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5 Roosevelt sailors test positive again

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Five USS Theodore Roosevelt sailors have tested positive again for the coronavirus after they had already recovered and were allowed to return to the ship, according to the Navy.

The five sailors had developed flu-like symptoms this week and went to be medically evaluated, Cmdr. Myers Vasquez, a Navy spokesman, said in a statement. They were immediately removed from the ship and placed in quarantine.

Additionally, 18 other sailors who had interacted closely with those five have been taken off the aircraft carrier, retested and are waiting for their results in quarantine, according to a U.S. defense official.

The sailors who retested positive did so after they had “met rigorous recovery criteria,” according to Vasquez, and the Navy’s “recovery criteria exceeds all [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] guidelines.”

The sailors had adhered to strict social distancing protocols put in place by the Navy while they were on the ship, he said.

Sailors who test positive must isolate for at least 14 days, have no symptoms for at least three days, and then are required to have two consecutive negative tests in a greater than 48-hour period before they are allowed to return to the ship, Vasquez said.

The Navy statement did not say how the sailors could have retested positive after meeting the recovery criteria or what these new cases mean for the redeployment of the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, which has been in port in Guam since March 27 to deal with the outbreak aboard the ship.

The Roosevelt had more than 1,100 active cases among its nearly 4,800-member crew as of April 30, the last update that the Navy has provided about cases associated with the ship’s outbreak. The Navy had reported 100% of the crew had been tested for the virus at that time and many of them

were returning to the ship after weeks of quarantine on Guam. The ship has also undergone cleaning and sanitizing in preparation of returning to sea, according to the Navy.

The Navy has the highest number of coronavirus cases in the military at 2,191 as of Thursday, according to the Pentagon.

The military has a total of 5,472 cases and two deaths, including one sailor from the Roosevelt.

The positive tests come as the Pentagon’s inspector general announced Monday that the office was starting an evaluation into the Navy’s approach to preventing the spread of infectious diseases aboard its ships and submarines after the Roosevelt and the destroyer USS Kidd had coronavirus outbreaks while at sea.

The Navy is conducting its own investigation into the service’s response to the Roosevelt outbreak, which reported its first case March 24. The investigation is expected to be submitted May 27 to Adm. Mike Gilday, the chief of naval operations.

Navy officer receives 1st waiver to transgender policy

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A transgender Navy officer is now permitted to serve openly as her preferred gender, the first such waiver since April 2019 when a Pentagon policy began to restrict transgender individuals in the military.

The acting Navy Secretary James McPherson approved the waiver to the transgender policy in this individual case, Lt. Brittany Stephens, a Navy spokeswoman, said in a statement.

“This service member requested a waiver to serve in their preferred gender, to include obtaining a gender marker change in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System and being allowed

to adhere to standards associated with their preferred gender, such as uniforms and grooming,” Stephens said.

The Pentagon’s policy does not allow the vast majority of men and women who have been diagnosed with gender dysphoria to enlist in the military or continue to serve as the person’s preferred gender without a waiver. Gender dysphoria is the medical condition associated with individuals who do not identify with their birth sex.

The policy overturned a 2016 policy from former President Barack Obama’s administration that allowed transgender service members to serve openly.

In a joint statement Friday, GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders and the National Center

for Lesbian Rights, legal organizations for LGBTQ rights and advocacy, said they had filed a lawsuit in March on behalf of the Navy officer who received the waiver. The government was going to file a response to the lawsuit next week, according to the statement.

“While we are relieved that our client, a highly qualified Naval officer, will be able to continue her service, there are other equally qualified transgender service members who have sought waivers and are still in limbo, despite being perfectly fit to serve,” Jennifer Levi, the director of GLAD’s Transgender Rights Project, said in the prepared statement.

The Navy officer, who has served two extended tours of duty in nine years, is seeking

emergency relief from the policy in order to continue serving, according to a news release about the lawsuit. She had come out after the April 2019 policy was put into effect and needed a waiver to continue serving.

Requiring transgender service members to seek a waiver to serve is discriminatory, NCLR Legal Director Shannon Minter said in the statement.

“Being transgender has nothing to do with a person’s fitness to serve, and transgender individuals should be held to the same standards as other service members,” Minter said.

The waiver “is an important victory for this sailor,” Peter Perkowski, the legal and policy director for the Modern Military Association of America, a LGBTQ non-profit, said.

US on track to reduce troops in Afghanistan

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. is on track to meet its commitment to the Taliban to withdraw several thousand troops from Afghanistan by summer, even as violence flares, the peace process is stalled, and Kabul struggles in political deadlock.

U.S. officials say they will reduce to 8,600 troops by July 15 and abandon five bases. And by next spring all foreign forces are supposed to withdraw, ending America's longest war. Yet

the outlook for peace is cloudy at best. In the absence of Afghan peace talks, the Trump administration may face the prospect of fully withdrawing even as the Taliban remain at war with the government.

That has concerned some lawmakers, including Rep. Liz Cheney, a Wyoming Republican and member of the House Armed Services Committee. She says the U.S. needs to keep a military and intelligence presence in Afghanistan to prevent extremist groups like al-Qaida

and Islamic State's Afghan affiliate from forming havens from which to attack the U.S.

Some question whether the U.S.-Taliban agreement signed in Doha, Qatar, on Feb. 29, which the Trump administration billed as "a decisive step to achieve a negotiated peace," was instead mainly a withdrawal agreement. President Donald Trump had campaigned on bringing troops home from foreign wars. And though the Afghan government publicly supported the deal, it

did not participate directly in the negotiations and has not, in Washington's view, capitalized on the chance for peace talks.

"A lot of this boils down to: Was the U.S.-Taliban agreement any kind of serious negotiation at all, or was it just totally a fig leaf to cover abject withdrawal? I suspect the latter," said Stephen Biddle, a Columbia University professor of international and public affairs and a former adviser to U.S. commanders in Kabul.

Medal of Honor recipient dies of cancer at 41

BY WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

Ronald Shurer, the Green Beret medic awarded the Medal of Honor for aiding the wounded during a six-hour firefight in Afghanistan in 2008, died of lung cancer Thursday. He was 41.

His death was announced by the U.S. Secret Service, for whom Shurer had worked since retiring from the Army in 2009.

"Today, we lost an American Hero: Husband, Father, Son, Medal of Honor Recipient - Special Agent Ronald J. Shurer

II," the Secret Service said in a tweet. "From a grateful Nation and Agency - your memory and legacy will live on forever."

Shurer was diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer in 2017 and had chronicled his treatment and hospitalization on Instagram.

Shurer was awarded the Medal of Honor on Oct. 1, 2018, an upgrade from the Silver Star originally presented for his actions in the fight that would become known as the Battle of Shok Valley in Nuristan province.

On April 6, 2008, a 12-man Green Beret force from Op-

erational Detachment-Alpha 3336 were on a mission to kill or capture a leader of the Hezbe-Islami Gulbuddin insurgent group.

The assault force was immediately faced with scaling a 100-foot cliff to reach the enemy compound. But within minutes, heavy machine fire and rockets rained from enemy positions above. While treating the wounded, Shurer was hit twice — once in the arm and once by a stunning round to his helmet.

One of the Green Beret soldiers who was critically wounded in the hip credited Shurer

for his survival.

"Without Ron Shurer at my side, I would have died that day. No question," Dillon Behr told Stars and Stripes in 2018.

As coalition airstrikes began pummeling the enemy positions, Shurer moved the wounded to be evacuated.

"While moving down the mountain, Staff Sergeant Shurer used his own body to shield the wounded from enemy fire and debris caused by danger-close air strikes," the Medal of Honor citation said.

Stars and Stripes reporter Corey Dickstein contributed to this report.

AFRICOM: Fight persists despite lull in airstrikes

BY JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. Africa Command hasn't launched an airstrike in Somalia in five weeks, the longest halt in more than a year, as torrential rains complicate the battlefield environment.

"With the rainy season there can be shifts in Al-Shabab and broader activity," AFRICOM spokesman Col. Chris Karns said. "There is always effort,

not always opportunity to conduct airstrikes. There is certainly no pause."

Somalia has been hard-hit by floods that have displaced nearly 300,000 people this spring, the United Nations has said.

The most recent U.S. strike in Somalia occurred April 10 — around the time the rainy season started — capping a series of attacks against the al-Shabab militant group, which is aligned with al-Qaida.

Even with the five-week lull,

AFRICOM has so far conducted about 40 airstrikes in the country this year, putting it on pace to eclipse last year's tally of 63.

The number of strikes has increased in recent years as part of an effort to aid Somali forces in their long-running battle against al-Shabab.

Despite the strikes, al-Shabab has proven resilient and is still able to carry out high-profile attacks in the country and neighboring states such as

Kenya, where three Americans were killed in January when a base used by U.S. forces was ambushed.

Officials also said the airstrike campaign keeps militants off-balance and confused.

"Where confusion exists, mistakes occur," Karns said. "The armed overwatch capability very much remains an option. Where opportunity presents itself and airstrikes are the appropriate option, strikes will resume."

Hospital ship returning to San Diego

The San Diego Union-Tribune

SAN DIEGO — The hospital ship Mercy was to return to San Diego on Friday after seven weeks in Los Angeles assisting with patients during the coronavirus pandemic, the U.S. Northern Command said.

Mercy was to leave the Port of Los Angeles early Friday and arrive at Naval Base San Diego Friday afternoon, the statement said.

The ship left San Diego March 23 just as community spread of the novel coronavirus was increasing and state officials were concerned hospitals would be inundated with pa-

tients. The Mercy was to serve as a relief valve, taking on non-coronavirus patients and freeing up space in Los Angeles hospitals.

The ship saw 77 patients over about six weeks. It discharged its final patient May 5.

While in Los Angeles, the medical staff of the Mercy performed several surgeries, including the ship's first-ever pacemaker replacement.

They also treated a single victim of a vehicle collision, performing eight surgeries, skin grafts and an orthopedic spine procedure on the patient, the Navy said. All treatment

was free to patients.

While the COVID-19 patient wave never overwhelmed L.A. hospitals, the ship did fight its own coronavirus outbreak on board. Several sailors tested positive and were removed. John Fage, a spokesman for the Navy's 3rd Fleet, said in an email that the majority of those sailors have recovered and have returned to duty.

Some medical personnel are staying in Los Angeles and Orange County to assist at skilled nursing facilities. About a month ago, 40 sailors began working off the ship at one such facility. The Navy says 20

more will also remain to help at others.

The director of the California Office of Emergency Services, Mark Ghilarducci, said Thursday the Mercy was "critical" to the state's response to the virus. He thanked the Navy, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and federal administrators.

On the East Coast another hospital ship, the USNS Comfort, deployed to support the pandemic response in New York. It left New York April 30.

Navy nurse gives inside look at Roosevelt response

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — In late March, the coronavirus-stricken aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt stopped its patrol of the Western Pacific to steam toward Guam and the promise of medical attention for the outbreak sweeping its decks.

Thousands of miles away, an anxious Navy Lt. Rodney Posley and about 100 of his colleagues from the 3rd Medical Battalion at Camp Foster, Okinawa, also departed for the U.S. island territory. They arrived April 1, and with staff from U.S. Naval Hospital Guam, formed Task Force Medical to test and treat the nearly 5,000 sailors assigned to the carrier.

"We walked in to [Roosevelt] sailors that were already known COVID positive," Posley, an intensive care unit nurse, said in a May 13 phone interview from Guam, where he was still caring for patients from the carrier.

"We knew there was testing being done so we immediately came in and started treating COVID-related signs and symptoms," he said. "Also doing isolation criteria to people who were COVID negative and those who were COVID

positive so that they wouldn't spread the virus."

It was an unprecedented situation, said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Jennifer Knapp, officer in charge of the medical side of the Okinawa-based detachment.

"This is honestly the most complex and dynamic operation I've ever been in charge of," she said by phone on May 13. "Since we've been here, we've been essentially writing the book on how to respond to a COVID outbreak on a U.S. naval vessel as large as the one we're dealing with."

Within a day of their arrival, Posley and his colleagues constructed a six-bed, pop-up, field ICU and observation center at Naval Base Guam, where the Roosevelt was docked. They also manned an isolation site where they could check sailors' temperatures and vitals, looking for coronavirus symptoms.

Nearly 5,000 sailors were moved off the carrier at various times and all were checked out by the task force.

The team from Okinawa brought medical expertise but also extra beds and ventilators, Roosevelt spokeswoman Lt. Cmdr. Julie Holland wrote Thursday in an email to Stars and Stripes.

Roosevelt crew members

who tested positive were moved to isolation on base, under medical care, Holland said. Those who tested negative went into quarantine in off-base hotels. Their movements were restricted, and they were evaluated daily.

Roosevelt sailors were tasked with reporting any signs or symptoms and they did so swiftly, Posley said. The task force's job was to intervene early, before coronavirus symptoms got serious, following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and World Health Organization guidelines.

They monitored oxygen levels and fevers, Knapp said. If something dipped out of a healthy range, they brought the patients to an observation center for around-the-clock treatment.

Navy officials declined to say how many patients from the Roosevelt became critical, but more than 1,150 sailors ultimately tested positive for the coronavirus. One, Chief Petty Officer Charles Robert Thacker Jr., 41, of Fort Smith, Ark., died on April 13.

By April 23, the entire Roosevelt crew had been tested, Holland said. On April 29, sailors who had tested negative for the coronavirus three times began moving back on board.

More than half of the crew was back aboard as of May 4, according to a CBS News report.

However, five of those sailors tested positive again, the Navy said May 14. They were immediately removed from the Roosevelt and returned to quarantine.

Knapp said having experienced sailors like Posley boosts task force members' confidence that they will succeed. She called Posley a "fantastic" ICU nurse.

"We know this will possibly make history because this is a new disease process as far as the COVID-19," Posley said. "The big thing for us is trying to get the T.R. sailors back to sea."

Crew from the Roosevelt made signs and notes thanking the sailors and Marines that were posted on Facebook by the Navy.

"We greatly appreciate the continued support of the team from 3rd Medical Battalion, 3rd Marine Logistics Group, for all our shipmates residing off ship," Holland said. "Third Medical Battalion, 3rd Marine Logistics Group, alongside Naval Hospital Guam, has provided incredible care as we go through this unprecedented time together."

Dems push \$3T relief bill; GOP resistant

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democrats began pushing Congress' biggest coronavirus relief bill yet toward expected House passage Friday, a \$3 trillion behemoth they said a beleaguered country badly needs but that Republicans called a bloated election-year wish list.

Democratic leaders were pressing ahead despite grumbling from party moderates leery of the measure's massive price tag and liberals who wanted bolder steps, like money to cover workers' salaries.

The bill was sure to go nowhere in the GOP-led Senate, let alone reach President Donald Trump's desk, where a

promised veto awaited. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., has said the legislation is Democrats' opening offer in what is expected to blossom into negotiations with the White House and congressional leaders of both parties.

In a scene that's become uncomfortably familiar since the virus took hold, the sparsely populated House chamber was dotted with members and aides wearing protective masks, though some Republicans were not.

There were few clusters of chatting lawmakers and Pelosi edged away from anyone who stepped near her. Each vote was expected to last an hour or more, with members voting in

alphabetical order in groups of around 70 to reduce crowding.

The bill would flush almost \$1 trillion to state and local governments and provide more money for virus testing and to pay front-line emergency workers. It would renew \$1,200 cash payments for individuals and extend the added \$600 weekly unemployment benefits being paid during the pandemic.

Democrats rejected GOP arguments that the measure was simply an effort by Democrats to display their priorities to voters.

"I don't give a damn about sending a message," said Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass. "I want to send help to those in desperate need."

Pelosi has loaded the 1,815-page measure with a slew of Democratic priorities, including funding to cover rent payments and utility bills, "hazard pay" for essential workers. It also has grants to thousands of municipal governments grappling with sagging revenues and provisions helping voters cast ballots by mail and increasing food aid to low-income people.

Few Republicans were expected to vote for the bill, despite popular provisions that also included help for the Postal Service and local schools and \$175 billion to help homeowners and renters stay in their homes.

Trump says he will replenish national stockpile

Associated Press

ALLENTOWN, Pa. — President Donald Trump says he intends to prepare for future pandemics by replenishing the national stockpile and bringing manufacturing of critical supplies and equipment back to the U.S. His comments came the same day a whistleblower told Congress the Trump administration had failed to properly prepare for the current pandemic.

"Wouldn't that be nice?" Trump said Thursday during a visit to a Pennsylvania distributor of medical equipment. "My goal is to produce everything America needs for ourselves and then export to the world,

including medicines."

Trump had complained about supply chains in a television interview that aired before he left Washington for the trip to Owens and Minor Inc. in Allentown.

"These stupid supply chains that are all over the world — we have a supply chain where they're made in all different parts of the world," Trump said in the interview with Fox Business Network. "And one little piece of the world goes bad, and the whole thing is messed up."

"We should have them all in the United States," he said.

It was Trump's second trip outside Wash-

ington in as many weeks as tries to convince the public that it's time for states to begin to open up again, even with the virus still spreading. Trump's remarks came as federal whistleblower Rick Bright testified before a House panel on Thursday about his repeated efforts to jump-start U.S. production of respirator masks that he says went nowhere.

In Pennsylvania, Trump added to the pressure Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf is under from home-state Republicans to roll back stay-at-home orders and business shutdowns after effectively containing the state's outbreak early on.

Health officials release edited guidance on reopening

Associated Press

NEW YORK — U.S. health officials on Thursday released some of their long-delayed guidance that schools, businesses and other organizations can use as states reopen from coronavirus shutdowns.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention posted six one-page "decision tool" documents that use traffic signs and other graphics to tell organizations what they should consider before reopening.

The tools are for schools, workplaces, camps, child care centers, mass transit systems, and bars and restaurants. The CDC originally also authored a document for churches and other religious facilities,

but that wasn't posted Thursday. The agency declined to say why.

Early versions of the documents included detailed information for churches wanting to restart in-person services, with suggestions including maintaining distance between parishioners and limiting the size of gatherings. The faith-related guidance was taken out after the White House raised concerns about the recommended restrictions, according to government emails obtained by The Associated Press and a person inside the agency who didn't have permission to talk with reporters and spoke on condition of anonymity.

On Thursday, a Trump administration

official also speaking on condition of anonymity said there were concerns about the propriety of the government making specific dictates to places of worship.

President Donald Trump has championed religious freedom as a way to connect with conservative evangelical voters and has shown eagerness for in-person religious services to restart.

The CDC drafted the reopening guidance more than a month ago and it was initially shelved by the administration, the AP reported last week.

The agency also had prepared even more extensive guidance — about 57 pages of it — that has not been posted.

Governor reopens Texas amid tension

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Two weeks into the reopening of Texas, coronavirus cases are climbing. New outbreaks still crop up. And at Guero's Taco Bar in Austin, which offers the occasional celebrity sighting, a log of every diner and where they sat is begrudgingly in the works.

"It seems like a huge invasion of privacy," said owner Cathy Lipincott, who is nonetheless trying to comply with Austin's local public health guidelines by asking, but not requiring, customers to give their information.

Few states are rebooting quicker than Texas, where stay-at-home orders expired May 1. With cases still rising, including single-day highs of 1,458 new cases and 58 deaths Thursday, Republican Gov. Greg Abbott has defended the pace by emphasizing steady hospitalization rates and pointing out that Texas' 1,200 deaths are still behind similarly big states, including California and Florida.

But on the cusp of even more restrictions ending Monday, including gyms cleared to reopen, a political confrontation is growing over attempts by big cities to keep some guardrails. The dispute underscores the gulf between Democrats who run city halls and GOP leaders who call the shots in the capital in Texas, where unlike other states, the governor's orders supersede all local mandates during the pandemic.

California

SACRAMENTO — California Gov. Gavin Newsom proposed \$14 billion in budget cuts on Thursday because of the coronavirus, with more than half coming at the expense of public schools already struggling to educate children from afar during a pandemic.

The cuts are part of a plan to cover a \$54.3 billion budget deficit caused by plummeting state revenues after a manda-

tory, statewide stay-at-home order forced most businesses to close and put more than 4.7 million people out of work.

Thursday, Newsom proposed to fill that hole through a combination of cuts, tax increases, canceled spending, internal borrowing and tapping the state's reserves. It also includes a 10% pay cut for all state workers, including the governor himself. Overall, the \$203 billion spending plan is about 5% lower than the budget lawmakers approved last year.

"Nothing breaks my heart more than having to make budget cuts," he said. "There's a human being behind every single number."

Minnesota

MINNEAPOLIS — The Mall of America, which is the largest shopping and entertainment complex in North America, will partially reopen on June 1 in compliance with Minnesota's new safety protocols for slowly reopening the economy during the COVID-19 pandemic, mall management announced Thursday.

Gov. Tim Walz's decision Wednesday to allow his stay-at-home order to expire and to allow retailers to start reopening on Monday was "promising news" for the mall and all retailers, the operators of the mall in the Minneapolis suburb of Bloomington said in a statement. The mall, which has more than 520 stores and restaurants, temporarily closed on March 17, though some of its merchants recently began offering curbside service.

North Carolina

RALEIGH — Conservative Christian leaders sued Gov. Roy Cooper on Thursday, asking a court to throw out his restrictions on indoor religious services in North Carolina during the COVID-19 pandemic. They argued the limits, initiated by Cooper with health in mind, violate their rights to worship freely.

Two Baptist churches, a minister and a Christian revival group filed the federal lawsuit seeking to immediately block enforcement of rules covering religious services within the Democratic governor's executive orders. The latest order still largely prevents most faith organizations from holding indoor services attended by more than 10 people.

"Freedoms curbed eventually becomes no freedom at all," the Rev. Ron Baity, pastor of Berean Baptist Church in Winston-Salem and a plaintiff in the lawsuit, said at a rally of roughly 500 people next to the Legislative Building.

Ohio

COLUMBUS — Ohio restaurants had the option beginning Friday to offer outdoor dining, the next step toward resuming normal business operations under Republican Gov. Mike DeWine's state reopening plan.

DeWine has said that 90% of the state's economy will be back online this weekend with Ohioans having returned to offices, factories, construction jobs and retail stores, and now outdoor eating. In-person dining can resume on May 21.

The governor and Health Director Dr. Amy Acton made it clear at a Thursday briefing that Ohioans must still take numerous precautions from wearing masks to frequent hand-washing to proper social distancing.

Pennsylvania

HARRISBURG — Gov. Tom Wolf will announce Friday that more counties can see some of his tightest pandemic restrictions lifted, as counties and lawmakers kept up pressure on him to ease up on his orders.

In a telephone news conference Thursday with reporters, Wolf said he will make his decision on Friday morning. However, he has not changed his criteria for deciding which counties can emerge from his stay-at-home order and his order for non-life-sustaining

businesses to close, he said.

His health secretary, Dr. Rachel Levine, echoed that, saying that the administration will continue to count cases in prisons, factories, nursing homes and other large settings prone to outbreaks against a county's total.

That is bad news for counties such as Beaver and Huntingdon that blame much of their outbreak on a single institution, like a prison or nursing home, and remain under the governor's tightest restrictions.

Rhode Island

PROVIDENCE — Rhode Island's summer camps will reopen, but organized sports likely won't make a return, Gov. Gina Raimondo said Thursday.

The Democrat said details about the planned June 29 reopening of camps are being finalized, but said parents can expect their children will be kept in small, set groups in order to limit the risk of virus transmission.

"It's going to be different, but fun," she said.

For now, Raimondo said she's sticking to federal guidelines that recommend canceling all organized youth sports, including Little League and travel team competitions.

Virginia

RICHMOND — Virginia's capital city and a rural county on the Eastern Shore are opting out of beginning to reopen Friday, saying it is still too soon to ease restrictions amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Gov. Ralph Northam granted requests from the city of Richmond and Accomack County on Thursday afternoon to delay a gradual reopening of some non-essential businesses just hours ahead of when those areas were set to start reopening.

The governor is easing some restrictions in most of the state Friday. He delayed the Richmond and Accomack reopenings by two weeks, which he'd previously done for several localities in northern Virginia.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Dad gives daughter graduation ceremony

TN MEMPHIS — Xavier University's cancellation of its graduation ceremony due to the coronavirus pandemic didn't stop one Tennessee senior from walking across the stage.

That's because Torrence Burson decided to throw his daughter her own personal graduation ceremony in the front yard of their Memphis home, complete with a stage to walk across, a podium for speeches and a supporting audience in the street.

Gabrielle Pierce told Fox 13 in Memphis that she was devastated when her university had to cancel its ceremony. Burson said he felt her pain and decided to take action, even if his wife thought he was crazy.

When the day came, Pierce walked to the stage as a loudspeaker blared "The Graduation March" and neighbors lined the street to cheer her on.

"I was amazed. I couldn't believe a lot of people showed up. People were driving by yelling congratulations," said Pierce, who plans to join the Air National Guard and then study epidemiology. "It was just amazing. Better than the actual graduation, because it was more personal."

Teen learning to park runs over, kills dad

FL TARPON SPRINGS — A Florida teenager accidentally drove a pickup truck over her father while learning how to park the vehicle on Tuesday evening, police said.

The 46-year-old man died at the scene. He was teaching his 15-year-old daughter to park the truck at a park in Tarpon Springs, police said.

The man was standing in front of the 2017 Ford F-150 so his daughter could park the vehicle herself, news outlets reported.

He thought the girl was going to back into the parking spot, but she "unintentionally" hit the accelerator while the truck was in drive, police said. The truck drove forward over a curb before hitting the man and then a tree.

Officers said that when they arrived at the scene, the girl was tending to her father. He was later pronounced dead.

Troopers shoot and kill runaway emu

PA COLLEGEVILLE — A runaway emu that disrupted travel by wandering along a major highway in the Philadelphia area was shot and killed by state police after attempts to capture it failed.

The emu was spotted on the median of Route 422 near Collegeville on Wednesday. The bird's presence caused lengthy backups in both directions, as authorities used tasers as part of their efforts to corral the emu.

KYW radio reports the emu was eventually shot for "the protection of officers and the community," according to state police.

Authorities say the large bird's owner apparently lost control of the emu shortly after buying it.

1 in custody after man shot with crossbow

NC HICKORY — North Carolina authorities took a homeowner into custody Wednesday, hours after someone was shot in the head with a crossbow on his property, a sheriff's office said.

Burke County deputies lo-

cated Siegfried Albert Jackson, 28, less than 1 mile from the Hickory home where a man was discovered suffering from a serious head injury, the agency said in a statement.

The victim was airlifted to a hospital. An update on his condition was not immediately given.

Investigators said a crossbow was discovered nearby and Jackson was spotted leaving the scene. Officials did not say whether Jackson was charged.

Invasive lizard sighted for 3rd year in a row

GA REIDSVILLE — An invasive South American lizard Georgia officials are attempting to eradicate was sighted for the third year in a row, a reptile conservation group said.

The lizard — known as tegus — was recently found in Tattnall County, the Orianna Society said in a Facebook post. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources said the Argentine lizards likely originated in the state as escaped pets or were released into the wild.

The tegus, which can grow to 4 feet long, poses a threat to protected native wildlife, including American alligators and gopher tortoises. The black and white tegus have been documented using gopher tortoise burrows and eating tortoise and alligator eggs, as well as the tortoise young.

3 charged with making counterfeit money

ME OGUNQUIT — Three New Hampshire residents have been arrested on charges of making counterfeit money and trying to spend it in Maine.

They were arrested in an

investigation of the production and passing of counterfeit currency in Ogunquit, according to police.

Authorities discovered the suspects passed counterfeit bills in common denominations at several businesses in the area.

William Sylvia, of Somersworth, was charged with aggravated forgery and unlawful possession of scheduled drugs. Nicole Ashline, of Manchester, and Kendra LeBlanc, of Somersworth, were charged with aggravated forgery.

Wildlife officials relocate 3 grizzlies

MT KALISPELL — Three grizzly bears trapped along Swan Lake in Montana were relocated after weeks of roaming the area, invading yards and ravaging garbage and hummingbird feeders, wildlife officials said.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks on Friday captured and released two females, weighing 173 pounds and 222 pounds, near the Whale Creek drainage area, and a male, weighing 241 pounds, near the Canada border, Daily Inter Lake reported.

All three bears were fitted with GPS radio collars, which will be used to monitor their future movements, officials said.

Department specialist Tim Manley first received reports of bear activity on April 18 when the grizzlies were seen feeding on grass along the west shore of the lake and again on May 1 when the bears knocked over a barbecue and rummaged through unsecured garbage.

The bears continued to roam near residences and were spotted eating dog food, avoiding traps placed by wildlife officials.

From wire reports

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Snell says he'll sit if pay cut further

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Tampa Bay Rays All-Star pitcher Blake Snell says he will not take the mound this year if his pay is cut further, proclaiming: "I'm not playing unless I get mine."

"I'm not splitting no revenue. I want all mine," the 2018 AL Cy Young Award winner said on a Twitch stream Wednesday. "Bro, y'all got to understand, too, because y'all going to be like: 'Bro, play for the love of the game. Man, what's wrong with you, bro? Money should not be a thing.' Bro, I'm risking my life. What do you mean, 'It should not be a thing?' It 100% should be a thing."

A 27-year-old left-hander, Snell agreed in March 2019 to a \$50 million, five-year contract that included a \$3 million signing bonus, a \$1 million salary last year and a \$7 million salary this season.

As part of the March 26 agreement between Major League Baseball and the players' association to deal with

the delay in the season caused by the coronavirus pandemic, Snell is being advanced \$286,500 for the first 60 days of the season through May 24 but would not get any more in 2020 if no games are played. The deal calls for players to receive prorated shares of salary if the season does start; Snell would get \$43,210 for each day of the schedule.

Teams say they would lose money if games are played in empty ballparks, and owners on Monday approved making a proposal to the union to base salaries on a 50-50 split of revenue. The union says the concept amounts to a salary cap, which players have long voted never to accept.

"If I'm going to play, I should be at the money I signed to be getting paid," Snell said. "I should not be getting half of what I'm getting paid because the season's cut in half, all on top of a 33% cut of the half that's already there, so I'm really getting like 25%. On top of that, it's getting taxed. So imagine how much I'm actually making to

play, you know what I'm saying? Like, I ain't making (expletive). And on top of that, so all of that money's gone and now I play risking my life."

Rays manager Kevin Cash did not want to talk about Snell's views of the finances but did discuss their medical worries.

"I would imagine there are players that feel — that have concerns about their specific health and the health of their families and teammates," Cash said Thursday during a telephone news conference. "And, I think that's fair. We all should, to a degree."

"Health and safety is the No. 1 priority right now for myself, our organization, MLB, of our players, our staff, our fans, and our specific communities," Cash said.

Bargaining began Tuesday when MLB made an initial presentation of a plan that calls for an 82-game schedule starting around the Fourth of July, which would reduce Snell's salary to \$3,543,210 under the March 26 deal. Frequent coronavirus testing would be part

of the plan.

Safety is among players' top concerns.

"If I get the 'rona, guess what happens with that? Oh, yeah, that stays — that's in my body forever," Snell said. "The damage that was done to my body, that's going to be there forever. So now I got to play with that on top of that. So, y'all got to — I mean — you'all got to understand, man, for to go, for me to take a pay cut is not happening because the risk is through the roof, it's a shorter season, less pay. Like, bro, this — yeah, man, I've got to, no, I've got to get my money. I'm not playing unless I get mine, OK? And that's just the way it is for me. Like I'm sorry if you guys think differently, but the risk is way the hell higher and the amount of money I make is way lower. Why would I think about doing that?"

Snell's Twitch stream was posted to Twitter by a person who was a freelance logger with the MLB Network until spring training stopped in March.

2-time All-Star, general manager Watson dead at 74

Associated Press

Bob Watson, an All-Star slugger who became the first black general manager to win a World Series with the New York Yankees in 1996, has died. He was 74.

The Houston Astros, for whom Watson played his first 14 seasons in a baseball career spanning six decades, announced his death Thursday night. The team did not provide details, but son Keith wrote on Twitter that he died in Houston from kidney disease.

"He was an All-Star on the field and a true pioneer off of it, admired and respected by everyone he played with or worked alongside," the Astros said in a statement. "Bob will be missed, but not forgotten."

Watson, nicknamed "The Bull," made the All-Star team

in 1973 and '75, hit over .300 four times and drove in at least 100 runs twice while hitting in the middle of the Astros' lineup. He also holds the distinction of scoring the 1 millionth run in major league history — on May 4, 1975, against the San Francisco Giants at Candlestick Park.

Commissioner Rob Manfred lauded Watson as a "highly accomplished figure" and "deeply respected colleague."

Watson also played for Boston (1979), the Yankees (1980-82) and Atlanta Braves (1982-84), finishing with a .295 career batting average with 184 home runs, 989 RBIs and 1,826 runs scored while primarily playing first base and left field. Watson also hit .371 in 17 career post-season games. He was the first player to hit for the cycle in both leagues — for Houston in 1977

and Boston two years later.

After retiring as a player, Watson began coaching and helped the 1988 Oakland Athletics win the American League pennant as the hitting coach for the likes of Jose Canseco and Mark McGwire.

He became the second black general manager in major league history — after Atlanta's Bill Lucas (1976-79) — when he was hired by the Astros in 1993.

Watson was hired as the Yankees' GM in 1995, and made the then-highly criticized decision to hire Joe Torre as New York's manager. Watson, along with Torre leading the team on the field, helped put together the World Series-winning squad in 1996.

He retired from the Yankees after the 1997 season, and Brian Cashman replaced

him as New York's GM. Watson later served as Major League Baseball's vice president in charge of discipline and vice president of rules and on-field operations and worked in the league offices until 2010.

"Bob's positive impact on our game and those who came in contact with him was accomplished with the utmost integrity, devotion and commitment," Tony Clark, executive director of the players' union, said in a statement.

The Astros honored Watson in March by dedicating the Bob Watson Education Center at the Astros Youth Academy in Houston with the former All-Star in attendance.

Watson overcame prostate cancer after being diagnosed in 1994 and became an advocate for awareness and early detection.

Source: MLB players ask for documents

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Lawyers for the baseball players' union asked Major League Baseball to submit a slew of financial documents that detail the industry's finances, a person familiar with the request told The Associated Press.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity Thursday because neither side announced the step.

Baseball owners on Monday approved a proposal that could lead to the coronavirus-delayed season starting around the Fourth of July with a regular-season schedule of 82 games per team, including 13 against each division rival. Owners also gave the go-ahead to propose basing players' salaries on a 50-50 revenue split, which the union says is a salary cap and a framework players will never agree to.

"It's hopeful that we will have some Major League Baseball this summer. We are making plans about playing in empty stadiums," Commissioner Rob Manfred said Thursday on CNN, adding he is confident of reaching a deal with players.

The type of financial disclosure the union asked for is more

common during overall collective bargaining talks, which play out for many months or years, rather than the limited negotiation time available now.

"There's so many ways to hide the money," Cincinnati pitcher Trevor Bauer said in a video he posted Wednesday on Twitter.

Bauer said owners could reduce ticket prices and at the same time charge more for parking garages they control through different entities that do not benefit the club.

Describing himself as being only slightly lighthearted, the outspoken 29-year-old took a shot at the commissioner.

"If I'm going to have to trust my salary to Rob Manfred marketing the game to make more money for the game, I am out on that," Bauer said. "Let me market the game and we'll all make more money."

Teams made a presentation to the union Tuesday that included a dire financial forecast but no formal proposal.

Management fears even more financial difficulty if regular-season games are played, causing players to be paid their salaries, and the postseason is canceled because of a second

wave of the new coronavirus. Players do not draw salaries during the postseason, when MLB receives the largest portion of its national broadcasting revenue.

Players are waiting to receive detailed medical and testing protocols from MLB.

The Sports Medicine Research and Testing Laboratory in Salt Lake City, which conducts testing for players with minor league contracts and participated in the recent coronavirus antibody study, would handle MLB's testing for the virus and promised a 24-hour turnaround.

"All of our players would be tested multiple times a week, PCR testing to determine whether or not they had the virus," Manfred told CNN. "That testing would be supplemented less frequently by antibody testing." Teams say they would lose money if games are played in empty ballparks. Manfred says 40% of revenue is gate and related to gate and told CNN if there is no season losses would approach \$4 billion.

"We hope that we will be able to convince the vast, vast majority of our players that it's safe to return to work," Man-

fred told CNN. "The protocols for returning to play, the health-related protocols are about 80 pages in length. They're extraordinarily detailed. They cover everything from how the players will travel, private charters, how those charters have to be cleaned, who has access to the ballpark, strict limits on number of people, tiering of employees, so even those people who are in the ballpark will be isolated in general from the players.

"So we'll hope that we'll be able to convince them that it's safe," he added. "We would never force them or try to force them to come back to work. They can wait until they feel they're ready to come."

Teams would play six games against each rival in the same region's division in the other league, creating six games each between rivals such as the Yankees and Mets, Cubs and White Sox, Dodgers and Angels, and Giants and Athletics.

MLB's preference is for teams to use their regular-season ballparks. Manfred said he has spoken with the 18 governors whose states host MLB teams.

Giants' Baker, Seahawks' Dunbar accused of robbery

Associated Press

MIAMI — Police in South Florida are trying to find New York Giants cornerback DeAndre Baker and Seattle Seahawks cornerback Quinton Dunbar after multiple witnesses accused them of an armed robbery at a party, authorities said Thursday.

Miramar police issued arrest warrants for both men Thursday on four counts each of armed robbery with a firearm. Baker faces an additional four counts of aggravated assault with a firearm. The residential community is located between Fort Lauderdale and Miami.

Baker, 22, and Dunbar, 27, were attending a cookout at

a Miramar home Wednesday night when a fight broke out, and Baker pulled out a handgun, the warrant said. Baker, Dunbar and two other men began robbing other people at the party of thousands of dollars in cash, watches and other valuables, witnesses told investigators.

Police said the four men then fled the home in three vehicles: a Mercedes Benz, a Lamborghini and a BMW. Witnesses said the vehicles were parked in a way that would make it easy to leave quickly, leading detectives to believe the robbery was planned. No injuries were reported.

Baker and Dunbar are both

from Miami.

Baker was one of three first-round draft picks the Giants had last season. He was the 30th pick overall out of Georgia. He played in all 16 games, starting 15. He had 61 tackles and no interceptions. He was the last of the three New York picks in that first round.

"We are aware of the situation. We have been in contact with DeAndre," the Giants said in a statement. "We have no further comment at this time."

Dunbar signed with the Washington Redskins as an undrafted free agent out of Florida in 2015 and was traded to the Seahawks in March. He started 11 games last season,

making 37 tackles and four interceptions.

"We are aware of the situation involving Quinton Dunbar and still gathering information," the Seahawks said in a statement. "We will defer all further comment to league investigators and local authorities."

Dunbar spent Thursday morning on a video conference with the Seattle media for the first time since being traded from Washington to the Seahawks in March.

"You just want to feel wanted at the end of the day. ... I just hope to repay them with the way I carry myself as a person," Dunbar said on the video conference.