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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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DOD preps to work in 'coronavirus world'

By COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon green-lighted plans this week that could allow some commanders to ease coronavirus-driven protection measures on military bases as widespread shutdowns to mitigate the pandemic in the United States drag into a third month.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper issued guidance Tuesday to those commanders that allows them to lower the health protection conditions at bases in areas where surrounding communities have faced few cases of the virus or appear to have outbreaks under control. Since late March, U.S. military bases worldwide have been placed at HPCON-Charlie or HPCON-Delta, the most re-

strictive levels of force protection. This week, a few overseas installations lowered them following the new guidance.

Esper's new instructions come at a time when the military has shown signs the virus' spread is slowing among its troops, according to the Pentagon's No. 2 general. Air Force Gen. John Hyten, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Thursday that the pandemic's impacts on the U.S. military have been significantly smaller than on the rest of the United States, which has seen more than 1.5 million positive cases and 94,729 deaths as of Friday morning, according to Johns Hopkins University.

As of Friday, the Pentagon reported more than half its 5,959 troops who have at some point tested positive for the virus

have since recovered. Only 161 service members have faced hospitalization at some point due to the virus. Defense officials reported less than 250 new cases of the virus in the past five days for the second consecutive week.

Hyten also spoke of "new normal" that the Defense Department must adapt to as it ramps up training and other operations to ensure it is prepared for combat or the dozens of missions that it is charged with worldwide. Separately, other senior Pentagon leaders and federal health officials warned of the potential for recurring outbreaks of the virus later this year.

"We really have to think about how do we as a nation, and then we as a military, operate in a [coronavirus] world,"

the general said Thursday during a virtual town hall with military families.

Just as the military adjusted to unforeseen past challenges, Hyten said he expected it would meet the changes necessitated by the pandemic. He compared moving back to a normal operational tempo for military troops amid the pandemic to how the military adjusted to past major events. Among them, he singled out, the 9/11 attacks and Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, which spawned the first U.S.-involved Gulf War and, ultimately, ushered in three decades in which the American military focused primarily on efforts in the Middle East.

Pentagon officials said the defense secretary's criteria is based on White House guidance to state and local officials.

Trump declares houses of worship 'essential'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump has labeled churches and other houses of worship as "essential" and called on governors nationwide to let them reopen this weekend even though some areas remain under coronavirus lockdown.

The president threatened Friday to "override" governors who defy him, but it was unclear what authority he has to do so.

"Governors need to do the right thing and allow these very important essential places of faith to open right now — for this weekend," Trump said at a hastily arranged press conference at the White House. Asked what authority Trump might have to supersede governors, White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said she wouldn't answer a theoretical question.

Trump has been pushing for the country to reopen as he tries to reverse an economic free fall playing out months before he faces reelection. White evangelical Christians

have been among the president's most loyal supporters, and the White House has been careful to attend to their concerns throughout the crisis.

Following Trump's announcement, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released new guidelines for communities of faith on how to safely reopen, including recommendations to limit the size of gatherings and consider holding services outdoors or in large, well-ventilated areas.

Public health agencies have generally advised people to avoid gatherings of more than 10 people and encouraged Americans to remain 6 feet away from others when possible. Some parts of the country remain under some version of remain-at-home orders.

In-person religious services have been vectors for transmission of the virus. A person who attended a Mother's Day service at a church in Northern California that defied the governor's closure orders later tested positive, exposing more than 180 church-

goers. And a choir practice at a church in Washington state was labeled by the CDC as an early "superspreading" event.

But Trump on Friday stressed the importance of churches in many communities and said he was "identifying houses of worship — churches, synagogues and mosques — as essential places that provide essential services."

"Some governors have deemed liquor stores and abortion clinics as essential" but not churches, he said. "It's not right. So I'm correcting this injustice and calling houses of worship essential."

"These are places that hold our society together and keep our people united," he added.

Dr. Deborah Birx, coordinator of the White House coronavirus task force, said faith leaders should be in touch with local health departments and can take steps to mitigate risks, including making sure those who are at high risk of severe complications remain protected.

Texas gunman likely tied to extremist views

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — FBI investigators have discovered social media posts that support extremist views that they believe were made by Adam Salim Alshahli, the gunman who shot a sailor as he attempted to gain access to Naval Air Station Corpus Christi.

The online posts show support for groups such as al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, according to two officials familiar with the investigation who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity. The officials were not authorized to discuss the investigation publicly.

Officially, the FBI has only identified 20-year-old Alshahli as the gunman in the shooting Thursday at the Texas base. On Friday, Defense Secretary Mark Esper said the Pentagon is looking at additional measures to prevent “foreign-inspired terrorists” from accessing military installations.

The incident at NAS Corpus Christi was the third active-shooter incident at a naval facility in five months and the second that the FBI has determined is related to terrorism. On Dec. 6, a Saudi Air Force officer, Mohammed Saeed Alshamrani, shot and killed three sailors and injured eight others at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Fla. On Monday, the FBI announced Alshamrani was in communication with al-Qaida

prior to the attack.

“I am very concerned about both cases,” Esper said Friday during a television interview on NBC’s Today show. “We’re looking at additional measures we will take to ensure that foreign-inspired terrorists do not have access” to military installations and the country. However, the defense secretary did not provide details about what those measures could be.

The FBI is leading the investigation into the shooting at NAS Corpus Christi and hopefully there will be more information in the coming days about what happened and what motivated the gunman, Esper said, adding Alshahli appears to have no affiliation with the Defense Department.

New lieutenant represents military at ceremony

BY ROSE L. THAYER

Stars and Stripes

As a newly commissioned second lieutenant in the Army, Lauren Shappell’s first assignment attracted a call of support from a four-star general.

Her mission: to represent the military at a White House commencement ceremony Friday afternoon that included only 20 class of 2020 students from across the country.

“There were a lot of lieutenants nominated from the class that just commissioned and somehow I got picked,” the 22-year-old said of the selection process, which included her cadre at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill nominating her to the Army Cadet Command, which ultimately selected Lauren from its 7,000 graduating cadets. “[But] I haven’t felt like I’m traversing this alone.”

Shappell received support in preparing for the ceremony from Army leadership, including a call from Gen. Paul E. Funk II, commander of Army Training and Doctrine Command, and traveled to the White House event with her mother from her family’s Vir-

ginia home.

The East Room ceremony, she said, was “very forward focused” and included students ranging from ages 5 to 50. One fellow participant was graduating kindergarten while another was a nontraditional aged student earning an associate degree.

Shappell was the only military member invited to participate. President Donald Trump, First Lady Melania Trump and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos spoke at the event and acknowledged the students were graduating at a very unique time for the country.

Her mother, Cynthia Shappell, a former major in the Army who now works as the senior medical adviser for the Army Review Boards Agency, said she thought her daughter’s charisma and natural leadership were some of the reasons why she was chosen for the opportunity.

Lauren Shappell’s father, retired Army Col. Steve Shappell, is a program analyst with the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

Coalition: 2 ISIS regional leaders killed in Syria

BY CHAD GARLAND

Stars and Stripes

A joint raid with Syrian Democratic Forces and members of the U.S.-led coalition in north-eastern Syria last week left two Islamic State leaders dead, Operation Inherent Resolve said.

The terrorist group’s governor of North Baghdad, known as Abu Ali al-Baghdadi, was killed in Deir al-Zour province on May 17, along with a senior logistics and supply official known as Abu Ammar, the coalition said in a statement Friday.

Al-Baghdadi was the *nom de guerre* of Ahmad Isa Ismail al-Zawi, who was responsible for disseminating guidance from ISIS leaders to operatives in north Baghdad, the coalition said. Ammar, whose real name was Ahmad Abd Muhammad Hasan al-Jughayfi, directed the acquisition and transportation of weapons, bomb materials and personnel across Iraq and Syria, it said.

“The removal of these ISIS leaders will disrupt future attacks against innocent civilians and our security partners and in the region,” the statement said.

The raid was part of an intensified campaign supported by special operations forces, a defense official said.

“The Wali of Baghdad (al-Zawi) blew himself up,” said the official, who asked not to be named to share details that had not been cleared for release. “The logistics guy was killed in a shootout.”

On the day the two leaders were killed, several ISIS members were arrested in a joint coalition-SDF operation, during which two Iraqi nationals blew themselves up, the SDF said on Twitter at the time. The raid also found explosive belts, weapons and other equipment, it said.

A joint raid in the province the following day killed another militant, Col. Myles B. Caggins III, spokesman for Operation Inherent Resolve, said in a tweet calling the SDF “ISIS slayers.”

At least one ISIS member was believed to be killed in the operation as well, Caggins said in a tweet Saturday, calling the SDF and its coalition backers “relentless against ISIS.”

China reports zero new cases of virus

Associated Press

BERLIN — New coronavirus cases dropped to zero in China for the first time Saturday but surged in India and overwhelmed hospitals across Latin America — both in countries lax about lockdowns and those lauded for firm, early confinement. The virus hit a reopened church in Germany and probably a restaurant, too.

The pandemic's persistence stymied authorities struggling to keep people safe and revive their economies at the same time, disrupting the Memorial Day weekend in the United States and collective celebrations around the Muslim world marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

In countries with weak health care systems, impoverished populations and not enough clean water, fighting the virus is increasingly difficult.

"I'm a mother, if I don't go out and sell, my children won't have food to eat. I am obliged to go out and come here to sell the products despite the danger that we are in," said Nagnouma Kante, a market vendor in Guinea's capital Conakry.

Turkey imposed its toughest lockdown measures yet starting Saturday for the Eid al-Fitr holiday marking the end of Ramadan, and Yemen's Houthi rebels urged believers to use masks and stay inside, as au-

thorities try to contain infections at a time usually marked by days of multigenerational feasting and collective prayer.

Elsewhere, many governments are easing restrictions as they face political backlash and historic recessions brought on by the global battle against the virus. In just a few months, the pandemic has killed at least 338,000 people worldwide and infected more than 5.2 million, according to a tally kept by Johns Hopkins University.

In Germany, which has drawn praise for its handling of the virus, seven people appear to have been infected with the coronavirus at a restaurant in the northwest of the country. It would be the first known such case since restaurants started reopening two weeks ago with varying precautions in each state, including a 6½-foot distance between tables, masks for waiters and an obligation to take the name, address and phone number of guests so that possible infections can be traced.

And in the southwestern city of Frankfurt, a parish leader says that several members of a congregation have tested positive for the coronavirus after attending a church service on May 10. Six are hospitalized, news agency dpa quoted the Evangelical Christian Baptist congregation as saying.

Cuomo eases state's ban on groups; NYC beaches open

Associated Press

NEW YORK — New Yorkers experiencing cabin fever after two months of coronavirus quarantine were offered an unexpected reprieve when Gov. Andrew Cuomo eased the state's ban on gatherings in time for the Memorial Day weekend.

The governor signed an order late Friday allowing people to assemble in groups of as many as 10 as long as they stay at least 6 feet from other people and wear masks when they can't maintain that distance.

The surprise order came hours after the New York Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit challenging earlier rules allowing gatherings only for religious services and Memorial Day commemorations. The NYCLU argued the Constitution requires the same right be extended to people gathering for other reasons.

Cuomo's move could clear the way for New Yorkers to picnic together in parks and backyards — if they don't get too close to their friends. They can also head to New York City beaches this weekend, but they shouldn't expect to get in the water, and they'd better be wearing a mask.

The forecast appeared less than ideal for the holiday weekend, however, with rain expected Saturday and clouds on Sunday.

While beaches elsewhere in the region will be open for

swimming, Mayor Bill de Blasio has said swimming is not allowed at the city's beaches and may not be all summer.

"I've been really clear about the beaches; they are closed for swimming," de Blasio said Friday at his daily coronavirus briefing. "There will not be lifeguards. People are not supposed to go to the beach to swim."

The danger of swimming without lifeguards on duty was made clear Friday when a 24-year-old man drowned off Rockaway Beach in Queens.

The main reason the mayor has cited for the swimming ban was to curb the spread of the virus by keeping people off public transportation.

Memorial Day weekend marks the beginning of beach season in New York City, with — in normal years — lifeguards starting duty and swimming permitted.

While beaches on Long Island or in New Jersey are usually reached by driving, city residents typically take the subway to summertime destinations like Coney Island or Rockaway Beach.

Under guidelines intended to keep crowds from flocking to the beaches, people who live nearby can go there to walk or to sit, de Blasio said. Hundreds of police officers and civilian city workers will be on hand to disperse gatherings that violate social distancing rules and to hand out masks to people who aren't wearing them, he said.

UN reports cybercrime on the rise during pandemic

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — The U.N. disarmament chief warned Friday that cybercrime is on the rise, with a 600% increase in malicious emails during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Izumi Nakamitsu told an informal meeting of the U.N. Security Council that the coronavirus crisis is moving the world toward increased technological innovation and online collaboration. But she said

"there have also been worrying reports of (cyber) attacks against health care organizations and medical research facilities worldwide."

The high representative for disarmament affairs said growing digital dependency has increased the vulnerability to cyberattacks, and it is estimated that one such attack takes place every 39 seconds. According to the International Telecommunication Union, she said, nearly 90 countries are still however, only at the early stages of

making commitments to cybersecurity.

Nakamitsu said the threat from misusing information and communications technology "is urgent."

But she said there is also good news, pointing to some global progress at the United Nations to address the threats by a group of government experts who developed 11 voluntary non-binding norms of responsible state behavior in the use of such technology.

Netanyahu trial to be historic first for Israel

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — After entering the record books last year as Israel's longest-serving prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu will once again make history when he becomes the country's first sitting leader to go on trial.

Surrounded by security guards, Netanyahu is set to march into Jerusalem's district court for arraignment on a series of corruption charges on Sunday. The stunning scene will push Israel into uncharted political and legal territory, launching a process that could ultimately end the career of a leader who has been undefeatable at the ballot box for over a decade.

Netanyahu has been charged with fraud,

breach of trust and accepting bribes in a series of cases. He is accused of accepting expensive gifts, such as cartons of champagne and cigars, from wealthy friends and offering favors to media moguls in exchange for favorable news coverage of him and his family.

In the most serious case, he is accused of promoting legislation that delivered hundreds of millions of dollars of profits to the owner of a major telecom company while wielding behind-the-scenes editorial influence over the firm's popular news website.

Netanyahu has denied the charges, claiming he is the victim of an "attempted coup" by overaggressive police, biased prosecutors and a hostile media.

Netanyahu is not the first Israeli leader

to go on trial. Both former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and former President Moshe Katsav went to prison in the 2010s — Olmert on corruption charges and Katsav for rape. But they stepped down to fight the charges.

As opposition leader in 2008, Netanyahu led the calls for Olmert to leave office, famously saying a leader "up to his neck" in legal troubles had no business governing a country.

But as the investigations have piled up, culminating with his indictment last November, Netanyahu has changed his tune. He has rejected calls to resign while repeatedly lashing out at the country's legal system.

Biden: Too 'cavalier' about black voters' choices

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Joe Biden says he "should not have been so cavalier" after he told a prominent black radio host that African Americans who back President Donald Trump "ain't black."

The presumptive Democratic presidential nominee quickly moved to address the fallout from his Friday remark, which was interpreted by some as presuming black Americans would vote for him. In a call with the U.S. Black Chamber of Commerce that was added to his public schedule, Biden said he would never "take the African American community for granted."

"I shouldn't have been such a wise guy," Biden said. "No one should have to vote for any party based on their race or religion or background."

That was an acknowledgement of the

stinging criticism he received in response to his comments, which he made earlier in the day on "The Breakfast Club," a radio program that is popular in the black community.

The rebukes included allies of Trump's reelection campaign — anxious to go on the offense after weeks of defending the Republican president's response to the coronavirus pandemic — and some activists who warned that Biden must still court black voters, even if African Americans overwhelmingly oppose the president.

"None of us can afford for the party or for this campaign to mess this election up, and comments like these are the kinds that frankly either make black voters feel like we're not really valued and people don't care if we show up or not," said Alicia Garza, a Black Lives Matter co-founder and principal of the Black Futures Lab.

Near the end of Biden's appearance on the radio program, host Charlamagne Tha God pressed him on reports that he is considering Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar, who is white, to be his vice presidential running mate. The host told Biden that black voters "saved your political life in the primaries" and "have things they want from you."

Biden said that "I guarantee you there are multiple black women being considered. Multiple."

A Biden aide then sought to end the interview, prompting the host to say, "You can't do that to black media."

Biden responded, "I do that to black media and white media," and said his wife needed to use the television studio.

He then added: "If you've got a problem figuring out whether you're for me or for Trump, then you ain't black."

FBI director orders internal review of Flynn probe

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — FBI Director Christopher Wray has ordered an internal review into possible misconduct in the investigation of former Trump administration national security adviser Michael Flynn, the bureau said Friday.

The after-action review will examine whether any current employees engaged in misconduct during the course of the investigation and evaluate whether any improvements in FBI policies and procedures need to be made.

In announcing the review, the FBI, a frequent target of President Donald Trump's

wrath, is stepping into a case that has become a rallying cry for Trump supporters — and doing so right as the Justice Department pushes back against criticism that its recent decision to dismiss the prosecution was a politically motivated effort to do Trump's bidding.

The announcement adds to the internal scrutiny over one of special counsel Robert Mueller's signature prosecutions during his investigation into ties between Russia and Trump's 2016 presidential campaign. It underscores how a case that was seemingly resolved by Flynn's 2017 guilty plea has instead given way to a protracted, po-

litically charged debate about FBI and Justice Department tactics during that investigation and the Russia probe more broadly.

The review will be led by the bureau's Inspection Division, which conducts internal investigations into potential employee misconduct. Trump has recently been sharply critical of the FBI, and suggested earlier this month that Wray's fate as director could be in limbo. An FBI official said Friday that the review had been contemplated for some time and that the FBI has cooperated with multiple Russia-related internal inquiries.

Mich. governor extends stay-at-home

Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. — Gov. Gretchen Whitmer on Friday extended Michigan's stay-at-home order by slightly more than two additional weeks, through June 12, while keeping theaters, gyms, salons and other places of public accommodation closed until at least then.

A day after a judge ruled in her favor in a lawsuit filed by the Republican-led Legislature, the Democratic governor also extended her coronavirus emergency declaration through June 19. Both the stay-at-home measure and state of emergency had been set to expire late next Thursday, though Whitmer said extensions were likely.

"While the data shows that we are making progress, we are not out of the woods yet. If we're going to lower the chance of a second wave and continue to protect our neighbors and loved ones from the spread of this virus, we must continue to do our part by staying safer at home," she said in a statement.

The state on Friday reported 5,158 confirmed deaths due to COVID-19 complications, which is the fourth-most of any state.

Arkansas

LITTLE ROCK — Arkansas hit a new peak of active coronavirus cases on Friday as businesses that had shuttered because of the pandemic continued to reopen.

Health officials said at least 5,612 people in the state have tested positive for the virus that causes COVID-19, an increase over the 5,458 reported a day earlier. The true number is likely higher because many people have not been tested, and studies suggest people can be infected and not feel sick.

The number of people who have died from COVID-19 rose to 113.

Dr. Nathaniel Smith, the state's health secretary, said 1,470 of the cases are active, which excludes people who

have recovered or died. The state's previous high of active cases was 1,466 on April 25.

Florida

FORT LAUDERDALE — Summer camps and youth activities in Florida can open without restrictions, Gov. Ron DeSantis announced Friday.

Local organizations and governments can set rules and guidelines, the Republican governor said during a news conference in Jacksonville. The state won't preempt those rules, he added.

"I hope that this will be good for folks over the summer. I really trust parents. I trust the physicians who work with the kids, the local leaders, coaches, camps," he said.

He said Florida has had no fatalities of people under the age of 25.

"I think the data is pretty clear: Kids don't seem to get infected at the same rates that adults get infected," he said.

Illinois

CHICAGO — Chicago cannot begin to loosen restrictions designed to limit the spread of the coronavirus before early June, officials in the nation's third-largest city said Friday.

Chicago, like the rest of Illinois, has been under a stay-at-home order since March 21. Gov. J.B. Pritzker has said all parts of the state are on track for restrictions to begin loosening on May 29. Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot, though, said she could not provide a specific date when restrictions in the city will be loosened but that she hoped it can move forward in early June.

"It's just a little more time, and I know that we can do this," she said. "But we have to be smart and careful."

Iowa

IOWA CITY — The Iowa Judicial Branch announced Friday that it would postpone jury trials in criminal cases until at least Sept. 14 and push back

any in-person proceedings until July 13 or later because of the coronavirus threat.

Some hearings can begin earlier if courthouses meet recommended safety protocols, but the use of teleconferences and video conferences will continue to be encouraged.

Health officials have warned that crowded courtrooms could be venues to spread the virus to clerks, jurors, lawyers, witnesses, spectators and defendants.

"We know that people and families with pending cases are anxious to have their day in court, but we must first ensure that the public and court personnel have confidence that appropriate cautionary measures have been taken to protect their health when entering our courtrooms," Chief Justice Susan Christensen said in a statement.

Pennsylvania

HARRISBURG — Gov. Tom Wolf said Friday he is easing some pandemic restrictions in Philadelphia and the heavily populated suburbs on June 5, while lifting them almost entirely in 17 rural counties next week as Pennsylvania continues to emerge from a shutdown imposed nearly two months ago to help slow the spread of the new virus.

Wolf is accelerating his reopening plan even though more than 20 Pennsylvania counties remain above the state's target for new infections that were supposed to qualify them for an easing of pandemic restrictions — and eight counties are more than three times over.

Wolf and his health secretary said the closely watched metric is no longer as important, citing dropping numbers of new virus infections and hospitalizations and increased testing capacity.

Texas

AUSTIN — Texas bars, bowling alleys, skating rinks and even some strip clubs began to reopen ahead of the Memorial Day weekend as the state continues to gradually restart one

of the world's largest economies after it was ravaged by shutdowns caused by the coronavirus epidemic.

Republican Gov. Greg Abbott earlier this week ordered further easing of some state restrictions that had shuttered many venues for more than a month. On Friday, the Texas Workforce Commission reported the state reached 12.8% unemployment in April, the highest monthly level since the state began recording the figures in January 1976.

Washington

VANCOUVER — Two dozen employees at a Vancouver food processing company have been sickened with the coronavirus, officials said.

It may be the Portland area's biggest workplace outbreak reported thus far, excluding the health care sector, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.

Firestone Pacific Foods CEO Josh Hinerfeld said the company had its first confirmed case last Sunday and learned of two more later that same day. The Vancouver plant shut down Monday but the infection total has grown. Firestone employs 150 people altogether, according to Hinerfeld.

"We thought we had a pretty good plan in place and boy, it bit us in the rear end," he said.

West Virginia

HUTTONSVILLE — Widespread coronavirus testing at Huttonsville Correctional Center found 25 additional cases at the West Virginia facility, officials said Friday.

Gov. Jim Justice ordered testing for all other inmates after the new cases were confirmed, the state Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety said in a news release.

On Thursday, officials said at least six people, including four staffers and two inmates, had tested positive at the Randolph County prison. Four additional staffers are also positive, the Friday release said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Wolves attack calves, state decides action

WA SPOKANE — A northeast Washington wolf pack attacked two more calves, state Fish and Wildlife officials have confirmed, potentially pushing the department to consider shooting at least one wolf.

The Wedge pack injured one calf and killed another in a private pasture in Stevens County, a department spokeswoman told the Capital Press.

The pack inflicted fatal injuries on another calf on May 11, according to the department.

Department officials planned to meet to discuss the department's response.

'Ultra-rare' metallic blue bee spotted

FL LAKE WALES — Researchers in Florida rediscovered an "ultra-rare" metallic blue bee that hadn't been spotted in years — so long that experts weren't sure it still existed.

The Naples Daily News reported Florida Museum of Natural History researcher Chase Kimmel found a blue calamintha bee March 9.

Since then, more of the elusive bees have been spotted, but efforts to research the insect have been curtailed by the coronavirus pandemic.

Man bites deputy's arm while arrested

LA RACELAND — A Louisiana man faces several charges after biting a deputy who was trying to arrest him for home invasion and battery.

Scotty Poindexter, 30, of Raceland was arrested after he reportedly forced his way into

a relative's home, argued with a woman inside and allegedly punched her in the face, the Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Office said in a news release.

Poindexter was outside the home when deputies arrived. As they began to take him into custody, Poindexter began resisting and, at one point during the struggle, he bit a deputy on the arm, the sheriff's office said. The deputy was treated at an area hospital and released.

Delivery driver accused of running into woman

IL CHICAGO — A food delivery driver accused of striking a woman with his car outside a Chicago restaurant faces felony charges over what police said was an altercation over social distancing protocols.

Aamir Mohammed, 30, was caught on video hitting a woman with a Toyota Prius, apparently knocking her down, outside Mrs. T's Southern Fried Chicken. The 24-year-old woman was blocking the driver while his car appeared to be parked.

Restaurant owner Nita Tanner said the woman hit by the car in the video is her daughter. She said the altercation escalated when she asked the driver to wait for his order outside the restaurant.

Pursuit ends with blast at gas station

NM ROSWELL — A suspect who evaded authorities in New Mexico remained at large after surviving an explosion at a gas station that ended a police pursuit and injured a woman, authorities said.

The pursuit began when authorities attempted to stop a stolen Ford pickup, Roswell

police spokesperson Todd Wildermuth said.

The suspect fled, driving at high speeds and ignoring traffic signs and signals before the officer canceled the chase to maintain public safety, Wildermuth said.

A county deputy continued the pursuit shortly after, which ended when the driver crashed into diesel and propane gas pumps at the Bell Gas Station resulting in an explosion, Sheriff Mike Herrington said.

Grizzly attacks hunter looking for antlers

WY DUBOIS — A grizzly bear attacked a man looking for antlers in western Wyoming.

The unidentified man was taken to a hospital with non-life-threatening injuries after the attack in a remote area east of Dubois, according to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

The bear was killed in the encounter. The department did not provide details about how the bear died.

The attack happened when the man accidentally surprised a female grizzly with a yearling cub, the Casper Star-Tribune reported.

Divers recover items from eroding cemetery

NH STARK — Divers at a river recently recovered two large granite bases and five marble stones from a small New Hampshire cemetery that's had erosion problems for decades.

One of the monument bases that was once part of the Blake Cemetery in Stark weighs nearly 300 pounds, the Caledonian-Record reported. It took a team of people to move the stones from the Upper Ammonoosuc

River.

No human remains were found in the river, said David Bryant of the Bryant Funeral Home in Berlin, which is storing the pieces for now.

The town has owned the cemetery since the 1940s. Its gravesites include several Revolutionary War soldiers.

Deputies hit by bottles at massive block party

FL DELAND — Deputies in Florida said they were hit with cups of alcohol, bottles and bar stools after they made arrests at a block party involving thousands of partygoers, officials reported.

The Volusia County Sheriff's Office estimated 3,000 people were at the outdoor party.

Two men were arrested for possession of a weapon by a convicted felon, tampering with evidence, inciting a riot and resisting an officer without violence.

During the arrests, two deputies were hit with a cup of alcohol, another deputy was punched by a man who fled.

Volunteer firefighter charged with arson

KY STANFORD — A volunteer firefighter in Kentucky was accused of deliberately setting fire to two houses.

Jeffrey "Tyler" Knouse, 19, was arrested after investigators connected him to the fires that were deliberately set in Lincoln County, Kentucky State Police said in a statement. Both of the homes were vacant residences, police said.

Knouse confessed to setting the fires after he was interviewed by investigators, Kentucky State Police said.

From wire reports

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Fans struggle with missing Coca-Cola 600

Associated Press

CONCORD, N.C. — Harry and Judy Wiley plan to walk down their driveway in Johnson City, Tenn., on Sunday, climb inside their 39-foot motorhome, flip on the television and do the best they can to enjoy NASCAR's Coca-Cola 600 — a staple of their Memorial Day weekend for decades.

It won't be the same as being in North Carolina.

"To me, I feel lost," Harry Wiley said.

The crown jewel race will go on as planned as NASCAR cranks up its schedule following a 10-week shutdown during the coronavirus pandemic. There are 20 races scheduled through June 21 but NASCAR does not plan to allow spectators to attend.

It's heartbreaking for the Wileys, who have made the yearly pilgrimage to Charlotte Motor Speedway since the late 1970s to see the longest race on the NASCAR calendar. They spend about 18 days every May camping at the track and reuniting with lifelong friends amid the backdrop of auto racing.

The Wileys plan their entire

year around the event.

"When I pull into the Charlotte Motor Speedway every year it's like the golden gates of heaven to me," said Wiley, who is 73. "So this is like losing a friend. I have nothing to do now. I look forward to this so much."

The race can draw as many as 100,000 spectators, though numbers have dwindled in recent years. This will be the first time no one is there besides the tenants of a 52-unit condominium tower located outside the first turn.

The speedway is offering fans a 120% credit toward future races or fans can choose a full refund.

"This is the most bittersweet of circumstances for our entire team at the speedway," said Scott Cooper, the speedway's vice president of communications. "We work year-round to produce memorable experiences for our fans. The last thing we would ever want to is to run a race without spectators but these are unusual times. But it is rewarding for our staff to know we're at least playing a big role in bringing the races back to television."

Mike Kleban, a 78-year-old fan who lives a few miles from the track in Harrisburg, N.C., has attended the last 54 Coca-Cola 600 races. He dreads the thought of his streak coming to an end.

"I asked the folks at the track if they would let me in at the start of the race to watch the first three or four laps just to keep (the streak) alive," Kleban said with a laugh. "But they said, 'We can't do that.'"

Kleban feels even worse for the military service members he annually hosts as part of the speedway's Memorial Day weekend tribute to the armed services.

Last year, Kleban and friends rented 20 infield campsites and hosted more than 60 members of the military and their families, many of whom are a part of the Wounded Warrior program. They provided free meals, a place to sleep and hats and shirts. He estimates it cost \$3,000 but is an enjoyable spend.

"It's like a reunion for them," said Kleban, who served four years in the Air Force. "We get together with guys who have fought together side by side.

Every year it just keeps on growing with more and more people."

The Wileys often choose the RV campground outside of turn four for their campsite. They host a potluck dinner for more than 50 friends, a tradition that was born 15 years ago when Harry helped fix a fan belt in a stranger's RV that had broken down near the track. Harry was invited to dinner the following night in gratitude. Since then, they've become close friends and the potluck tradition was repeated every Wednesday night before the big race.

He said he'll miss the familiar scent of barbecue ribs on the grill, corn on the cob and sharing beverages with other fans in lawn chairs under awnings while talking about life, loved ones and, of course, racing. Many of them have become lifelong friends, and they've traveled to weddings and funerals across the country to be with them.

"It's friendships beyond friendships," Wiley said. "We've known a lot of these people for 30-plus years. They're family. So I'm going to miss everyone terribly."

College baseball coaches propose later, shorter season

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — A group of Power Five coaches led by Michigan's Erik Bakich is proposing a later start to the college baseball season to trim expenses in the post-coronavirus era, make the game more fan friendly and reduce injury risk to players.

Under the 35-page proposal titled "New Baseball Model," there would be nine weeks of preseason practice instead of five, the regular season would run from the third week of March to the third week of June and the College World Series would wrap up the last week of July. The regular season currently begins the third week of February and the CWS runs into the last week of June.

Past efforts to push back the season were rooted in cold-weather schools' concerns about competitive equity because they had to travel to warmer climates in the South or West to play games the first month of the season.

The impetus this time is budget management.

"We operate at a significant financial net loss among almost all teams," Bakich said Friday. "There are only a few that operate where they are actually making a profit or covering their costs. The majority of college baseball is a drain on athletic departments, and in the post-COVID era that is not a good combination when universities are looking to improve their fiscal bottom lines."

Bowling Green and Furman recently announced they've dropped their baseball programs to save money.

Bakich said he, Vanderbilt's Tim Corbin, Louisville's Dan McDonnell, TCU's Jim Schlossnagle and UCLA's John Savage began looking at changes to help the sport shortly after the college season was shut down because of the coronavirus outbreak in March.

The core group held Zoom calls with coaches from top baseball schools from all regions, and the discussions resulted in the proposal.

Bakich said the next step is to recruit athletic directors who will take up the cause, bring it to faculty athletic representatives and presidents, and get it entered into the NCAA legis-

lative process. The hope is the new schedule would be in place in 2022.

Bakich said five-year attendance trends show college teams draw bigger crowds in April and May than they do in February and March, and the potential is there for even bigger turnouts in June.

"We looked at why that is," Bakich said, "and even in warm-weather places it's still cold in March. But it's also basketball season. A collegiate fan can only invest their energy in so many places."

The proposal said northern teams could save about \$200,000 in travel costs by not having to go South and West early in the season and there would be more regional scheduling.

NHLPA approves talks for return to play

Associated Press

The NHL Players' Association's executive committee authorized moving forward in talks with the league on returning to play from the coronavirus suspension, approving 24 teams making the playoffs with other aspects still to be negotiated.

The NHLPA did not provide a breakdown of the vote of its 31 player representatives in making the announcement Friday night, a day after the proposal was presented to the union's executive board. In giving the format the green light, the NHLPA stressed several details still need to be negotiated before games can begin.

The proposal will now go to the NHL board of governors, which is expected to approve the plan in the next few days. Once approved, the proposal effectively ends the season of the

league's bottom seven teams.

Under the plan proposed by the NHL/NHLPA Return To Play committee, the top four teams in each conference would play each other in a mini-tournament for seeding while the remaining 16 teams face off in a best-of-five series play-in round to set the final 16 to compete for the Stanley Cup.

Though the approval is considered significant, the task of establishing a path to getting players back on the ice remains challenging.

NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly said the league has a plan in place, but stopped short of providing details by saying it would be premature to do so at this time.

"All good questions and all questions with answers. But not in a position to answer any of them at this point in time," Daly wrote in an email. "If and when we are in a position

to make an announcement, we will try to make sure they are answered in that context."

At the very least, the league has the framework of a plan on which to build off for the first time since the regular season was placed on pause on March 12.

Games would likely be played without fans present. It's unclear how the league will address players' concerns over spending potentially lengthy stretches of time in self-isolation away from their families.

Both sides agree there is no ideal plan, while acknowledging the limitations they face because of the uncertainty created by the pandemic. The NHL's regular season was paused on March 12, with 189 games remaining and its 31 teams having played an uneven number of games.

"Obviously, it's not ideal, but I think in a time like this, how

can anything be super traditional?" Toronto Maple Leafs defenseman Tyson Barrie said this week. "I think we all have to adapt and be willing to adapt and kind of realize that it's not going to be this perfect, classic NHL playoffs. I think for the situation we're in, for a year, I think that's fine."

Under the proposed 24-team format, Montreal would be the final team to qualify in the East based on a slim points-percentage margin. With 71 points in 71 games (.500), the Canadiens edge out Buffalo, which had 68 points in 69 games (.493) and would extend the league's longest active playoff drought to a ninth consecutive season.

The difference in the West is much larger, with Chicago (.514) beating out Anaheim (.472). All three California teams would miss the playoffs for the first time since 1995-96.

SEC, Big 12 to allow football workouts next month

Associated Press

Southeastern Conference schools will be able to bring athletes in all sports back to campus for voluntary activities starting June 8 at the discretion of each university, and the Big 12 plans to welcome football players back to campus a week later.

The Friday announcements are the latest signs that a college football season will be launched in some form this fall. Other conferences are expected to follow, though decisions could be left to individual schools.

The move comes two days after the NCAA Division I Council voted to lift a moratorium on voluntary workouts on campus by football and basketball players, effective June 1. The NCAA updated that ruling Friday by saying voluntary activities would be allowed in all sports starting June 1.

"At this time, we are preparing to begin the fall sports

season as currently scheduled, and this limited resumption of voluntary athletic activities on June 8 is an important initial step in that process," SEC Commissioner Greg Sankey said.

The SEC initially announced Friday that voluntary in-person activities could resume June 8 on SEC campuses only for football, men's basketball and women's basketball. But after the NCAA issued its updated ruling Friday afternoon, the SEC announced that June 8 date would apply to athletes in all sports.

Big 12 presidents and chancellors met Friday and decided voluntary activities could begin June 15 for football, July 1 for other fall sports and July 15 for all other sports.

SEC officials noted any workouts would take place "under strict supervision of designated university personnel and safety guidelines developed by each institution." They referred to June 8 as the start of "transition period that will allow

student-athletes to gradually adapt to full training and sports activity after this recent period of inactivity."

Permitted actions are limited by the NCAA to voluntary activities supervised by strength and conditioning personnel. Georgia athletic director Greg McGarity said it was "only the first step with further details and plans coming over the next several days and weeks."

"This is an important first step toward having a season this fall, and we will continue to collectively work together as our top priority is to ensure the safety and well-being of our student-athletes, coaches and staff," Auburn coach Gus Malzahn said in a statement.

Defending national champion LSU said it will resume voluntary workouts for players on June 8 in accordance with the SEC decision.

"Our administration has worked very hard to make sure that all of the necessary safety procedures and protocols are

in place to keep our team safe and healthy," Tigers coach Ed Orgeron said. "This is a great first step to take in order for us to get back to playing the great game of college football in the fall."

The SEC decided to resume athletic activities with the guidance of a league task force that includes public health, infectious disease and sports medicine professionals from each of the league's 14 member schools.

The task force prepared a series of best practices for screening, testing, monitoring, tracing, social distancing and maintaining clean environments to serve as a guide for each school.

Recommendations included testing of symptomatic team members (including athletes, coaches and staffers) as well as screening athletes before they arrive on campus within 72 hours of entering athletic facilities and on a daily basis once they resume athletic activities.