

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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US pouring billions into hypersonic weapons

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — They fly at speeds of a mile a second or faster and maneuver in ways that make them extra difficult to detect and destroy in flight.

President Donald Trump calls them “super-duper” missiles, though they’re better known as hypersonic weapons. And they are at the heart of Trump administration worries about China and Russia.

For decades, the United States has searched for ways to get ultra-fast flight right. But it has done so in fits and starts. Now, with China and Russia arguably ahead in this chase, the Trump administration is pouring billions of dollars a year into hypersonic offense and defense.

The Pentagon makes no bones about their purpose.

“Our ultimate goal is, simply, we want to dominate future battlefields,” said Mark Lewis, the Pentagon’s director of defense research and engineering for modernization.

Critics have argued that hypersonic weapons would add little to America’s ability to deter war. Some think that they could ignite a new, destabilizing arms race.

Two things make hypersonic weapons special: speed and maneuverability. Speed brings surprise, and maneuverability creates elusiveness. Together, those qualities could mean trouble for missile defenses.

By generally agreed definition, a hypersonic weapon is one that flies at speeds over Mach 5, or five times the speed of sound. Most U.S. missiles, such as those launched from aircraft to hit other aircraft or ground targets, travel between Mach 1 and Mach 5.

The Pentagon is pursuing two main types of hypersonic weapons. One, called a hypersonic glide vehicle, is launched from a rocket. It then glides to a target, maneuvering at high speed to evade interception. The other is sometimes referred to as a hypersonic cruise missile. Capable of being launched

from a fighter jet or bomber, it would be powered by a supersonic combustion ramjet, or scramjet, enabling the missile to fly and maneuver at lower altitudes.

On March 19, the Pentagon flight-tested a hypersonic glide vehicle at its Pacific Missile Range Facility in Kauai, Hawaii. It deemed the test a success and “a major milestone toward the department’s goal of fielding hypersonic warfighting capabilities in the early- to mid-2020s.”

Unlike Russia, the U.S. has said that it is not developing hypersonic weapons for use with a nuclear warhead. As a result, a U.S. hypersonic weapon will need to be more accurate, posing additional technical challenges.

Top Pentagon officials have said that it’s about Russia and, even more so, China.

“By almost any metric that I can construct, China is certainly moving out ahead of us,” Lewis, the Pentagon research and engineering official, said

last week. “In large measure, that’s because we did their homework for them.”

China is pushing for hypersonic weapon breakthroughs. It has conducted a number of successful tests of the DF-17, a medium-range ballistic missile designed to launch hypersonic glide vehicles. According to a Congressional Research Service report in March, U.S. intelligence analysts assessed that the DF-17 missile has a range of approximately 1,000 to 1,500 miles and could be deployed this year.

Russia last December said that its first hypersonic missile unit had become operational. It is the Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle, which Moscow has said can fly at Mach 27, or 27 times faster than the speed of sound, and could make sharp maneuvers to bypass missile defenses. It has been fitted to existing Soviet-built intercontinental ballistic missiles and in the future could be fitted to the more powerful Sarmat ICBM, which is still in development.

Navy uses laser to shoot down drone in midflight

Stars and Stripes

The USS Portland successfully disabled an unmanned aerial vehicle in midflight during the test of a new “high-energy laser weapon system” May 16, according to U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Video footage released by the Navy on Friday shows the amphibious transport dock ship firing a Laser Weapon System Demonstrator, or LWSD, somewhere in the Pacific. A separate clip shows the drone being shot down.

The test marks the “first system-level implementation of a

high-energy class solid-state laser,” the statement said.

The technology allows the Portland to redefine war at sea for the Navy, said the ship’s commander, Capt. Karrey Sanders.

“By conducting advanced at sea tests against [drones] and small crafts, we will gain valuable information on the capabilities of the [LWSD] against potential threats,” Sanders said.

The test of the Northrop Grumman-developed weapon comes three months after a Chinese destroyer shot a weapons-grade laser at a U.S. Navy

P-8A Poseidon patrol aircraft in a recent move that U.S. Pacific Fleet dubbed “unsafe and unprofessional.”

The incident happened Feb. 17 in the Philippine Sea about 380 miles west of Guam while the Poseidon crew was “operating in international airspace in accordance with international rules and regulations,” a Navy statement said.

A sensor on the Poseidon detected the laser, which was invisible to the naked eye, according to the statement.

“Weapons-grade lasers could potentially cause serious harm to aircrew and mariners, as

well as ship and aircraft systems,” the statement said. On March 19, a state-run newspaper in China said that Beijing should consider using non-lethal lasers on U.S. Navy warships to discourage their transits through the South China Sea.

Chinese military expert Song Zhongping told Global Times that the use of electromagnetic weapons, such as low-energy laser devices, could ultimately “send a strong warning” by temporarily paralyzing weapon and control systems on U.S. ships — all done “without visible conflict.”

Trump honors fallen troops at two events

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump silently honored the nation's war dead Monday in a wreath ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery, first in a pair of public events also taking him to Baltimore, to the chagrin of the mayor.

Presidents on Memorial Day typically honor fallen military members by laying a wreath and delivering a speech at the hallowed burial ground in Virginia. But because of the pandemic, which is expected to claim its 100,000th American this week, the ceremony looked different this year.

Attendees at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier arrived wearing masks and removed them for the ceremony in the well-spaced crowd. Trump, maskless as always in public, gave no remarks. He approached a wreath already in place, touching it.

He spoke later at Baltimore's Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine. It's where a poem, written after a huge American flag was hoisted to celebrate an important victory over the British during the War of 1812, became "The Star-Spangled Banner."

"Together we will vanquish the virus and America will rise from this crisis to new and even greater heights," Trump said during the ceremony. "No obstacle, no challenge and no threat is a match for the sheer determination of the American people."

Veteran victims of virus also remembered on Memorial Day

Associated Press

ATLANTA — One was a 94-year-old veteran of World War II who was the first of his 11 brothers to enlist in the military. One was a Vietnam veteran who lost his leg overseas and was always touched when people thanked him for his service. Another was drafted into the military at 18 and was awarded a Purple Heart.

They are among the untold number of veterans who served and survived during times of war only to die in recent weeks from the coronavirus.

This year's Memorial Day will pay tribute not only to those who died on the battlefield but more recent fallen soldiers. And in a reminder of the way coronavirus has transformed American lives and traditions, many of the usual Memorial Day gatherings have been either canceled or curtailed — mindful of the pandemic that has already killed more than 90,000 people in the U.S.

It's making the situation even more painful for the relatives of those veterans who have died from the virus.

Robert Hopp was one of at least 79 residents of a veterans home in Paramus, N.J., to die from COVID-19, making the state-run facility one of the nation's worst hot spots for the virus.

He served two and a half tours during the Vietnam War and received a Purple Heart after he was hit with enemy fire while in a helicopter. Everyone else on board the chopper died, but Hopp managed to climb into the pilot's seat and fly to safety.

After being hospitalized recently for diabetic complications, his health deteriorated quickly and he died in April at 70.

His family was at a loss about how they would mark the occasion.

"We couldn't even have a funeral for him yet," said stepson J.J. Brania-Hopp. "There's not really anything we can do right now. All we'll probably do is talk about him, maybe go for a walk out in the sun."

The toll of the virus on military veterans has been particularly harsh. They are older, have underlying health problems, and many reside in facilities that have been breeding grounds for the disease.

According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, more than 1,000 veterans have been killed by the coronavirus. That does not include hundreds more who have died in state-run veterans homes.

"The last couple of weeks have been hard," said Neal Hebert, whose father died at a veterans home in Reserve, La. "I'm an only child and I'll routinely have the impulse of going, 'Oh, I need to call Dad and tell him this thing.' And it hits me that I can't do that."

His father, Berlin Hebert Jr., lost a leg from a land mine during the Vietnam War. He rarely talked about the war but made his son promise to never join the Army. It was only in recent years that he became more proud of his service, after the widower moved to the Southeast Louisiana Veterans home. It was there where he would attend Veterans Day services and he felt people acknowledged his time in the military.

In March, after learning that a resident in the home was positive for COVID-19, Neal Hebert became concerned about his 74-year-old father's safety. Within days, Berlin Hebert was hospitalized with the telltale respiratory symptoms. His condition quickly worsened and his son had to say goodbye to him over the phone, his father too weak to say anything back.

USFK ceremony honors Korean War veterans' sacrifices

By MATTHEW KEELER

Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — The commander of U.S. Forces Korea called on his troops to "take pride in our service and our dedication to duty" during a Memorial Day service near command headquarters that was livestreamed on social media.

Gen. Robert Abrams, who also leads the United Nations Command and Combined Forces Command on the peninsula, also

laid wreaths at the U.N. Command Memorial in honor of those killed in the 1950-53 Korean War. Abrams invoked the U.S.-South Korea bond during his address.

"Here in Korea we are no stranger to that shared sacrifice. Over 54,000 Americans have given their lives for the cause of freedom in support of the Republic of Korea," he said. "They faced difficult circumstances and demonstrated incredible bravery and determination seemingly against all odds."

"We will never forget our fallen friends

and teammates, nor our amazing Gold Star families," he said. "These heroes are our sisters and brothers, daughters and sons, and mothers and fathers."

The ceremony was attended by roughly 25 guests — including U.S. Ambassador to South Korea Harry Harris and Veterans of Foreign Wars District 3 commander Donald Kelley — who practiced social distancing amid coronavirus concerns. Harris and Kelley assisted Abrams and USFK Command Sgt. Maj. Walter Tagalicud as they placed wreaths at the memorial.

Biden honors fallen in first in-person appearance

Associated Press

NEW CASTLE, Del. — Joe Biden made his first in-person appearance in more than two months Monday as he marked Memorial Day by laying a wreath at a veterans park near his Delaware home.

Since abruptly canceling a March 10 rally in Cleveland at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee has waged much of his campaign from his home in Wilmington. When Biden emerged Monday, he wore a face mask, in contrast to President Donald Trump, who has refused to cover his face in public as health officials suggest.

Biden and his wife, Jill, laid a wreath of white flowers tied with a white bow, and bowed their heads in silence at the park. He saluted and could be heard saying “Never forget.”

“I feel great to be out here.” Biden told reporters after, his words muffled through his black cloth mask. His visit to the park was unannounced and there was no crowd waiting for him.

But Biden briefly greeted a county official and another man, both wearing face masks and standing a few feet away. His campaign says Biden has gone to the park for Memorial Day in the past, though services were canceled Monday in the pandemic.

Though low-key, the appearance was a milestone in a presidential campaign that has largely been frozen by the coronavirus outbreak. While the feasibility of traditional events such as rallies and the presidential conventions are in doubt, Biden’s emergence suggests he won’t spend the nearly five months that remain until the election entirely at home.

Start of summer draws crowds, triggers coronavirus warnings

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — The Memorial Day weekend marking the unofficial start of summer meant big crowds at beaches and warnings from experts Sunday about people disregarding the coronavirus social-distancing rules and risking a resurgence of the scourge that has killed nearly 100,000 Americans.

Sheriff’s deputies and beach patrols tried to make sure people kept their distance from others as they soaked up the rays on the sand and at parks and other recreation sites around the country.

In the Tampa area along Florida’s Gulf Coast, the crowds were so big that authorities took the extraordinary step of closing parking lots because they were full. Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri said about 300 deputies were patrolling the beaches to ensure people didn’t get too close.

On the Sunday talk shows, Dr. Deborah Birx, coordinator of the White House coronavirus task force, said she was “very concerned” about scenes of people crowding together over the weekend.

“We really want to be clear all the time that social distancing is absolutely critical. And if you can’t social distance and you’re outside, you must wear a mask,” she said on ABC’s “This Week.”

In Missouri, people packed bars and restaurants at the Lake of the Ozarks, a vacation hot spot popular with Chicagoans, over the weekend. One video showed a crammed pool where vacationers lounged close together without masks, St.

Louis station KMOV-TV reported.

In West Virginia, ATV riders jammed the vast, 700-mile Hatfield-McCoy network of all-terrain vehicle trails on the first weekend it was allowed to reopen since the outbreak took hold. Campgrounds and cabins were opened as well.

“We truly appreciate getting to reopen,” Jeff Lusk, executive director of the Hatfield-McCoy Regional Recreation Authority, told the Charleston Gazette-Mail. “Being able to open now will help our trail businesses recover.”

In Daytona Beach, Fla., gunfire erupted Saturday night along a beachside road where more than 200 people had gathered and were seen partying and dancing despite the restrictions. Several people were wounded and taken to the hospital, authorities said.

The U.S. is on track to surpass 100,000 coronavirus deaths in the next few days, while Europe has seen over 169,000 dead, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University that almost certainly understates the toll.

The issue of wearing masks in public and staying several feet apart has become fraught politically, with some Americans taking to the streets to protest such rules as a violation of their rights.

Republican Gov. Mike DeWine, of Ohio, who has been targeted by such demonstrations, insisted precautions should not be a partisan issue.

“This is not about politics. This is not about whether you are liberal or conservative, left or right, Republican or Democrat,” DeWine said on NBC’s “Meet the Press.”

Small ceremonies mark NY Memorial Day

Associated Press

NEW YORK — New Yorkers marked Memorial Day with car convoys and small ceremonies instead of parades, as those looking to honor fallen military members contended with coronavirus restrictions.

“It’s something we’re upset about, but we understand,” said Raymond Aalbue, chairman of the United Military Veterans of Kings County, which usually puts on a parade in Brooklyn.

There’s “no reason to put anybody in harm’s way,” he said. Still, “it’s really cutting quick to the heart of all the veterans.”

His organization was to have

a convoy of 10 cars leaving from the Bay Ridge spot where the parade usually starts and then ending at Brooklyn Veterans Affairs Medical Center, where participants would line up next to their cars for a salute and a wreath-laying ceremony. Elsewhere in the borough, Mayor Bill de Blasio was due at a wreath-laying at the Brooklyn War Memorial.

On Long Island, a small group of veterans saluted, wearing masks and spaced several feet apart to observe social distancing, as a parade of cars passed beneath a large American flag by the Eisenhower Park Veterans Memorial on Mon-

day morning. The parade and wreath-laying were closed to the public but streamed on Nassau County Executive Laura Curran’s Facebook page.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo joined a private ceremony at the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum in Manhattan, with both the sacrifices of military members and the current challenge of coronavirus on his mind.

“Over 100,000 Americans will lose their lives to this COVID virus. How do we honor them? We honor them by growing stronger together,” he said. “We want to make sure we remember them and thank our heroes today.”

2 US B-1 bombers train with Swedish, Norwegian fighters

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

U.S. B-1B Lancers trained with Swedish Gripen fighter jets over Sweden last Tuesday, a first in the bomber's 35-year history, the Air Force said.

A pair of the bombers flew from Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., to integrate with the Swedish Armed Forces jets and conduct close-air support training with Swedish Joint Terminal Attack Controller ground teams at Vidsel Test Range, the Air Force said in a news release Thursday.

The bombers' 23-hour non-stop mission was made possible with refueling planes provided by Great Britain and the Netherlands, the news release said.

"This was a great opportunity to operate in new territory and clearly demonstrates the flexibility, credibility, and the

lethality of our nation's bomber force," Col. David Doss, commander of the 28th Bomb Wing, said in the news release.

The Gripen, built by Saab, is a multirole fighter in use by several NATO countries. Among its capabilities, it carries beyond-visual-range air-to-air missiles. The B-1s were escorted by Royal Air Force fighter jets while over the United Kingdom.

The bombers also integrated with Norwegian F-35 fighter jets to tactical sorties and conduct a low-approach over Orlando Air Station, which is home to the Royal Norwegian Air Force's F-35 fleet that only recently became operational, the news release said.

Bomber missions such as this "showcase our ability to respond globally from anywhere," Gen. Jeff Harrigan, commander of U.S. Air Forces in Europe and Air Forces Africa, said in the

news release.

The value of the mission to Scandinavia on Tuesday was its rare opportunity for B-1 aircrews to integrate with NATO partners they might work with in future conflicts, the news release said.

"While preparing for these missions, our aircrew plan a tactical scenario with mission leads from all participants and learn the capabilities and limitations of unfamiliar air assets," Lt. Col. Thomas Taylor, commander of the 34th Bomb Squadron, said in the news release.

"In future wars, the enemy may not afford us the luxury of staging from a base only a few hours from the target area," Taylor said. "These sorties train our aircrew to be just as lethal on a 24-hour combat mission as they are on a three-hour training mission."

Trump to attend astronaut launch

Associated Press

STERLING, Va. — President Donald Trump plans to be on the Florida coast Wednesday to watch American astronauts blast into orbit from the Kennedy Space Center for the first time in nearly a decade.

It will be the first time since the space shuttle program ended in 2011 that U.S. astronauts will launch into space on an American rocket from American soil.

Also new Wednesday: a private company — not NASA — is running the show.

Elon Musk's SpaceX is the conductor and NASA the customer as businesses begin chauffeuring astronauts to the International Space Station. With American shuttles no longer in use, the United States has had to rely on Russia for rides to the station.

The NASA/SpaceX Commercial Crew flight test launch will carry NASA's newest test pilots, Doug Hurley and Bob Behnken, in a SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.

They're scheduled to blast off at 4:33 p.m. EDT from launch pad 39A, the same one the Apollo astronauts used to get to the moon.

The White House portrayed the launch as an extension of Trump's promise to reassert American dominance in space. He recently oversaw creation of the Space Force as the sixth branch of the armed forces.

Vice President Mike Pence, who is chairman of the National Space Council, also plans to attend Wednesday's launch.

NASA has discouraged spectators, citing the pandemic, and is limiting the number of visitors inside the space center.

Troops among D&D players turning to virtual realms amid pandemic

BY THERON GODBOLD
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — In days of yore, when a dungeon master commanded his party to roll for initiative, the clatter of icosahedrons — the 20-sided die — sounded across the gaming table.

But in the plague times, the coronavirus pandemic, Dungeons & Dragons, the popular fantasy role-playing game better known as D&D, has changed. It's gone virtual, with many more locked-down players, even in the military, turning to online platforms to live their fantasies.

"I look forward to my online game with my friends," said Tech Sgt. Thomas Smith, operations manager for American Forces Network Tokyo.

Smith lives under tight restrictions on movements and group gatherings imposed by Yokota's commander.

"I haven't had any real social interactions outside of work; it lets me see and spend time with my friends and it's a good stress release," he said during a phone interview Monday. D&D "helps me maintain my sanity with all of the nonsense going on."

Dungeons & Dragons, which first appeared in 1974, now counts about 13.7 million players worldwide, according to dungeonvault.com, an informational website designed for D&D players.

Unlike video games, D&D relies not on amped-up graphics but on players' imaginations. Traditionally played in person such as a board or card game,

D&D also developed an online presence before social distancing and personal hygiene became pandemic buzzwords.

That presence has exploded, said Adam Bradford, vice president of tabletop gaming at DnD Beyond, a Huntsville, Ala., firm that creates the game's official "digital toolset."

The company has more than 4 million users and is expected to reach 6 million by the end of the year, Bradford said.

For active-duty troops such as Smith, who uses Roll20, playing online keeps the game alive.

"There are a lot of interesting aspects moving to a virtual tabletop," he said. "But the biggest pro to playing online is the fact I don't have to wear pants anymore."

States' reporting of infection testing data causes confusion

Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Elected officials, businesses and others are depending on coronavirus testing and infection-rate data as states reopen so that they will know if a second wave of contagion is coming — and whether another round of stay-at-home orders or closings might be needed.

But states are reporting those figures in different ways, and that can lead to frustration and confusion about what the numbers mean. In some places, there have been data gaps that leave local leaders wondering whether they should loosen or tighten restrictions. In others, officials are accused of spinning the numbers to make their states look better and justify reopening.

In a continuing theme for the outbreak in the United States, a lack of federal leadership persists. Even the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has been lumping together tests that measure different things.

Such errors render the CDC numbers about how many Americans are infected “uninterpretable,” creating a misleading picture for people trying to make decisions based on the data, said Ashish Jha, director of Harvard’s Global Health Institute,

“It is incumbent on health departments and the CDC to make sure they’re presenting information that’s accurate. And if they can’t get it, then don’t show the data at all,” Jha said. “Faulty data is much,

much worse than no data.”

Officials at the CDC and in multiple states have acknowledged that they combined the results of viral tests, which detect active cases of the virus essentially from the onset of infection, with antibody tests, which check for proteins that develop a week or more after infection and show whether a person has been exposed at some point in the past.

Viral test results should be reported separately, public health experts say. That allows for tracking of how many people have confirmed active infections, the percentage of people testing positive and how those numbers change over time — all crucial for guiding public policy.

NC governor warned of RNC move if order denied

Associated Press

President Donald Trump threatened Monday to pull the Republican National Convention out of North Carolina if the state’s Democratic governor doesn’t immediately sign off on allowing a full-capacity gathering in August despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Trump’s tweets about the RNC, planned for Charlotte, come just two days after North Carolina recorded its largest daily increase in positive cases yet.

On Friday, Gov. Roy Cooper moved the state into a second phase of gradual reopening by loosening restrictions on hair salons, barbers and restaurants. But he said the state must continue to closely watch virus trends and has ordered indoor entertainment venues, gyms and bars to remain closed for several more weeks.

“Unfortunately, Democrat Governor, @RoyCooperNC is still in Shutdown mood & unable to guarantee that by August we will be allowed... full attendance in the Arena,” Trump tweeted Monday.

He added that Republicans “must be immediately given an answer by the Governor as to whether or not the space will be allowed to be fully occupied. If not, we will be reluctantly forced...to find, with all of the jobs and economic development it brings, another Republican National Convention site.”

Cooper’s office responded with a brief statement that state officials are working with the GOP on convention decisions.

“State health officials are working with the RNC and will review its plans as they make decisions about how to hold the convention in Charlotte,” Cooper spokeswoman Dory MacMillan said in an email. “North Carolina is relying on data and science to protect our state’s public health and safety.”

Japan lifts state of emergency in all areas

Associated Press

TOKYO — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe lifted a coronavirus state of emergency in Tokyo and four other remaining areas on Monday, ending the restrictions nationwide as businesses begin to reopen.

Experts on a government-commissioned panel approved the lifting of the emergency in Tokyo, neighboring Kanagawa, Chiba and Saitama prefectures, and in Hokkaido to the north, which had more cases and remained under the emergency declaration after it was removed in most of Japan earlier this month.

Abe said the lifting of the emergency does not mean the end of the outbreak. He said the goal is to balance preventive measure and the economy until vaccines and effective drugs become available.

Japan, with about 16,600 confirmed cases and about 850 deaths, has so far avoided a large outbreak like those experienced in the U.S. and Europe despite its softer restrictions.

At the White House, officials slapped a travel ban on Latin America’s most populous nation, saying it would deny admission to foreigners who have recently been in Brazil. The ban, which takes effect Thursday, does not apply to U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents. With over 363,000 reported infections, Brazil is second

only to the U.S. despite limited testing.

Greece’s low COVID-19 infection rate allowed the government to restart the summer holiday season three weeks earlier than previously planned. In addition to resuming ferries with new passenger limits, it allowed cafes and restaurants to reopen under new social-distancing rules. All this, of course, was for Greek holiday-makers as foreign tourists are not expected until after June 15.

Islands such as Santorini, Mykonos, Corfu and Samos are major draws for tourists but have been mostly off-limits since late March when the country’s lockdown took effect.

Hard-hit Spain reached a milestone Monday as half the population — including those in the two biggest cities, Madrid and Barcelona — were finally allowed to gather, albeit in limited numbers. Outdoor seating at bars and restaurants also reopened.

Madrid coffee bar owner Roberto Fernandez said the mood was bittersweet.

“We are also a little sad today, as we have lost two of our more elderly regular customers,” Fernandez said. “They used to come every day, but now they have left us.”

Relaxations went a step further in the rest of Spain, where people can now visit beaches and nursing homes and hold weddings. Spain recorded 28,700 virus deaths.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police: Man set fire in hospital room

PA PHILADELPHIA — Police said a man in a north Philadelphia hospital for drug detoxification barricaded himself in a room in the emergency department and set fire to bedsheets, but no one was injured.

Police said the 30- to 40-year-old man was searched by security at Temple University Hospital's Episcopal Campus and placed in a room. Police said he barricaded himself inside and turned on oxygen tanks, then lit the bedsheets on fire.

Police said a maintenance man broke a window and the man climbed out and fought with security, but police arrived and arrested him.

Boy cracks case by reeling in sunken safe

SC JOHNS ISLAND — A 6-year-old boy helped crack open a nearly decade-old robbery case when he reeled in a locked safe from the bottom of a South Carolina lake.

Knox Brewer took up "magnet fishing" and began hunting for metal objects underwater as a way to pass time during the coronavirus pandemic, his family members told WCIV-TV.

The boy was out at Whitney Lake when the magnet attached to his line stuck to something heavy, the news outlet reported. Knox pulled in and pried open what turned out to be a waterlogged lockbox containing debris-covered jewelry and credit cards, as well as a checkbook, according to a video of the discovery.

Authorities determined the sunken safe belonged to a woman who lived across the street from the lake. She said

it had been stolen from her home eight years ago, the outlet reported.

Coach suspended over reports of practice

FL MIAMI — A Florida high school football coach was suspended as administrators investigate whether he held practice against rules and stay-at-home orders during the coronavirus pandemic, officials said.

The Miami Herald reported that Miami Northwestern Senior High School launched an investigation when it learned there had been unauthorized football training. The football coach Max Edwards was suspended indefinitely.

Daisy Gonzalez-Diego, a spokeswoman for the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, said the school was in communication with parents of students who may have practiced during the unauthorized training.

School director charged in plot to steal \$700K

NC RALEIGH — A school director has been charged with plotting to steal approximately \$700,000 in student financial aid to help fund a religious leader's North Carolina ranch.

Brenda Joyce Hall, 51, faces federal charges including aggravated identity theft and conspiracy to commit student loan fraud, according to the U.S. Attorney's office for the Eastern District of North Carolina.

An indictment said Hall used fabricated high school transcripts to fraudulently acquire hundreds of thousands of dollars in student aid and used the money to fund the operations of the ranch and make other purchases.

Teen rescued after fall into abandoned shaft

AZ NEW RIVER — Firefighters rescued a teenage boy from an abandoned mine shaft after he fell about 50 feet while driving an all-terrain vehicle in a desert area on the northern outskirts of metro Phoenix.

The 17-year-old boy was taken to hospital for evaluation after being pulled out of the shaft near New River.

Rescuers arriving at the scene found the boy at the bottom of the shaft with the ATV on top of him.

Indictment: Explosions used to rob ATMs

FL TAMPA — Two men have been indicted on charges using small explosions to rob ATMs in Florida.

A federal grand jury in Tampa returned indictments charging Mawdo Malick Sallah, 33, of Clearwater, Fla., and Kirk Douglas Johnson, 34, of Anderson, S.C., with eight counts each, according to court records.

Sallah and Johnson took nearly \$70,000 from several Tampa Bay area ATMs and vandalized others without taking any cash, according to a criminal complaint. Investigators believe the men injected some type of flammable fuel into the machines and used a spark to ignite it.

Man gets 8 years in jail for \$2M cocaine bust

NC RALEIGH — A man has been sentenced to eight years in prison for his role in a North Carolina cocaine bust that netted \$2 million and 176 pounds of the illegal drug.

The Raleigh-based federal

prosecutor's office announced that Andrew Richard Rodarte, 73, was sentenced after previously pleading guilty to possession with intent to distribute cocaine.

A news release from prosecutors said that Rodarte was observed during a drug surveillance operation driving a semi-truck to a trailer home in the rural town of Littleton where men were seen unloading duffel bags.

Officers served a search warrant on the home and found four duffel bags inside a bedroom closet that each held approximately 44 pounds of cocaine, according to court documents.

Authorities said they then found Rodarte at a truck stop and located \$2.2 million in cash in a hidden compartment of his truck.

Decapitated wild turkey found at sanctuary

NM ROSWELL — Authorities are searching for a suspect after the discovery of a decapitated wild turkey and destruction of several duck eggs near a New Mexico bird sanctuary.

The Roswell Daily Record reported a reward is being offered for any information about the turkey's decapitation and destruction of duck eggs around the J. Kenneth Smith Bird Sanctuary & Nature Center in Roswell.

Roswell Parks & Recreation Director Jim Burress said the carcass of the wild turkey was found on a walking trail at the sanctuary.

Burress said the culprit could have been the work of an animal such as a raccoon, skunk, or fox, but officials suspect a human because of recent vandalism.

From wire reports

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Keselowski picks up first win of season

Associated Press

CONCORD, N.C. — Brad Keselowski, in a contract year and trying to up his value in free agency, gave Roger Penske a victory on what should have been the most celebrated day in motorsports but was instead just a 6-plus-hour NASCAR show.

Keselowski extended Jimmie Johnson's losing streak to 102 races by holding off the seven-time NASCAR champion in overtime early Monday to win the Coca-Cola 600, the longest race on the NASCAR schedule.

It was the first win for Keselowski this season, his first Coca-Cola 600 victory and the first win at this event for Ford since 2002. Keselowski celebrated as he usually does by waving a giant American flag out his window during his victory burnouts on the frontstretch of Charlotte Motor Speedway.

When he first got out of the car for his network interview, the silence at the track was a downer.

"I was kind of bummed. I wanted to win the 600 my whole life and wanted to win in front of everybody, but that's not always how it works," Keselowski said. "I know there are fans that wish they could be in the stands."

In these unusual times of the coronavirus pandemic, NASCAR is still adapting in its return to racing a full week ago. This

event was its third Cup race in seven days — all without spectators — and limited media access.

Wearing a white Team Penske mask, Keselowski went to the empty infield media center for a post-race Zoom news conference. Unable to hear the questions, he shouted into the computer.

"Can you talk really loud?" he yelled. "My ears are ringing."

The Sunday before Memorial Day is a supposed to be a smorgasbord of motorsports that begins with Formula One at the Monaco Grand Prix, then IndyCar and the Indianapolis 500, followed by NASCAR and its longest race on the calendar.

The coronavirus pandemic has wiped out the first part of F1's schedule and, like IndyCar, it is still waiting to start its season. Penske, the new owner of Indianapolis Motor Speedway, has moved the Indy 500. It marks the first time since 1946 the 500 is not being run on Memorial Day weekend.

NASCAR was able to resume its season under a health plan approved by state officials that allowed the sport to resume after a 10-week hiatus. NASCAR ran three events in South Carolina, and the Coca-Cola 600 kicks off four consecutive days of racing at Charlotte.

A rain delay of nearly 90 minutes during the first stage of the race pushed the finish into Monday, but it still ended up just fine for Penske, the owner of Keselowski's car who should have spent Sunday celebrating

his first Indy 500 as the racetrack's owner.

"This is one of the biggest days for him," Keselowski said. "Winning never hurts. This is my 30th win and I think I have another 30 in me."

Johnson finished second, one spot ahead of devastated Hendrick Motorsports teammate Chase Elliott, as Chevrolet is still seeking its first win in the three Cup races since NASCAR resumed. But almost two hours after the race, NASCAR disqualified Johnson because his Chevrolet failed post-race inspection.

"We think something must've broken, but won't know until we get it back to the shop," said Johnson crew chief Cliff Daniels. "Tough news after a strong night."

Elliott had a comfortable lead and was coasting to the win when Hendrick Motorsports teammate William Byron spun with a tire problem.

"That's got to be a joke," Elliott said over his radio.

Elliott was wrecked by Kyle Busch trying to race for the win at Darlington Raceway on Wednesday night. It led to Elliott flipping Busch the bird at Darlington.

This time, he was briefly consoled by Busch as he climbed from his car on pit road. But he was openly disappointed for the second time in four days.

"I was a lap-and-a-half away from winning the 600," Elliott said. "This week has been pretty unfortunate, we have had some tough losses."

Woods, Manning trash talk way to a charity win

Associated Press

Tom Brady delivered the shot of the match that made it easy to forget the rest of his swings. Tiger Woods didn't miss a fairway and earned a small measure of revenge against Phil Mickelson.

The PGA Tour is set to return in just over two weeks, and it has a tough act to follow.

In the second and final charity match that brought live golf to TV, this exhibition was as entertaining as the real thing.

Woods lagged a long birdie putt close enough that his partner, Peyton Manning, didn't have to putt. That secured a 1-up victory over Mickelson and Brady in "The Match: Champions for Charity."

The goal was to raise \$10

million or more for COVID-19 relief funds, and online donations sent money climbing toward about twice that much.

This made-for-TV exhibition would have been worth pay-per-view, the model Woods and Mickelson used for a \$9 million winner-take-all match in Las Vegas over Thanksgiving weekend in 2018 that Mickelson won in a playoff under lights. It felt forced, lacked banter and was free because of technical issues.

Throw in two NFL greats in Brady and Manning, and this allowed viewers to ride along for 18 holes at Medalist Golf Club among four of the biggest stars in sports.

Justin Thomas pitched in as an on-course reporter, bringing a mixture of humor and in-

sight with the right amount of words.

Woods and Manning took the lead on the third hole and never trailed, building a 3-up lead in fourballs on the front nine, with Manning making two birdies (one was a net par).

Brady, whose six Super Bowl titles are more than any NFL quarterback in history, took a beating on social media and in the broadcast booth from Charles Barkley, who twice offered \$50,000 of his own money toward charity if Brady just hit the green on a par 3. He missed so far right it would be comparable to a pass that landed three rows into the stands.

New Orleans Saints coach Sean Payton weighed in on Twitter, noting Brady signing as a free agent with Tampa Bay

by saying he liked the "Florida" Brady much better.

One shot shut everyone up.

Never mind that Brady had to take a penalty drop before getting back to the fairway on the par-5 seventh. With his fourth shot, with Barkley needling him relentlessly, Brady's shot landed beyond the pin and spun back into the cup.

"Shut your mouth, Chuck," said Brady, whose microphone piece dangled off the back of his pants.

Donations for COVID-19 relief funds kept piling up, and the entertainment didn't stop even as the rain returned. It caused a 45-minute delay at the start, and as Woods said on the practice range, "I don't normally play in conditions like this."

EuroLeague cancels season

Associated Press

Europe's top basketball league canceled the remainder of its season Monday because of the coronavirus pandemic, saying health concerns had to be paramount despite numerous attempts to find ways to resume play.

The EuroLeague, which is composed of 18 teams across 10 European nations, had been suspended since March 12. League officials said they "explored every possible option" in trying to find a way to resume the season.

"Without a doubt, this is the most difficult decision we have had to take in our 20-year history," Euroleague Basketball President and CEO Jordi Bertomeu said. "Due to reasons beyond our control, we have been forced to cut short the most successful and exciting season in European basketball history."

The news came only two days after the NBA announced it, along with the National Basketball Players Association, has entered discussions with The Walt Disney Co. on a single-site scenario for a resumption of play in Central Florida in late July.

The EuroLeague is generally considered the second-

England's women's league halted, no decision on title

Associated Press

LONDON — The top women's soccer league in England was canceled Monday, with no decision reached on which teams have won the title and been relegated.

The decision was taken to end the Women's Super League following "overwhelming feedback from the clubs," the Football Association said, and to give them

the chance to "prepare and focus on next season." Manchester City was leading the league by a point, but if the league is decided on average points per game, Chelsea would win the title.

Clubs have "discussed various recommendations which will be sent to the FA Board to determine the most appropriate sporting outcome for the 2019/20 season," the FA said.

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best basketball league in the world behind the NBA. Istanbul-based club Anadolu Efes led the league with a 24-4 record this season but will not be recognized as champions, with that trophy simply not being awarded this season.

The EuroLeague, which is basketball's equivalent of a Champions League in soccer with the top teams from various nations qualifying to take part, is planning to have all 18 teams from this season in the league again next season. Plans call for longer-than-usual training

camps later this year "to allow players to recover their physical and mental shape in time for the new season," the league said.

Officials plan to start the 2020-21 season on Oct. 1. "All the league's stakeholders maintained their determination and exhausted every possible avenue in trying to deliver a complete and uniquely special season to our fans, whose passion is the driving force for all our efforts," Bertomeu said.

Japanese baseball to start on June 19

Associated Press

TOKYO — Japan's professional baseball season will open on June 19 under a plan that excludes fans.

League commissioner Atsushi Saito made the announcement on Monday after an online meeting with representatives of the league's 12 teams.

"I hope we can provide some guidance for sports other than professional baseball," Saito said. "It is important to operate cautiously according to our guidelines."

The announcement came as the state of emergency was lifted in Tokyo and on the northern island of Hokkaido by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Teams can begin practice games on June 2.

The season was to have begun on March 20 but the start was postponed because of the pandemic. Japan has reported about 850 deaths from COVID-19.

Japan joins South Korea and Taiwan, whose leagues are open and playing largely without fans.

WNBA set to make tough choices on roster cuts

Associated Press

NEW YORK — New York Liberty general manager Jonathan Kolb knew that he and first-year coach Walt Hopkins would have to make some tough decisions on the team's roster this year.

He just didn't think they'd have to do it so quickly and without seeing players compete in training camp. The WNBA and the players' union decided that teams would have to get their rosters under the salary cap by Tuesday so that players could start getting paid on June 1.

It's left many teams with tough decisions on who they will cut and little time to figure it out.

"It is the worst part of this job," Kolb said. "These are dreams that are suddenly altered and you're a large part of that."

Connecticut Sun coach and general manager Curt Miller had set up his training camp roster so a few position battles would determine the final spots on the team. Now he'll have to make choices a different way.

"Ultimately we have to decide, because we can't do it all together, what skill set strength of theirs makes most sense to round out our roster?" Miller said.

Teams usually have to cut their rosters to get under the salary cap before the regular season begins, which would have been on May 14. The WNBA postponed the start of the season in early April because of the coronavirus pandemic and is still focusing on a handful of scenarios that would allow it to play this year.

Teams typically would be able to evaluate players by their on-the-court actions.

Now it's more based on how quickly they pick things up on Zoom calls or how they understand plays online.

"The league office didn't foresee a pandemic," Kolb said in a phone interview. "They are doing the best they can do. It doesn't take away from how difficult this was for us."

The Liberty have six rookies on the roster, including No. 1 draft pick Sabrina Ionescu. They also have five international players, which has made life a little more difficult because of the logistics involving travel.

"It's definitely impacting us the most," he said. "We have the most international players and with so much uncertainty and lack of answers at the moment, it puts us in a position to have to make decisions."