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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Roosevelt prepares for return to patrols

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

The USS Theodore Roosevelt will not wait for all of its sailors to clear quarantine before returning to sea after more than a month sidelined on Guam battling a coronavirus outbreak on board, the ship's commander said in a CBS News report Monday.

The San Diego-based aircraft carrier had been patrolling the Western Pacific before diverting to Guam on March 26 after several sailors required virus treatment. Since then, at least 1,156 sailors have tested positive, one of whom died.

The Navy on Friday stopped publicly reporting daily tallies of new coronavirus cases among the Roosevelt crew.

"We've taken 45 days from that business (of patrolling) and it's a dangerous business, so we have a lot of training to complete," Roosevelt commander Capt. Carlos Sardiello told CBS News.

Sardiello took over last month after the ship's former commander, Capt. Brett Crozier, was relieved when a letter he sent pleading for help for his sailors and warning of future deaths was leaked to the San Francisco Chronicle.

Sardiello also preceded

Crozier as the carrier's commander, having left for a position with Naval Air Forces command five months earlier, according to the Navy.

After spending about a month isolated in hotel rooms on Guam as the carrier was sanitized and all crew members were tested for the coronavirus, sailors began moving back onto the Roosevelt on April 29, the Navy said. More than half of the crew was on board as of Monday, according to the CBS report.

Sailors allowed back on board had tested negative for the coronavirus three times, the Navy said in a statement April 29. A few were turned away at the

pier, however, after showing coronavirus symptoms despite testing negative prior, Politico reported Monday.

Those embarking are given an N95 mask "to be worn at all times except when sleeping, showering or eating," according to the Politico report.

Meanwhile, an investigation into the outbreak is underway, Navy officials said Friday. A report on its findings and recommendations is due to Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday by May 27.

It is unclear when the Roosevelt will return to sea. The Navy as policy does not discuss planned ship movements.

UK now Europe's epicenter; S. Korea plays baseball

Associated Press

LONDON — Britain on Tuesday became the first country in Europe to confirm more than 30,000 coronavirus deaths, and infections rose sharply again in Russia, even as other nations made great strides in taming the virus. China marked its third week with no new virus deaths and South Korea restarted its professional baseball season.

In the U.S., some states began halting steps to lift the lockdown restrictions being blamed for throwing millions out of work and upending the global economy even as thousands of new U.S. infections and deaths were being reported daily.

Britain looks set to surpass Italy as Europe's hardest-hit nation. The government said that 28,734 people with COVID-19 had died in U.K. hospitals, nursing homes and other settings, while Italy has reported 29,079 fatalities.

Official U.K. statistics released Tuesday that take people who died with suspected COVID-19 into account give a fuller picture and put Britain's coronavirus toll at more than 30,000 dead. The statistics, which cover up to April 24, show that deaths were a third higher than in the government count. A comparable figure for Italy was not available.

In Russia, the number of infections rose sharply again, with Moscow reporting more than 10,000 new cases for three days in a row.

At the same time, many European countries that have relaxed strict lockdowns after new infections tapered off were watching their virus numbers warily.

"We know with great certainty that there will be a second wave — the majority of scientists is sure of that. And many also assume that there will be a third wave," Lothar Wieler, the head of Germany's

national disease control center, said Tuesday.

Widely seen as a success story, South Korea reported only three new cases of the virus, its lowest total since Feb. 18. Schools will be reopened in phased steps, starting with high school seniors on May 13, but the highlight Tuesday was the baseball season.

Cheerleaders danced beneath rows of empty seats and umpires wore protective masks as one of the world's first major professional sports returned to action in games broadcast to starved sports fans around the world. The Korea Baseball Organization employed other protective measures, including fever screenings for players and coaches before they entered the stadiums.

With Major League Baseball in the U.S. still mulling plans on what to do about its own season, American sports network ESPN signed a contract to broadcast six KBO games

per week, starting with Tuesday's season opener between Daegu's Samsung Lions and Changwon-based NC Dinos, which the Dinos won 4-0.

The country's professional soccer leagues will kick off Friday, also without spectators.

In China, it has been three weeks since any new deaths have been reported in the country where the pandemic began late last year. Just one new case of infection was confirmed, and fewer than 400 patients are still being treated for COVID-19, health officials said.

Other places in the Asia-Pacific region have also suppressed their outbreaks, including Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam, Thailand, Australia and New Zealand, which has had zero new cases for two days. But experts have said that India, a nation of 1.3 billion people, has yet to see the peak of its outbreak.

29 wounded in Iraq to get Purple Heart

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Twenty-nine U.S. soldiers are to be awarded the Purple Heart medal after sustaining brain injuries in the Iranian missile attack in January on al Asad Air Base in Iraq's Anbar province, U.S. Central Command announced Monday.

Six of the medals were awarded in Iraq and Kuwait on Sunday and Monday, Navy Capt. Bill Urban, a CENTCOM spokesman, said in a statement. The remaining medals will be presented later this week.

The Pentagon had reported 110 service members were diagnosed with mild traumatic brain injuries from the missile attack on Jan. 8. Some of the injured troops were transported to Germany, then to the United States where they received treatment as outpatients at either their home stations or at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Maryland.

The Purple Heart medal is awarded to service members who are wounded or killed in action during combat or hostilities. Each military service determines the eligibility criteria for personnel to be recommended for the award.

"It is important to note that a traumatic brain injury diagnosis does not automatically qualify a service member for Purple Heart eligibility or awarding," Urban said in the statement.

Units submitted award packages for troops who were injured and might be eligible for the medal to a review board set up by the Operation Inherent Resolve joint task force, which oversees the mission in Iraq.

A total of 80 award packages were received and evaluated according to Army and Air Force eligibility criteria, Urban said. The 29 medals for soldiers were approved by Army Lt. Gen. Pat White, the commander of Operation Inherent Resolve.

GAO: More info needed about DOD commissary merger plan

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

More reliable information is needed about the potential costs and savings associated with the Defense Department's idea to merge its retail and grocery organizations, a government report said.

A Pentagon task force created to review the merger found it would cost about \$500 million but the DOD could save between \$690 million and \$1.3 billion within five years. But that group might have overestimated savings and underestimated costs when analyzing the merger that was first suggested to Congress in 2018, said a report from the Government Accountability Office.

Instead, the GAO recommends the Pentagon revisit the potential costs and savings of merging the Defense Commissary Agency, which sells groceries in 240 commissaries around the globe, with the military's three retail organizations — the Army and Air Force Exchange Service, the Navy Exchange Service Command and Marine Corps Community Services. The three retail exchanges operate 2,500 facilities that include department stores, uniform sales, gas stations, food courts and convenience stores on military bases worldwide.

While the exchanges make a profit — which is used to support military families through morale, welfare and recreation programs — DeCA received about \$1.3 billion in recent years from

the defense budget, according to the report titled "Commissaries and Exchanges: DOD and Congress Need More Reliable Information on Expected Savings and Costs of Consolidating the Defense Resale Organizations."

AAFES reported \$8.7 billion in revenue in fiscal year 2018, according to its website. During the past 10 years, more than \$2.3 billion has gone into quality-of-life programs that promote military readiness and resiliency as well as those that offer activities for children and families.

Just 3% of the AAFES budget comes from appropriated funds, which primarily cover the cost of transporting goods overseas, according to the AAFES website. The Navy and Marine Corps entities operate in a similar fashion.

By law, the two types of organizations must operate separately. The DOD's analysis on merging the organizations spurred Congress to include a review of the task force's work by the GAO in the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2020.

The Military Officers Association of America, along with a coalition of about 30 other military and veteran organizations, expressed concerns about the merger when the task force's business analysis was released in late 2018, said Eryn Wagon, director of government relations for the MOAA. The biggest concern is that a merger would take funds from family and morale programs to prop up DeCA, which doesn't perform as well financially, she said.

Military withholds Afghan airstrike details

By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The U.S. military has stopped releasing information about airstrikes it conducts in Afghanistan, reversing a longtime policy amid a spike in violence in recent weeks, officials said.

The policy reversal was announced as the U.S. continues to withdraw troops as outlined in a peace deal with the Taliban, and days after a report said the military was withholding information on Taliban attacks.

U.S. officials have repeatedly expressed frustration over the slow pace of progress toward peace in Afghanistan, where nearly two decades of war have cost the U.S. around \$2 trillion and the lives of roughly 2,400 service members.

Some analysts said that by withholding information previously released since 2006, Washington is trying to obscure the precarious security

situation, even as the U.S. draws down troops.

Obscuring information might backfire, said Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia program at the Washington, D.C.-based Wilson Center.

"The public is too smart to be hoodwinked by these attempts to remove bad news about the war from public view," he said. "Being less transparent about the war effort will only entrench suspicion and unhappiness about the direction of the U.S. policy in Afghanistan."

A separate monthly tally published by NATO's Resolute Support mission detailing the number and location of U.S. airstrikes in Afghanistan has also been suspended, the RS mission said.

The decision to withhold information about airstrikes in Afghanistan was taken in part because "the reports could adversely impact ongoing [peace] discussions with the Taliban," said Capt. Kenneth A. Hicks, a spokesman for U.S. Air Forces Central Command.

Army wants wearable coronavirus detector

BY JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

The Army is seeking to rapidly field wearable coronavirus detectors in a push to get an earlier warning of a virus that has infected nearly 5,000 service members.

On Monday, the military put out a \$25 million bid through its Medical Technology Enterprise Consortium to develop the device. The Army hopes to award up to 10 contracts within weeks.

“There is a dire and urgent need for development of rapid, accurate wearable diagnostics to identify and isolate pre-

symptomatic COVID-19 cases and track/prevent the spread of the virus,” the Army’s proposal said.

The service is looking for existing, proven technology rather than something new. Companies with a ready manufacturing capability and ability to produce on a large scale are also key.

The kits, which need to be wearable or “minimally invasive,” should not affect the user’s daily activity. The equipment also should be user-friendly with results that can be interpreted by non-laboratory personnel.

A key challenge in stemming the spread of the coronavirus has been early detection and the problem of those without symptoms unknowingly spreading the virus.

“Physiologic surveillance for COVID-19 positive individuals that do not yet show clear medical symptoms is an ultimate goal,” the proposal said.

The wearable device should monitor for symptoms such as elevated temperature, respiratory difficulty, antibodies against COVID-19 and molecular biomarkers indicative of virus exposure, the solicitation said.

Former skipper leaves Guam for new assignment

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Capt. Brett Crozier, the former commander of the USS Theodore Roosevelt, has left Guam where he had been fighting the coronavirus and has been re-assigned to a position in California, a Navy official said.

Crozier now reports to the commander of Naval Air Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet, based in San Diego, Cmdr. Ron Flanders, a spokesman for Naval Air Forces, wrote Tuesday in an email.

The captain was relieved of command of the aircraft carrier April 2 after a letter that he wrote requesting the crew be evacuated from the ship due to an outbreak of the virus was

leaked to the media.

Crozier warned in his letter that the outbreak could kill some sailors, and “if we do not act now, we are failing to properly take care of our most trusted asset — our sailors.”

Flanders did not say what Crozier would be doing in his new assignment.

The Navy initiated an investigation into the outbreak and Crozier’s letter following his dismissal. On April 24, the Navy’s top leaders briefed Defense Secretary Mark Esper on the investigation and news reports said they recommended Crozier be reinstated as commander of the Roosevelt. However, no action was taken after Esper requested more time to review the Navy’s written report.

Since that briefing, the entire 4,800-member crew of the Roosevelt has been tested for the coronavirus, the Navy has reported. The Navy’s last update Thursday stated there were 1,102 active cases of the virus among the ship’s crew, 53 sailors had recovered, and three were being treated at U.S. Naval Hospital Guam for symptoms. One Roosevelt sailor died April 13 from the virus.

Sailors have been returning to the Roosevelt after weeks of quarantine in Guam. Sailors who have tested negative repeatedly for the virus are allowed back on the ship, which has been cleaned, according to the Navy.

The nuclear-powered aircraft carrier arrived in Guam on March 27 as the virus spread

among the ship’s crew.

The new commander, Capt. Carlos Sardiello, said during a CBS News interview Monday that the ship will not wait for all its sailors to leave quarantine before it returns to sea.

More than half of the crew has returned to the ship, according to the CBS report.

“We’ve taken 45 days from that business (of patrolling) and it’s a dangerous business, so we have a lot of training to complete,” he said.

Acting Navy Secretary James McPherson on Wednesday ordered a deeper review into the virus outbreak aboard the Roosevelt and the Navy’s response, following an initial investigation that left him with “unanswered questions.”

Esper warns that military must adapt to new normal

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The military could see a greater impact on readiness if it does not adapt training and recruitment to cope with the coronavirus, Defense Secretary Mark Esper said Monday.

The Defense Department is learning how to meet its training and readiness needs until there is a vaccine for the coronavirus, Esper said during an online discussion with the liberal-leaning Brookings Institution about the impact of the pandemic on the military.

“And that means the sooner we can adapt

our practices, as soon as we can learn from this virus and make changes, the better we will be and the more likely you are to maintain a high degree of readiness for the force. And we’re looking at all those things right now,” he said.

The military has nearly 5,000 cases of the coronavirus, with 100 troops hospitalized, according to the Pentagon. Two service members have died.

The low numbers are a testament to the force, not just because they are young and healthy, but also because they have followed Defense Department guidance since January that has left them in “pretty good

shape,” Esper said.

The defense secretary said that he is more concerned with the potential long-term impact from the adjustments to recruiting and basic training prompted by the pandemic.

Basic training bases have had to adjust how they receive recruits to prevent the spread of the virus among personnel, and it has affected how fast they can move people through the process. The Army, Navy and Marine Corps have delayed recruits from arriving to basic training in order to work out improved processes for future recruits.

Hunt for virus vaccine heats up globally

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Hundreds of people are rolling up their sleeves in countries across the world to be injected with experimental vaccines that might stop COVID-19, spurring hope — maybe unrealistic — that an end to the pandemic may arrive sooner than anticipated.

About 100 research groups are pursuing vaccines with nearly a dozen in early stages of human trials or poised to start. It's a crowded field, but researchers say that only increases the odds that a few might overcome the many obstacles that remain.

"We're not really in a competition against each other. We're in a race against a pandemic virus, and we really need as many players in that race as possible," Dr. Andrew Pollard, who is leading the University of Oxford's vaccine study, told The Associated Press.

The hard truth: There's no way to predict which — if any — vaccine will work safely, or even to name a front-runner.

As Dr. Anthony Fauci, the U.S. government's top expert, put it: "You need more shots on goal for a chance at getting a safe and effective vaccine."

The first cautious tests of March, when small numbers of volunteers got injections to check for side effects, have turned into larger studies in China, the U.S. and Europe to look for hints that different vaccine candidates really protect.

Next: Finding out for sure if any of the vaccines work in the real world by testing large groups of people in areas where the virus is circulating — a tricky prospect when study participants may be in places where the virus is fading or they are told to stay home — and finding a way to quickly distribute lots of doses of any successful candidates.

Policymakers are devising plans to try to overcome both obstacles in an attempt to

compress the years it usually takes to develop a vaccine. Asked if a vaccine by January was possible, Dr. Deborah Birx, the White House coronavirus task force coordinator, told Fox News Sunday "on paper, it's possible. It's whether we can execute," she said.

Fauci has cautioned that even if everything goes perfectly, 12 to 18 months to develop a vaccine would set a speed record — and January will mark a year since the National Institutes of Health began creating its own COVID-19 vaccine, now in trials with Moderna Inc.

■ **Multiple shots:** Depending on how you count, there are between eight and 11 vaccine candidates in early stages of testing in China, the U.S., Britain and Germany — a collaboration between Pfizer Inc. and BioNTech last week began a study in Germany that's simultaneously testing four somewhat different shots. More study sites are about to open in still other countries — and between May and July another handful of different vaccines is set to begin first-in-human testing.

The initial vaccine candidates work in a variety of ways. That's important because if one type fails, maybe another won't.

Different types of vaccines work better in some virus families than others. But for coronaviruses, there's no blueprint. Back in 2003 when scientists attempted vaccines against SARS, a cousin of the new virus, animal studies hinted at safety problems but then SARS disappeared and vaccine funding dried up. Vaccines against another COVID-19 cousin named MERS have only reached first-step safety testing.

■ **Pros and cons:** China's Sinovac and SinoPharm are testing "inactivated" vaccines, made by growing the new coronavirus and killing it. The companies have revealed little information about how the shots differ. But the technology is tried-and-true — polio shots and some types

of flu vaccine are inactivated virus — although it's hard to scale up to rapidly produce millions of doses.

Most other vaccines in the pipeline aim to train the immune system to recognize a piece of the new coronavirus — mostly, the spiky protein that studs its outer surface.

One way: Use a harmless virus to carry the spike protein into the body. It's easier to produce but determining which virus is the best "carrier" is a key question. China's CanSino Biologics brewed its vaccine using a common cold-causing adenovirus, engineered so it won't spread in the body. And in case people's immune systems fight off the cold virus before the vaccine can do its job, Pollard's Oxford team instead chose an adenovirus that normally infects chimpanzees.

Another way: Inject a piece of the coronavirus genetic code that instructs the body itself to produce spike protein that in turn primes the immune system to attack. It's a new and unproven technology but one that promises even faster production.

Still more methods are next in line: Vaccine made of spike protein nanoparticles, and even a nasal spray alternative to shots.

■ **Proving they work:** Most vaccine studies so far are tracking safety and whether volunteers' blood shows any immune reactions. Some have jumped to larger numbers quickly, but there's still concern about being able to prove real-world protection.

If study participants are holed up at home or live in areas where the virus has quit spreading rapidly, then too few may get sick for scientists to tell if the vaccine or social distancing was what protected them. The Oxford study, for example, will track about 1,000 people, half given the real vaccine.

But the team plans a later-stage study with another 5,000 volunteers for a final answer and knows it might have to move to other countries.

Major US automakers plan to reopen within two weeks

Associated Press

DETROIT — Major U.S. automakers are planning to reopen North American factories within two weeks, potentially putting thousands of workers back on the assembly line as part of a gradual return to normality.

Fiat Chrysler CEO Mike Manley said on an earnings conference call Tuesday his company plans to start reopening factories May 18, though that depends on an easing of government restrictions.

Right now, Michigan's shelter-at-home

order is in effect until May 15.

Detroit automakers will likely be on the same timetable because their workers are represented by the same union.

The United Auto Workers union Tuesday appeared to be onboard.

Detroit automakers employ about 150,000 factory workers in the United States alone. Auto plants have been shut since mid-March because of the outbreak. At least 25 employees at auto facilities represented by the UAW have died as a result of COVID-19, although it's not known if

they were infected at work.

Manley said a lot depends on whether Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer allows factories to reopen.

Last week, Whitmer hinted that auto plants may soon reopen as the curve of cases continues to flatten. She said the reopening could take place as long as the UAW can ensure employees feel safe.

The UAW said in a prepared statement that workers will return to auto plants starting May 18, and it has agreed on safety procedures to protect them.

3 charged in killing of guard who halted maskless shopper

Associated Press

FLINT, Mich. — A woman, her adult son and husband have been charged in the fatal shooting of a security guard who refused to let her daughter enter a Family Dollar in Michigan because she wasn't wearing a face mask to protect against transmission of the coronavirus.

Calvin Munerlyn was shot Friday at the store just north of downtown Flint a short time after telling Sharmel Teague's daughter she had to leave because she lacked a mask, according to Genesee County Prosecutor David Leyton.

Teague, 45, argued with Munerlyn, 43, before leaving. Two men later came to the store.

Teague; her husband, Larry Teague, 44; and Ramonyea Bishop, 23; are charged with first-degree premeditated murder and gun charges.

Larry Teague also is charged with violating Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's executive order mandating that all customers and employees must wear face coverings inside grocery stores, Leyton said.

Witnesses identified Bishop as the man who shot Munerlyn in the back of the head, Leyton said.

Sharmel Teague has been arrested. Police were looking for her husband and son.

No information has been released about the daughter, who has not been charged in the shooting.

"It is important that the governor's order be respected and adhered to, and for someone to lose their life over it is beyond comprehension," Leyton said earlier Monday in a statement.

On Thursday, gun-carrying protesters and other demonstrators rallied inside the state Capitol, calling for coronavirus-related restrictions to be lifted. Some protesters with guns — which are allowed in the statehouse — went to the Senate gallery. Some senators wore bulletproof vests.

As of Monday, Michigan has reported 43,754 confirmed COVID-19 virus cases and 4,049 deaths due to complications from the disease.

About 150 people attended a candlelight vigil Sunday night. On Monday, a makeshift memorial was started outside the Family Dollar.

Munerlyn's mother, Bernadett, said she wants justice for her son.

"They didn't have to take my baby and it wasn't that serious," she said. "All you people just have to do is listen to the law, listen to the governor. Just stay home. If you don't have to come out, then you wouldn't need a mask unless you're out getting groceries or necessities. All my baby was doing was his job working and doing his job."

Venezuela says 2 US 'mercenaries' arrested

Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela — Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said that authorities arrested two U.S. citizens among a group of "mercenaries" on Monday, a day after a beach raid purportedly aimed at capturing the socialist leader that authorities said they foiled.

Maduro held up a pair of blue U.S. passports, reading off the names and birth dates on them in a nationwide broadcast on state television. He showed images of the fishing boats the alleged attackers rode in on and equipment like walkie-talkies and night-vision glasses collected in what Maduro called an "intense" couple of days. He blamed the attacks on the Trump administration and neighboring Colombia, both of which have denied involvement.

"The United States government is fully and completely involved in this defeated raid," Maduro said, praising members of a fishing village for cornering one group in the sweep netting the "professional American mercenaries."

Before dawn on Sunday, officials said that the first attack started on a beach near Venezuela's port city of La Guaira, when security forces made the first two arrests and killed eight others attempting to make a landing by speedboats.

The two U.S. citizens arrested Monday were identified as Luke Denman and Airan Berry, both former U.S. special forces soldiers.

Florida-based ex-Green Beret Jordan Goudreau said earlier Monday that he was working with the two men in a mission intending to detain Maduro and "liberate" Venezuela. Goudreau has claimed responsibility for the operation.

Goudreau, a three-time Bronze Star U.S. combat veteran, claimed to have helped organize the deadly seaborne raid from Colombia.

Leaders urge Biden to select black female running mate

Associated Press

DETROIT — After a devastating start to the Democratic primary, Joe Biden's campaign was revived when black voters in South Carolina and throughout the South overwhelmingly sided with him. Now that he's the presumptive Democratic nominee, black voters and leaders are pressing for him to pick a black woman as his running mate.

Biden launched a committee last week to begin vetting possible candidates for the vice presidency, a process he has said will likely last through July. He has already committed to picking a woman.

But black voters and leaders say he needs to go further

and pick a black woman. They argue that Biden's success — and that of the Democratic Party as a whole — depends on black people turning out to vote in November. They want a tangible return for their loyalty, not just a thank you for showing up on Election Day.

Biden has been vocal about the people he would consider as running mates. He's referenced two black women, Sen. Kamala Harris of California and Stacey Abrams, the former Democratic nominee for governor in Georgia. Other black women, including Rep. Val Demings of Florida and Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, have also been mentioned.

But Biden is also thought to

be considering several white women, including Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota and Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. Biden campaign co-chair Cedric Richmond, a Louisiana congressman and a former Congressional Black Caucus chairman, is a forceful advocate for African Americans within Democratic politics. But he's also absolute in his assertion that Biden cannot be forced to check a demographic box.

"I'm not sure that the VP is going to throw names out there just to appease people," Richmond said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Porch package thieves dressed as nurses

WA KENNEWICK—Authorities in Washington state are searching for two women suspected of dressing up as nurses and stealing packages that had been delivered to people's front porches.

Police in Kennewick asked for the public's help in solving the thefts from residences in the town in eastern Washington, KEPR-TV reported.

Detectives do not believe that the women involved are nurses, and posted photos of the suspects and a vehicle in hopes that someone could identify them, according to the Kennewick Police Department.

"We do not believe they are actual nurses. ... The nurses we are fortunate to know only give their time, lives and take the vitals of their patients (not their property)," the department said in a social media post.

Shipwreck fragment emerges along beach

MI LUDINGTON — A portion of a shipwreck was recently discovered on a Lake Michigan beach near Ludington State Park, and historians are working to identify the wreckage.

The fragment was revealed by waves amid high water levels on the Great Lakes. It was spotted by people walking on the beach, the Ludington Daily News reported.

Officials with the Port of Ludington Maritime Museum said that the remains are consistent with schooners built between the 1850s and 1880s. They are working with the Michigan Shipwreck Research Association to determine the origin of the fragment, MLive.com reported.

The fragment measures 32 feet by 8 feet and consists of 15 "ribs" with planking on both sides. According to the museum, a large wooden windlass — a type of winch — that staff from Ludington State Park found a few years ago may be from the same wreck.

Teenager arrested after school bus chase

KS DODGE CITY — A 16-year-old boy is in custody after he led authorities on a chase through several counties in a stolen school bus, authorities said.

The incident began Saturday morning when the bus was stolen in Cheney, in Sedgwick County, and was seen heading west on Highway 54.

Ford County Sheriff Bill Carr said that deputies tried to stop the bus near Bloom, but the driver evaded law enforcement for several miles by driving on and off county roads and Highway 54. He eventually surrendered without incident near Kingsdown in Ford County.

The driver was a runaway from another county, Carr said. He faces possible charges of fleeing and eluding, aggravated assault on an officer, use of a deadly weapon, criminal damage, driving without a license, possession of stolen property and several traffic violations.

Woman donates 10K PB&J sandwiches

DE WILMINGTON — A Delaware woman has reached a major milestone in her campaign to bring comfort to others during the coronavirus outbreak: 10,000 donated peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit locally and the state started to shut down in March,

Louise Eliason thought about the homeless, children and families who might not be able to access enough food.

So she started organizing members of her church — Westminster Presbyterian Church — and later, her neighbors in Wilmington to make and donate PB&J sandwiches to the Emmanuel Dining Room.

The News Journal reported that by Sunday, Eliason and her network of 120 volunteers expected to hit the 10,000 mark in deliveries made to the nonprofit.

Grizzly injures antler hunter near Yellowstone

WY CODY — A Wyoming man was injured by a grizzly bear Friday while he was searching for antlers east of Yellowstone National Park, officials said.

Spencer Smith, 41, of Cody, suffered a severe neck injury but was alert and in stable condition after being flown to a hospital in Billings, according to the Park County, Wyoming, sheriff's office.

Searchers responded to an emergency alert that was activated on a GPS device in the East Painter Creek area north of the Sunlight Basin Wildlife Habitat Management Area, sheriff's officials said. They first found Smith's parked four-wheeler and then Smith.

Friday was the first day that shed hunters could go onto public lands to collect antlers that elk, deer and moose lost over the winter.

Truck with 80 tons of garbage overturns

CT SEYMOUR — The driver of a truck carrying roughly 80 tons of garbage faces multiple charges after the truck overturned in

Seymour and spilled trash, authorities said.

The accident left southbound Route 8 closed for five hours Saturday afternoon as crews cleaned up. No injuries were reported.

Jose Edwin Vasquez, of Waterbury, was charged with operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license, reckless driving, reckless endangerment and failure to stay in the proper lane.

Authorities said that the driver, hauling garbage from Waterbury to Bridgeport, was traveling south when he couldn't navigate a left curve. The vehicle rolled over and blocked all lanes of traffic.

An investigation showed that Vasquez "failed to make necessary corrections" after a February inspection found several violations with the vehicle, authorities said.

Bad weather damages landmark pagoda

PA READING — Officials said a storm that brought high winds and heavy rains to eastern Pennsylvania last week also damaged the landmark pagoda atop Mount Penn overlooking Reading.

The Reading Eagle reported that strong gusts Thursday ripped off several of the signature red tiles from the roof of the structure, which dates back to early in the past century.

Cindy Castner, city manager of public properties, said that public works crews cleaned up the damage Friday and there was fortunately no evidence of leaks into the interior of the building.

Castner said many of the terra cotta tiles need to be replaced but "there's quite a bit involved in that process."

From wire reports

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G League offers different route to NBA

Associated Press

Jalen Green was wooed by Memphis and its fans for months. Thousands chanted “We want Jalen” at the team’s first event that he visited this past season as he nodded in approval and acknowledgement. Even Grizzlies rookie guard Ja Morant was in on the sales pitch, doing all he could to convince Green to come to his city.

And then the G League came calling.

Before long, everything — Green’s plans, the trajectory and mission of the G League, perhaps even the landscape of college basketball on some level — changed. When Green signed to become the first to go straight from high school into the G League’s new developmental program that gives elite players an opportunity to make money while spending a year solely majoring in basketball, a new era for the game officially began.

“There’s nothing wrong with college basketball,” Green said. “I have a lot of friends that I played with in college right

now. But I just felt this was the best route for me. Being different, I carried that through high school and this was another way that I could carry on being different.”

So far, Green — a 6-foot-5 shooting guard who was considered by some as the top recruit in the country — is one of three players to take advantage of this new pathway. He’s been joined since by 6-10 power forward Isaiah Todd, and 6-4 point guard Daishen Nix. Todd was committed to Michigan, Nix was actually signed by UCLA. It’s likely that they’ll be joined by at least two more players, with a center and a small forward believed to be the primary targets so the initial group can have one player at every primary position.

It is very similar to recruiting: The G League is identifying top talent and trying to sign those players, much in the same way colleges are.

“I don’t think this is us in competition with college basketball,” G League President Shareef Abdur-Rahim said.

“For those young men who are looking for alternatives to the natural route, we’re offering an alternative that we believe will be a good program for them.”

But in many respects, this very much seems like it will be the G League competing with the NCAA — at least for the elite players.

Green, a person with knowledge of his deal who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because it has not been released publicly, signed a contract that could exceed \$1 million when factoring in all available possibilities. The person said the deal includes a college scholarship, which the G League will provide if he chooses to attend school again at some point.

That’s big money: The G League was initially planning to offer \$125,000 salaries in this program, and most G League players are making just below \$40,000. And colleges, which can pay players through stipends and other allowances, simply cannot keep up — not within NCAA guide-

lines, anyway.

“If it was a free market where Jalen could go directly to the NBA, he’d have been a top pick this year,” said longtime agent Aaron Goodwin, who advises Green. “The G League was prepared to do something that no college could do ... center a program around his development. They saw that and the college coaches couldn’t offer that.”

There are some who would argue that losing a handful of players — even elite ones — won’t hurt college basketball too much. There were 4,806 players who appeared in at least one Division I men’s game this season, and someone will happily take the spots that Green, Todd and Nix would have had on the Memphis, Michigan and UCLA rosters.

But even Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski has been sounding the alarm on looming changes for several months, citing the rate of attrition in the college game and saying it “can’t take that type of a hit” and that “we have not kept up with it.”

MLB’s average salary stagnant for 5th straight year

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Major League Baseball’s average salary ahead of a postponed opening day remained at around \$4.4 million for the fifth straight season, according to a study of contracts by The Associated Press.

Following an offseason when Gerrit Cole, Stephen Strasburg, Anthony Rendon and Christian Yelich all agreed to \$200 million-plus deals, the flattened salary curve is evidence of a shrinking portion of the pie for baseball’s middle class. The stagnant stretch is unprecedented since the free-agent era dawned in 1976.

And that is before taking into account any decrease caused by a shortened season in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

In a throwback, the New York

Yankees top payrolls for the first time since 2013 and tower over the Pittsburgh Pirates at \$54 million — the lowest of any big league team in six years.

Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred remains confident there will be a season but is unsure when health conditions will allow training to resume.

MLB’s average when rosters were frozen on March 28 was \$4,432,530, up 1.3% from \$4,375,486 in the AP’s opening-day survey last year. The average remains below its record \$4.45 million at the start of the 2017 season and has plateaued since stiffer luxury tax rates began for high-payroll teams.

Going back to 2016, the average has increased just 1% over four offseasons, an average annual rise of 0.25%. The average went up 27% in the four years

ending in 2012 and 9% in the four years through 2008.

MLB revenue is estimated to have increased at close to a 4% annual rate in recent years, but will drop sharply this year because of the impact of the new coronavirus. MLB’s 2021 revenue also will be impacted, according to Manfred.

Scott Boras, the sport’s most powerful agent, says the disparity in rate of increase should be addressed in collective bargaining for the labor deal that replaces the contract expiring in December 2021.

“When the revenues are going up 15% and salaries are going up 1%, we’ve got to really calculate the rights valuation and look at it in a way that allows for those rights to be exercised differently,” he said.

While there were 878 play-

ers on rosters and injured lists at the start of the 2019 season, there were 899 players in the latest AP survey because teams had not yet trimmed to the active limit. The limit goes up this year from 25 to 26, and there could be an additional roster expansion following the disrupted spring training, which would impact the average.

Many teams have redirected money from the shrinking baseball middle class and toward the top of salary structures.

Forty-four players are at \$20 million or more, up from 39 last year and topped by Los Angeles Angels outfielder Mike Trout. The three-time AL MVP is at \$38.5 million when a prorated share of his signing bonus is added to his \$36 million salary.

Cole is second at \$36 million with the Yankees.

NCAA accuses Louisville of violations

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — The NCAA has accused the Louisville men's basketball program of committing a Level I violation with an improper recruiting offer and extra benefits and several Level II violations, including an accusation that former Cardinals coach Rick Pitino failed to promote an atmosphere of compliance.

The notice released on Monday is the completion of a two-year NCAA investigation following a federal corruption probe into college basketball. Louisville acknowledged its involvement in the investigation related to the recruitment of former player Brian Bowen II, which led to the ousters of Pitino and athletic director Tom Jurich in October 2017.

The school noted those personnel moves and other corrective measures in a statement and subsequent teleconference in which it said it takes the allegations seriously. The school has 90 days to respond.

Louisville President Neeli Bendapudi said the school would accept responsibility for violations it committed and "will not hesitate to push back" against allegations it believes are not supported by facts.

"What we have done to be a model of compliance, to be a model of ethical conduct," Bendapudi said, "we truly believe we have gone above and beyond any other institution."

The NCAA's notice says the improper offer and subsequent extra benefits were

provided by people it identified and defined as "representatives of the university's athletics interests."

The most serious violation alleged in the redacted document accuses Adidas employees James Gatto and Merl Code of offering \$125,000 combined to the family of a recruit from May to September 2017. Then-Louisville assistant Jordan Fair is alleged to have provided between \$11,800 and \$13,500 in benefits to coach/trainer Brad Augustine, who was associated with another prospective recruit, while former associate head coach Kenny Johnson is alleged to have provided an extra benefit of \$1,300.

Pitino is alleged to have violated the head coach's responsibility for ensuring compliance by failing to conduct additional inquiries into Gatto's recruiting assistance of a prospect and not reporting activities to the athletic department's compliance staff. The Hall of Fame coach was not named in the federal complaint and has consistently denied authorizing or having knowledge of a payment to a recruit's family.

Pitino, who returned to college basketball in March when he was hired as head coach at Iona, acknowledged the NCAA allegation in a statement.

"I firmly disagree with this allegation and will follow the protocols in addressing this allegation through the administrative process. Due to NCAA bylaws on public disclosure on enforcement issues, I will

have no further comment on this matter until it is resolved," Pitino said.

"We are aware of the report," Iona said in a statement. "The NCAA has a process to address the allegations. Prior to hiring coach Pitino, we conducted extensive due diligence. We support coach Pitino and expect him to respond within the process."

Louisville is currently on NCAA probation for a 2015 scandal in which a former basketball employee was found to have paid women to provide sexual favors to recruits and players. That episode resulted in sanctions including the vacating of 123 victories and its 2013 NCAA championship.

Though the latest notice of allegations could subject the school to additional discipline, the governing body did not accuse it of a lack of institutional control.

Asked if Louisville is concerned about a so-called "death penalty" and shutdown of the program, AD Vince Tyra said, "We don't foresee that. I think it's clear to the NCAA what we've done. I don't want to get too far down that path, but we've done all we can do here and made some pretty unparalleled corrections in our program."

A statement from Louisville notes the school has changed leadership in athletics and basketball, though it does not mention Tyra or second-year men's basketball coach Chris Mack. It also outlines several measures of compliance that include reporting to the vice president for risk management, audit and compliance instead of athletics.

Auditor: Favre was paid for no-show speeches

Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. — A non-profit group caught up in an embezzlement scheme in Mississippi used federal welfare money to pay former NFL quarterback Brett Favre \$1.1 million for multiple speaking engagements but Favre did not show up for the events, the state auditor said Monday.

Details about payments to Favre are included in an audit of the Mississippi Department of Human Services. State Auditor Shad White said his employees identified \$94 million in questionable spending by the agency, including payments for sports activities with no clear connection to helping needy people in one of the poorest

states of the U.S.

The audit was released months after a former Human Services director and five other people were indicted on state charges of embezzling about \$4 million. They have pleaded not guilty and are awaiting trial in what White has called one of Mississippi's largest public corruption cases in decades.

"If there was a way to mispend money, it seems DHS leadership or their grantees thought of it and tried it," White said Monday.

White said the Human Services audit "shows the most egregious misspending my staff have seen in their careers."

Payments to Favre were made by Mississippi Commu-

nity Education Center, a group that had contracts with the Department of Human Services to spend money through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. The audit says Favre Enterprises was paid \$500,000 in December 2017 and \$600,000 in June 2018, and he was supposed to make speeches for at least three events. The auditor's report says that "upon a cursory review of those dates, auditors were able to determine that the individual contracted did not speak nor was he present for those events."

Favre, who lives in Mississippi, faces no criminal charges. The audit report lists the payments to Favre as "questioned" costs, which White said means

"auditors either saw clear misspending or could not verify the money had been lawfully spent."

The Associated Press on Monday sent questions to Favre through his longtime agent Bus Cook, and Favre did not immediately respond.

John Davis was director of the Department of Human Services from January 2016 until July 2019, appointed by then-Gov. Phil Bryant — a Republican who also appointed White to office when a previous auditor stepped down. Davis was one of the people indicted; another was Nancy New, who was director of the Mississippi Community Education Center. Davis, New and the others indicted have pleaded not guilty.