’re going to get through the weekend, the head of an industry group said Friday.

Minnesota’s congregate-care facilities were already struggling to hire enough staff before the pandemic hit, said Patti Cullen, president of Care Providers of Minnesota, which represents about half of the state’s senior care communities. But now, when a staffer or resident tests positive, employees who’ve been exposed to them have to isolate themselves. So, a facility can start the day thinking it’s in good shape but suddenly find itself in trouble, she said.

“We are familiar with two or three that are really straining for this weekend, but it could happen to any facility if you have to send staff home,” Cullen said in an interview but declined to identify them.

It’s hard for a lot of long-term care facilities to pay competitive wages, she said. Evening and nighttime shifts are particularly hard to fill, and some employees might stay home because they don’t want to risk infecting family members.

Nevada

CARSON CITY — A newly formed state Department of Education committee has been tasked with helping develop a plan and guidelines for Nevada’s school districts and charter schools to reopen for the 2020-2021 academic year.

State Superintendent Jhone Ebert said the committee includes school district superintendents, health officials and safety experts.

Gov. Steve Sisolak directed that schools continue operations during the current school year by providing distance learning to students. Ebert said that has raised challenges that include access to technology, training teachers and quality instructional materials.

New Mexico

SANTA FE — A modern-day trading post on the southern outskirts of the Navajo Nation was on lockdown over the weekend under the watch of National Guard troops and state police to discourage non-essential travel and commerce as local coronavirus infections soar.

Invoking provisions of the state Riot Control Act, New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham ordered residents of Gallup to remain home except for emergencies and blocked roads leading in and out of town to nonessential travel and any vehicles carrying more than two people.

The restrictions were welcomed by local and state officials who have watched COVID-19 infections spread to nursing homes and homeless populations as well as overwhelm hospital intensive care units, leading coronavirus patients to be transferred to Albuquerque.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police say 11-year-old girl stole a vehicle

MA BOSTON — Boston police officers who pulled over a vehicle that had been reported stolen were surprised to find that the suspect was an 11-year-old girl wearing a medical mask, the department announced.

Because of her age, under state law the girl could not be charged with a crime. Instead, she was released and turned over to state child welfare authorities.

The woman told police she left her teenage son and nephew in the car in the Dorchester neighborhood. One of the teens told police that someone wearing a mask approached the vehicle and ordered them to get out.

The girl then got in the car and drove away, police said. She was stopped a few blocks away.

Employees cited for taking free fishing trip

OH COLUMBUS — The former director of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and about 40 state employees improperly accepted a free Lake Erie fishing trip two years ago, the state inspector general's office has determined.

James Zehringer, the former director, and the employees — some of whom claimed overtime pay — accepted the trip as part of what was billed "Fish Ashtabula Day," according to the report. Some state lawmakers also attended, the report noted, but their presence was deemed proper.

The state Ethics Commission told Zehringer and the employees to file amended financial disclosure statements about the free trip in July 2018 and its value.

Police move forward on body camera plan

VA FAIRFAX — Virginia's most populous county is moving ahead with its plan to outfit police officers with body-worn cameras.

Fairfax Police Chief Edwin Roessler said the first phase of the three-year program to outfit officers with cameras began last week. Officers, prosecutors and public defenders have all been training on how to use the system.

That first phase begins with more than 400 cameras being put into service. Plans call for similar numbers of cameras to be phased in for each of the next two years.

Bird owners warned to guard against predators

VT RUTLAND — Vermonters with chickens and other birds on their property were being advised to take precautions against predators.

Vermont Game Warden Col. Jason Batchelder said there have been complaints across the state of bears, foxes, raccoons, fishers, skunks and bobcats eating birds and bird feed, the Rutland Herald reported.

The state recommends chicken owners invest in electrified wire or netting for fencing and wire or plastic netting to cover pens.

Explosion levels gas station; 2 inside injured

IA EARLING — Two men who were inside a western Iowa gas station and auto repair shop when it was leveled by an explosion are expected to recover from their injuries.

Dan Grote, co-owner of Earling Standard Shop, received stitches for cuts and was re-

leased from a hospital hours after the blast in the small town of Earling he told Omaha, Neb., television station KETV. Grote said his brother-in-law, Don Bruck, who was also in the shop when it exploded, is expected to be released soon from an Omaha hospital.

Grote said he had been in the shop fixing a customer's tire when he heard what he at first thought was another tire exploding. The blast sent him to the floor.

Motorcyclist strikes cop's car during chase

VA CHESAPEAKE — State police in Virginia said that a motorcyclist who was fleeing police ended up striking a trooper's vehicle head-on.

Virginia State Police said in a statement that the person suffered unspecified injuries. The trooper suffered minor injuries.

State troopers said the motorcyclist was driving more than 100 mph on Interstate 64 in Chesapeake. They said the person on the motorcycle refused to stop when they tried to pull the person over.

Police said the suspect exited the interstate only to strike a trooper's vehicle.

2 arrested, 10 cited in street race crackdown

OR PORTLAND — Authorities arrested two people and stopped 27 drivers in their latest crackdown on Portland street racing.

Ruben Gonzalez was arrested on suspicion of reckless driving, and Nicholas Murphy was arrested on a warrant for first-degree forgery, according to Portland police.

The effort in North and Northeast Portland also result-

ed in 10 traffic citations, police said. Two cars were towed, as well.

Good Samaritan saves officer from fiery crash

MS POPLARVILLE — A police officer in Mississippi who crashed while chasing a speeding vehicle was saved by a good Samaritan that pulled him out of his burning patrol car, the chief of the police department said.

The Poplarville officer, identified as J.D. Herring, clocked a vehicle going about 50 mph over the speed limit, Chief Danny Collier told The Picayune Item.

Herring chased the vehicle until it drove out of sight, Collier said. Then, Herring came to a curve and hit a gravel driveway. He lost control and plowed into a stop sign before slamming into several brick columns, according to the chief.

A resident pulled Herring from his patrol car as flames started erupting, carrying the officer about 30 yards away.

3-year-old gets parade on last day of chemo

MN PRIOR LAKE — A 3-year-old Minnesota girl who has been battling cancer for two-thirds of her life got to celebrate on her last day of chemotherapy — with the help of some fire trucks and dozens of decorated cars.

Family and friends couldn't hold a party for Mabel Franks because of social distancing restrictions due to COVID-19, so they held a parade in her Prior Lake cul-de-sac.

Mabel smiled and waved from her father's arms as fire trucks and dozens of cars rolled by.

Mabel had been diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

From wire reports

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US women's soccer team loses claim

Associated Press

A federal judge threw out the unequal pay claim by players on the U.S. women's national soccer team in a surprising loss for the defending World Cup champions but allowed their allegation of discriminatory working conditions to go to trial.

Players led by Alex Morgan sued in March 2019, claiming they have not been paid equally under their collective bargaining agreement to what the men's national team receives under its labor deal. They asked for more than \$66 million in damages under the Equal Pay Act and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

In a 32-page decision Friday, U.S. District Judge R. Gary Klausner granted in part a motion for partial summary judgment by the U.S. Soccer Federation. He threw out the Equal Pay Act allegations but left intact the Civil Rights Act claims.

"The history of negotiations between the parties demonstrates that the WNT rejected an offer to be paid under the same pay-to-play structure as

the MNT, and the WNT was willing to forgo higher bonuses for benefits, such as greater base compensation and the guarantee of a higher number of contracted players," Klausner wrote.

"Accordingly, plaintiffs cannot now retroactively deem their CBA worse than the MNT CBA by reference to what they would have made had they been paid under the MNT's pay-to-play terms structure when they themselves rejected such a structure," he said.

Klausner left intact claims the USSF discriminated in the money it spent on commercial airfare, hotel accommodations, and medical and training support services.

A trial is scheduled for June 16 in federal court in Los Angeles.

"We are shocked and disappointed with today's decision, but we will not give up our hard work for equal pay," Molly Levinson, spokeswoman for the women's players, said in a statement. "We are confident in our case and steadfast in our commitment to ensuring that girls and women who play this sport will not be valued as lesser just

because of their gender."

Players intend to ask the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to overturn Klausner's decision, a move that could delay the trial into 2021 or later.

"If you know this team at all you know we have a lot of fight left in us. We knew this wasn't going to be easy, change never is," defender Becky Sauerbrunn wrote on Twitter.

While the Americans are the most successful women's team, with four World Cup titles including the last two, the U.S. men did not even qualify for the 2018 World Cup. The USSF argued the women actually made more than the men both overall and by game average, and the women claimed they should have the same bonus structure as the men.

"Merely comparing what WNT players received under their own CBA with what they would have received under the MNT CBA discounts the value that the team placed on guaranteed benefits they receive under their agreement, which they opted for at the expense of higher performance-based bonuses," Klausner wrote.

"This issue is insufficient to create a genuine issue of material fact for trial," he added.

Klausner also said the women could not go forward with their claim that the USSF discriminated against them by scheduling more games on artificial turf than the men had. He said there was not sufficient evidence to show that decisions on field surface were made for discriminatory reasons.

He rejected the USSF's argument that the men had a competitive need for charter flights that the women lacked, allowing that part of the suit to go forward. The federation has argued that the men, who have struggled in World Cup qualifying, have more need for charters than the women in order to arrive more rested for their qualifiers.

"This rationale does not fully explain the gross disparity on money spent on airfare and hotels for the teams," Klausner wrote.

In addition, the USSF has said spending in these areas has been equal since the women's union agreed to a new labor deal in 2017.

Sports briefs

Bulls hire 76ers' Everley as new general manager

Associated Press

CHICAGO — The Chicago Bulls announced Marc Eversley as their new general manager on Friday.

Eversley agreed to take the job earlier in the week. He succeeds the fired Gar Forman and will work under new top executive Arturas Karnisovas. Eversley spent four years in Philadelphia's front office — the past two as the 76ers' senior vice president of player personnel.

The Bulls were 11th in the Eastern Conference at 22-43 and on the way to their third straight losing record when the league stopped play.

"I'm grateful to be working with someone like Arturas, who shares my level of passion and commitment to winning basketball, and having both come from successful programs, we will put in the work and all it entails to become a sustainable and winning team," Eversley said in a statement.

A Canadian, Eversley becomes the Bulls' first black general manager.

In other NBA news:

■ The NBA is delaying the draft lottery and draft combine, events scheduled for Chicago later this month.

The league made the decision Friday, though it has been

expected for some time. The lottery cannot occur until the regular season is completed or is declared over, because team records determine the odds that the 14 non-playoff teams will have of securing the right to pick No. 1 overall.

For now, the draft remains scheduled for June 25 — though that, too, will likely have to change in the coming weeks as the league continues reacting to the coronavirus pandemic.

F1 hopes to start season on July 5

PARIS — Formula One hopes to finally start the sea-

son with a double-header in the naturally isolated environment around the venue for the Austrian Grand Prix.

Despite the first 10 races having been canceled or postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic, the targeted start date is July 5 in Austria. F1 still envisages holding 15 to 18 of the 22 scheduled Grands Prix.

One way to make up for lost time is having consecutive weekends on one circuit, like the Red Bull Ring in Spielberg. F1 manager director of motor-sports Ross Brawn says this is a "real consideration" so long as iron-tight safety regulations are met.

Replay may vanish for '20 season

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Replay reviews could vanish in Major League Baseball in 2020 as part of a deal that covers how umpires would be paid for a season shortened or wiped out by the coronavirus pandemic.

The sides struck an agreement late Thursday night, two people told The Associated Press. They spoke Friday on condition of anonymity because there was no official announcement.

Umps are guaranteed 50% of their salaries for May, but would be paid nothing else if no games are played in 2020. Umpires generally make between

\$150,000 and \$450,000.

The start of the season has been postponed because of the virus outbreak and there is no timetable for opening day. If baseball is permitted to proceed this year, MLB is considering playing regular-season games at spring training ballparks in Arizona and Florida that are not wired for replay.

The new agreement gives MLB the right to not use instant replays of umpires' decisions during the 2020 season. Most calls have been subject to video review since 2014 and it's become a big part of games, with about half the challenged calls resulting in a reversal.

Umpires have already been paid from January through April and will be paid at a 50% rate in May. If even one regular-season game is played this season, the umps are guaranteed about one-third of their salaries.

The umps will be paid a prorated share of their salaries based on games over a 182-day season, according to a copy of the four-page term sheet obtained by The Associated Press.

In a statement, the MLB umpires' union said it was "pleased" to reach this agreement with the commissioner's office.

UFC sets matchups for shows

Associated Press

The UFC has announced the full fight lineups for its shows scheduled for May 13 and May 16 as the mixed martial arts promotion moves closer to resuming competition amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The UFC plans to stage several shows without fans at VyStar Veterans Memorial Arena in Jacksonville, Fla., this month. The first event is the pay-per-view UFC 249 on May 9.

Many of the bouts announced Friday are matchups initially made for shows that were canceled in recent weeks. The May 13 and May 16 shows are expected to be broadcast on ESPN Plus.

The nine-bout show on May 13 will be headlined by former light heavyweight title contenders Anthony Smith and Glover Teixeira. The matchup originally was scheduled to headline the UFC's show in Lincoln, Neb., on April 25.

The May 13 show is co-headlined by Ovince Saint Preux's heavyweight debut against Ben Rothwell. Other matchups on the card include lightweights Alexander Hernandez and Drew Dober, bantamweights Ray Borg and Ricky Simon, and heavyweights Andrei Arlovski and Philippe Lins.

The main event of the nine-bout show on May 16 is Dutch heavyweight veteran Alistair Overeem against Walt Harris. They were scheduled to meet in the main event of a show in Portland, Ore., on April 11.

Harris (13-7) will fight for the first time since his 19-year-old stepdaughter, Aniah Blanchard, went missing and was later found dead last November in Alabama.

The May 16 show also includes featherweights Edson Barboza and Dan Ige, middleweights Eryk Anders and Krzysztof Jotko, bantamweights Song Yadong and Marlon Vera, and strawweights Claudia Gadelha and Angela Hill.

Special feature

Appreciating the little things during lockdown

For The Associated Press

It has been kind of nice to be home, spend more time with my girls.

In a way, I get to see what it would be like to not go to the park every day, to not have to face Noah Syndergaard, Jacob deGrom, Clayton Kershaw.

My body feels unbelievable right now. Not having to go through the grind of a season, but still working out. I kind of envision myself being that way when I'm done playing: Still being active and staying in shape but not necessarily doing what we do every single day to get ready for a game.

Going the other way, though, being home and not being able to even go to the field — you don't realize how much you love it until it's gone.

In that sense, this time has made me realize how lucky I am to play the game.

So it's kind of shown me that I'll be OK, either way: Whether I continue past 2020 or not, I'll be great whenever I retire.

I would lean more toward that it shows me I still really enjoy playing the game and competing and putting the work in that it takes to be suc-

Ryan Zimmerman is a two-time All-Star infielder who has played 15 years in the majors, all with the Washington Nationals. He holds most of the team's career hitting records, and his two homers and seven RBIs last postseason helped the Nationals win their first World Series championship. With baseball on hold because of the coronavirus pandemic, Zimmerman occasionally will offer his thoughts — as told to AP sports writer Howard Fendrich — while waiting for the 2020 season to begin.

cessful at that level.

I already had decided that from here on out, I'm just going to do one-year deals. That way I can assess how I feel, how my body feels, how I performed and if I'm still capable of contributing at this level and helping the team win. That's the top priority.

A lot of people were saying, "You could have gone somewhere else and gotten a two-year deal." Things like that.

I obviously didn't want to go anywhere else. And I also didn't want a multi-year deal.

I'm at the point now where it's kind of nice to be able to see where things stand each year and go from there.

If it turns out there isn't a 2020 season, and I had to decide right now about 2021, I would say: Yes, I definitely would plan on playing next year.

A lot of things could change.

But part of the reason I decided to come back this year is I wanted to see what it was like to try to defend a World Series title.

That would be pretty cool.

Why didn't I just win and ride off into the sunset? The No. 1 answer is I still love this and think I can be productive. And being back with basically the same group of guys to try and do what we did last season again was appealing to me.

If we don't have a season this year, it would kind of be the same mindset going into next year.

Truth is, other than being a year older, having a year off wouldn't be a bad thing for my body — and I wouldn't be a "year older" in baseball terms, I guess. It's not another year of wear and tear, so it kind of doesn't count.