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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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China may be preparing for 1st dual-carrier drills in South China Sea

By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

China may deploy two aircraft carriers for the first time during an exercise in the South China Sea this summer, according to numerous media reports.

The Chinese carriers Liaoning and Shandong have been conducting combat readiness training in the Yellow Sea this month ahead of deployment, the South China Morning Post reported Sunday.

"An aircraft carrier strike group will pass through the Pratas Islands on its way to the exercise site to the southeast of Taiwan in the Philippine Sea," said the report, quoting an anonymous military source.

It's unclear whether both the Liaoning, China's first aircraft

carrier, and the Shandong, commissioned at the end of last year, will proceed to the drills, the newspaper reported.

Britain's Daily Mail reported Tuesday that plans to deploy the carriers play into fears of a Taiwan invasion after Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Sunday that "political forces in the U.S. are taking China-U.S. relations hostage and pushing our two countries to the brink of a new Cold War."

A dual-carrier deployment by China would be "more symbolic than substantive," Paul Buchanan, an American security analyst based in Auckland, New Zealand, said Wednesday, noting that Beijing doesn't have a lot of experience in carrier operations. The drills are a direct challenge to U.S. supremacy in the South China Sea, he added.

Navy: Russian pilots intercepted P-8A in an 'unsafe' manner

Stars and Stripes

Russian pilots in two Sukhoi Su-35 fighters flying in an "unsafe and unprofessional manner" intercepted a U.S. Navy P-8A Poseidon reconnaissance aircraft over the eastern Mediterranean Sea on Tuesday, according to the 6th Fleet.

The Russians intercepted the Poseidon over international waters and flew nearby for 65 minutes, according to a Navy statement issued Wednesday.

"The intercept was determined to be unsafe and unprofessional due to the Russian pilots taking close station on each wing of the P-8A simulta-

neously, restricting the P-8A's ability to safely maneuver," the statement said.

The incident is the third since April involving Russian and American fliers in that area, the statement added. The Americans did not provoke the Russian actions, according to the Navy.

The Russian aircraft were operating in international airspace, but their "interaction was irresponsible," the statement said. "We expect them to operate within international standards set to ensure safety and to prevent incidents. Actions like these increase the potential for midair collisions."

Report: Air Force fails to deal with racial disparities in justice system

By **JOHN VANDIVER**
Stars and Stripes

The Air Force has failed to make reforms to fix racial disparities within its justice system and withheld documents to hide its "abysmal record," a watchdog group said.

"The Air Force has concealed records and discredited its own statistics, with leadership later doubting that disparities were as severe as their own data reveals, contrary to conclusions reached by (government and independent) investigations," Protect Our Defenders said Wednesday in a report on racial disparities in military justice.

In 2017, the group published a report that found racial inequalities across the military justice system, with the Air Force cited

as having some of the most extreme discrepancies.

In the Air Force, black airmen on average were 71% more likely to face court-martial or nonjudicial punishment than their white counterparts, according to the group's investigation at the time.

"Four years after the Air Force admitted the need to examine racial disparities, no recommendations have been formally made nor have any changes been implemented," the report said.

Protect Our Defenders is led by retired Col. Don Christensen, a former chief prosecutor for the Air Force.

In 2019, the Government Accountability Office launched its own probe, which found that in

the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force, black, Hispanic and male service members were more likely to be investigated than white and female service members.

They were also more likely to be tried in general and special courts-martial, the GAO found in an analysis based on data from 2013-2017. However, the GAO found no statistically significant difference by sex or ethnicity in terms of convictions.

The investigations prompted Congress in December to order that services track race and ethnicity within the justice system in an effort to root out unfairness.

The latest Protect our Defenders report said the Air

Force has failed to take significant action and that a "racial disparity team" established to deal with the issue was window dressing.

The Air Force didn't respond to requests for comment Wednesday.

Documents obtained earlier this year after a series of court fights showed that the Air Force acknowledged a "persistent" and "consistent" racial disparity in military justice, but did nothing about it, the report said.

"We recognize there is still work to do in this area," an Air Force working group said in a talking point slide the service was court-ordered to release, according to the report.

Air Force sends bombers over South China Sea

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

Two Air Force B-1B Lancer bombers flew over the South China Sea on Tuesday, the latest in an increasing number of United States military demonstrations in the region.

Bombers deployed to Guam flew the mission to demonstrate the Air Force's ability to operate anywhere international law allows, "at the time and tempo of our choosing," Pacific Air Forces said via Twitter on Wednesday.

The Lancers, originally from the 9th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron at Dyess Air Force Base, Texas, were at least the second pair to turn up in the area in less than a month. The Air Force does not publicize all of its B-1B flights.

On April 29, two Lancers appeared over

the South China Sea during a 32-hour round trip from Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D. That flight demonstrated the new "dynamic force employment model" aimed at making its global bomber presence less predictable, the Air Force said at the time.

The squadron from Dyess arrived at Guam on May 1 with four B-1B bombers and about 200 airmen to train and conduct operations with allies and partners, the Air Force said at the time.

Beijing deems such overflights "provocative," and blames the U.S. for rising tensions between the two nations. China and several other countries have overlapping claims to portions of the South China Sea.

The U.S. disputes China's claims over several islands and reefs in the resource-rich South and East China seas, including the Spratly, Paracel and Senkaku islands, according to the CIA World Factbook. The

Air Force missions follow an increasing number of freedom-of-navigation operations the Navy conducts in the region to challenge what it calls China's "excessive maritime claims."

China has been active there, as well, sending an aircraft carrier task force twice in April through the Miyako Strait, a strategic waterway near Okinawa.

Since mid-March, Chinese fighter jets have also harassed U.S. reconnaissance aircraft at least nine times in the South China Sea, a Pentagon official told Fox News in a May 19 report.

Reed Werner, deputy assistant secretary of defense for Southeast Asia, said that a Chinese vessel escorting a Chinese carrier maneuvered in an "unsafe and unprofessional way" near the guided-missile destroyer USS Mustin last month.

Pentagon watchdog resigns after being passed over

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The No. 2 official in the Pentagon's office of inspector general, Glenn Fine, resigned Tuesday, several weeks after he was effectively removed as head of a special board to oversee auditing of the \$2.2 trillion coronavirus economic relief package.

His departure, effective June 1, is the latest move in a broader shakeup of government watchdog agencies that Democrats call a politically motivated campaign by President Donald Trump to weaken government oversight.

On May 15, Trump fired the State Department's inspector general, Steve Linick, whose office was critical of what it saw as political bias in the State Department's

management. In April, Trump also fired Michael Atkinson, the intelligence community inspector general who forwarded to Congress a whistleblower complaint that ultimately led to the president's impeachment in the House.

A spokeswoman for the Pentagon's Office of Inspector General, Dwrena Allen, said Fine was not asked to resign. Fine issued a brief written statement lauding the importance of government watchdogs.

"The role of inspectors general is a strength of our system of government," Fine said. "They provide independent oversight to help improve government operations in a transparent way. They are a vital component of our system of checks and balances, and I am grateful to have

been part of that system."

Fine, who received his law degree from Harvard, came to the Pentagon's inspector general's office as the No. 2 official in 2015 and had previously been inspector general at the Department of Justice from 2000 to 2011. He also is a former assistant United States attorney in Washington, D.C.

Trump in early April designated Sean O'Donnell, the inspector general at the Environmental Protection Agency, to also be the acting Pentagon inspector general, replacing Fine as the head official. That move pushed Fine back to his previous position as the principal deputy inspector general and made him ineligible to head the special oversight board for coronavirus relief spending.

FBI: Only 1 attacker involved in Texas base shooting

Associated Press

HOUSTON — The FBI said Tuesday that its investigation points to only one attacker in the shooting at a Texas naval air base, days after the agency suggested another person involved might be on the loose.

FBI Supervisory Senior Resident Agent Leah Greeves said last week that investigators were working to determine

whether a second person of interest was at large following the shooting at Naval Air Station Corpus Christi. The Thursday attack left a sailor wounded and the gunman dead.

But the agency's Houston office said Tuesday on Twitter that "while there was initial concern about a potential second person of interest, intense investigation leads us now to believe there was not."

The FBI also repeated that the shooting is being investigated as a "terror-related incident," without elaborating on what that means. Two officials familiar with the investigation previously told The Associated Press that agents were examining social media posts they believe the shooter made expressing support for extremist groups, including al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula.

Officials have identified the gunman as Adam Salim Al-sahli, 20, a Corpus Christi resident who had been a student at a local community college.

Security officers shot and killed him after he opened fire while trying to drive a truck through a base entry gate.

The FBI said Tuesday that Al-sahli was a Syria-born American citizen.

Pentagon easing travel restrictions

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department announced its stop-movement order will remain in place but some bases could soon meet new guidelines that will allow travel for military personnel and their families.

A memorandum by Defense Secretary Mark Esper dated May 22 states he has canceled the prior travel guidance that went into effect April 20 and was expected to end June 30. He extended the travel restrictions for all government travel of personnel and their families indefinitely unless locations meet specific criteria to allow travel to resume.

“While the [coronavirus pandemic] still presents risk to DOD service members, civilians, and their families, improving conditions warrant a transition in our approach to domestic and overseas personnel travel to a conditions-based, phased approach to personnel movement and travel,” the memo states.

The memo was released along with two others on guidelines for reopening the Pentagon and health guidance for personnel who are deploying.

Esper’s memo states regional criteria laid out by a White House directive and installation-level criteria based on local conditions need to be met

Some bases take steps to return to normal

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Some military bases will be able to begin bringing back some workers and take the first major step toward a return to normal operations this week, the Pentagon said Tuesday.

The announcement came as the Pentagon laid out detailed plans that will govern how the department and its forces around the world will gradually and systematically begin to lift restrictions put in place by the global coronavirus pandemic. Defense officials did not say how many bases or where they were, but said the locations would be made public.

Speaking to Pentagon reporters, Matthew Donovan, the department’s under secretary for personnel, said that some locations will be able to “go green immediately” based on the conditions in their region and a downward trend in virus cases or positive COVID-19

tests that has lasted for two weeks.

Until now, all Defense Department installations have been at “phase zero” which requires that at least 80% of the workforce be teleworking, and mandates social distancing, masks and other health precautions.

Under the plans released Tuesday, there are four more phases.

Each one calls for a two-week decline in virus cases and other conditions at the base and the surrounding community in order to move to the next phase.

At phase two, gyms and some expanded food court choices could open, with social distancing, and as little as 20% of the workforce could be teleworking.

And if all goes well for another two weeks, bases would move to phase three, which allows workers to return to their offices, with exceptions allowed for individuals.

in order to bring back unrestricted travel to states, territories and other countries.

Matthew Donovan, the undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, said Tuesday that he expected some states and locations to be considered “green” — or meet the memo’s criteria — as soon as Tuesday evening.

The White House’s Opening Up America Again guidelines require removal of local shelter-in-place orders, a 14-day downward trajectory in virus symptoms and a 14-day down-

ward trajectory in new cases or positive tests. Data and guidance from the Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will be used as well to assess the local conditions.

Installations will be assessed by the services, which will report whether they meet four factors: removal of local travel restrictions; availability of essential services such as schools and child care; quality control and assurances for packing and moving household goods,

and the capacity and capability to treat and test personnel.

Once areas and installations meet the memo’s criteria, they will be considered for permissions to travel to and from the area. Donovan’s office will publish locations that have resumed travel, according to the memo. He said during a news briefing at the Pentagon that the information will be published publicly, not just internally to the Defense Department.

Ill. reservist is third service member to die of virus

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A 34-year-old Army reservist from Illinois died Friday from coronavirus complications, becoming the third service member to succumb to the illness that has sickened more than 6,000 U.S. troops, service officials said Wednesday.

Sgt. Simon Zamudio died at a suburban Chicago hospital after contracting the virus, according to Army officials and an obituary announcing his death. He had served in the Army Reserve since Octo-

ber 2015 and he had been promoted to sergeant in April, said Lt. Col. Simon Flake, a spokesman for the Army Reserve.

He was not on active-duty orders as part of the military’s response to the coronavirus pandemic when he contracted the illness, defense officials said Tuesday.

He is survived by his wife and a daughter, according to his obituary.

His death is the second among Army soldiers and the first U.S. service member death from the virus since April 13, when Navy Chief Petty Officer Robert Thacker Jr. died of complications of the virus at

U.S. Naval Hospital Guam. The 41-year-old sailor was among more than 1,000 crew members to contract the disease aboard the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt.

Army Capt. Douglas Linn Hickock, a member of the New Jersey National Guard, died March 28. Hickock, 57, a physician assistant, was preparing to activate as part of the pandemic response just before he was hospitalized with the virus.

The Pentagon said Wednesday that 6,168 service members had tested positive for the virus. Among them, 168 had spent some time in the hospital and 3,474 had recovered.

Congress circles back to small-business aid

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Deadlocked over the next big coronavirus relief bill, Congress is shifting its attention to a more modest overhaul of small-business aid in hopes of helping employers reopen shops and survive the pandemic.

Bipartisan legislation that would give small employers more time to take advantage of federal subsidies for payroll and other costs is expected to pass the House this week, as lawmakers return to Washington for an abbreviated two-day session.

Yet absent from the agenda is formal talks between congressional leaders on the next phase of the federal coronavirus response. Democrats have already pushed a \$3 trillion-plus measure through the

House, but negotiations with the GOP-controlled Senate and White House have yet to begin.

“We can’t keep propping up the economy forever,” Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said Tuesday in Lexington, Ky. It was one of his first public appearances in his home state since mid-March because of the pandemic.

“The ultimate solution is to begin to get back to normal,” he said. “There are three things that are essential to have full normalcy — testing, treatment and vaccine.”

Senate Republicans are divided on the next steps and wary of another sprawling negotiation where Democrats and the White House call the shots. They are also split on a central element — how much aid

to provide state and local governments and other coronavirus response after earlier relief bills totaled almost \$3 trillion.

Even as they hit “pause” on a larger bill, Republicans are enthusiastic about improving the Paycheck Protection Program, which was established in March under the \$2 trillion coronavirus relief bill and was replenished last month. All told, Congress has provided about \$660 billion for the program.

Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., a key architect of the aid, said in an interview that the program has shifted from one that was intended to keep paychecks flowing during the shutdown to a bridge to help businesses pay workers as they reopen — in many cases, at less than full capacity.

Swift firings for Minneapolis officers in man’s death

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — To the general public, the video of a white police officer pressing his knee into the neck of a black man prone on the street, crying out for help until he finally stopped moving, was horrifying.

Four officers were fired a day after George Floyd’s death, a stunning and swift move by the Minneapolis chief with the mayor’s full backing. But despite their dismissal, whether the incident will be considered criminal, or even excessive force, is a more complicated question that will likely take months to investigate.

The officers were dismissed soon after a bystander’s video taken outside a south Minneapolis grocery store Monday showed an officer kneeling on the handcuffed

man’s neck, even after he pleaded that he could not breathe and stopped moving. Floyd’s death prompted protests Tuesday, with thousands gathering at the intersection where he died.

Many protesters marched 2 miles to the police precinct station in that part of the city, with some damaging the building’s windows and squad cars and spraying graffiti. Police in riot gear eventually confronted them with tear gas and projectiles, with tense skirmishes stretching late into the evening.

Bridgett Floyd told NBC’s “Today” show in an interview Wednesday that the officers involved in her brother’s death should be charged with murder because “that’s exactly what they did.” She said she hadn’t

watched the bystander’s video, but told ABC’s “Good Morning America” that “I don’t understand how someone could possibly let an individual go out like that.”

Mayor Jacob Frey announced the firings on Twitter, saying: “This is the right call.”

The FBI and state law enforcement were investigating Floyd’s death, which immediately drew comparisons to the case of Eric Garner, an unarmed black man who died in 2014 in New York after he was placed in a chokehold by police and pleaded for his life, saying he could not breathe.

But in the Garner case, local prosecutors, the NYPD’s internal affairs unit, and the Justice Department all finished investigations into the case before the officer was ultimately fired.

Thousands protest in Hong Kong over anthem law

Associated Press

HONG KONG — Thousands of protesters shouted pro-democracy slogans and insults at police in Hong Kong on Wednesday as lawmakers debated a bill criminalizing abuse of the Chinese national anthem in the semi-autonomous city.

Police massed outside the legislative building ahead of the session and warned protesters that if they did not disperse, they could be prosecuted.

In the Central business district, police raised flags warning protesters to disperse before they shot pepper balls at the crowd and searched several people. More than 50 people in the Causeway Bay shopping

district were rounded up and made to sit outside a shopping mall, while riot police with pepper spray patrolled and warned journalists to stop filming.

Nearly 300 people were arrested across Hong Kong for unauthorized assembly, according to Facebook posts by the Hong Kong police force.

The bill would make it illegal to insult or abuse the Chinese national anthem, “March of the Volunteers” in semi-autonomous Hong Kong. Those guilty of the offense would face up to three years in prison and a fine of \$6,450.

Opponents have called the bill a blow to freedom of expression in the city, while Beijing officials have said that it will foster

a patriotic spirit and socialist values.

“Western democracies all have laws to protect their national flags, national anthems and emblems. Any insulting acts toward these symbols would also be criminal,” pro-Beijing lawmaker Tony Tse said in the legislative debate.

Tse said that the bill would not affect human rights or force people to love the country or support any political power.

“The purpose of this is to protect the dignity of a country,” he said.

Pro-democracy lawmaker Charles Mok disagreed, saying that the legislation would not help gain the respect of people and was an excuse to control freedom, speech and ideas of people.

LA County stores, worship houses can open

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — California moved to further relax its coronavirus restrictions and help the battered economy on Tuesday by permitting barber-shops and hair salons to reopen, while Los Angeles County, moving more cautiously, said that stores and houses of worship can open their doors.

The state's most populous county — and the hardest-hit by the coronavirus — moved to permit in-person shopping and religious services with social distancing restrictions, a day after California announced that counties wouldn't need state permission to do so if certain requirements were met.

Retail stores — including those at shopping malls — can open at 50% capacity. Churches, mosques, synagogues and temples can have no more than 25% of building capacity or 100 people. Everyone will be urged to wear masks and practice social distancing.

Washington, D.C.

The White House said Tuesday that President Donald Trump remains committed to holding a Fourth of July celebration in the nation's capital even as Democratic lawmakers from the region — one of the hardest hit by the coronavirus — warn that the area will not be ready to hold a major event.

White House spokesman Judd Deere reiterated that Trump wants to hold an Independence Day celebration after members of Congress wrote on Tuesday to Defense Secretary Mark Esper and Interior Secretary David Bernhardt to raise their concerns about the safety of such an event.

In their letter, the D.C.-area members wrote that “such an event would needlessly risk the health and safety of thousands of Americans.” The letter was organized by Rep. Don Beyer, D-Va, and signed by 10 other congressional Democrats with constituencies in the District of Columbia, Virginia and Maryland.

D.C. mayor Muriel Bowser

said Tuesday that the city won't be issuing any permits for large gatherings in the immediate future. The capital is still under a stay-at-home order, with plans to shift to Phase One of its reopening this upcoming weekend.

Kansas

TOPEKA — Kansas' Democratic governor on Tuesday vetoed a sweeping Republican coronavirus measure that would have limited her power to direct the state's pandemic response, but then ceded to local officials the authority to keep restrictions on businesses.

Gov. Laura Kelly not only killed a bill approved by the GOP-controlled Legislature last week, but also issued a new state-of-emergency declaration to replace one set to expire Tuesday night. Many Republicans have questioned whether she has the legal authority to do that — and retain the governor's broad emergency powers — so her action is likely to keep an intense partisan dispute burning and risk a potential court challenge.

Kelly is also heightening the potential conflict with GOP leaders by calling the Legislature back into special session June 3 to extend the new state of emergency past June 10. Republicans have a long list of proposals, however, including shielding businesses and health care providers from possible coronavirus-related lawsuits.

Kentucky

FRANKFORT — Vowing not to back down after armed protesters gathered near his home and hung him in effigy, the governor of Kentucky on Tuesday condemned their use of “fear and terror” in a demonstration fueled by coronavirus restrictions.

Gov. Andy Beshear referred to the protesters as a mob in sharply condemning the weekend rally that spread to the Governor's Mansion, where his children play. And the Democratic governor bluntly accused

some Kentucky politicians of culpability for attending a previous rally.

Beshear said that he would not be deterred by the demonstration. He has stressed the need to reopen the state safely, phasing in business restarts amid the health crisis. Nonesential retail stores and restaurant dining rooms have been among the reopenings, though with restrictions meant to adhere to social distancing. Beshear has also strongly urged the wearing of masks.

North Carolina

CHARLOTTE — President Donald Trump's demand for a full-capacity Republican convention in August is putting pressure on North Carolina health officials — and local Republicans — as coronavirus cases surge in the host county and statewide.

Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper's administration has refused to give in, though, responding with a letter demanding a written safety plan from organizers of the Republican National Convention, slated for August in Charlotte. Even local Republican officials have noted that Trump doesn't have the power to unilaterally move the event scheduled to start in 90 days after two years of planning.

Asked about Trump's tweets threatening to move the convention, Cooper said Tuesday that he's “not surprised at anything that happens on Twitter,” without mentioning the president by name. He said that discussions with RNC organizers are continuing.

State Health and Human Services Secretary Mandy Cohen's letter signed Monday asked Republican convention organizers for a written COVID-19 safety plan “as soon as possible,” noting that Cohen and Cooper discussed various scenarios with GOP officials by phone Friday.

Nevada

LAS VEGAS — Nevada casinos will be able to open June

4, when they will have been closed for more than 11 weeks to prevent crowds from gathering and spreading the coronavirus, Nevada Gov. Steve Sisolak announced Tuesday night.

Nevada gambling regulators said earlier that day that they may require the state's shuttered casinos to test all front-line resort workers for COVID-19, plan to isolate infected visitors and take other steps to slow the coronavirus spread before they can reopen.

In a statement Tuesday night, Sisolak said that he would allow casinos to reopen June 4 and in-person religious services of no more than 50 people starting Friday.

By allowing the casinos to reopen, with new rules on social distancing and sanitizing, Sisolak said that Nevada would again welcome visitors but would also be prepared to close down again if there is a spike in cases.

New York

NEW YORK — After weeks of declining deaths and hospitalizations, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said that it was time to focus on relaunching New York City's moribund economy.

The Democratic governor laid out a plan that included accelerating major infrastructure projects and tackling transmission of the coronavirus in the hardest-hit neighborhoods after ringing open the Stock Exchange.

On Tuesday, the mid-Hudson Valley, including the city's northern suburbs, became the latest region of New York state to begin slowly phasing in economic activity. Long Island was expected to follow Wednesday, which would leave New York City as the only region awaiting the start of reopening.

Cuomo said that the state will direct outbreak-fighting resources to 10 city ZIP codes that account for many of the new hospitalizations. Those cases are coming from mostly lower-income and predominantly minority neighborhoods, he said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

K-9 officer helps in arrest of suspect

TN MEMPHIS — Tennessee authorities said a police dog helped in the arrest of a man wanted on a first-degree murder charge out of Arkansas.

The U.S. Marshals Service said in a news release that Kevin D. Curry Jr. was arrested at a house in Memphis. Curry tried to escape the house by going out an upstairs window, but was deterred by a K-9 officer, marshals said.

Authorities: Grizzly bear attacked mountain biker

MT BILLINGS — A mountain biker was attacked by a grizzly bear near the southern Montana community of Big Sky, according to authorities.

Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks spokesperson Morgan Jacobsen told the Billings Gazette that the man was able to walk away and find help. He was airlifted to a hospital with injuries to his face and back and is stable in critical condition.

The man, in his 60s, had likely surprised the bear after rounding a sharp corner on a trail on private property, according to the wildlife agency's initial investigation. Jacobsen said the attack did not appear to be predatory.

The trail is closed during the investigation. Authorities are not searching for the bear.

Woman arrested, another sought in brawl

NY ROCHESTER — Police have one woman in custody and expected to make more arrests after a brawl that left two people hospitalized with stab wounds.

The Rochester Police De-

partment said a crowd of mainly women and teenage girls got embroiled in fights along Weyl Street. Bystander video given to WHEC-TV showed over a dozen people gathered and sometimes scrapping with each other as police intervene.

Police say officers used pepper spray after people ignored orders to break it up.

A 19-year-old woman was arrested on assault and rioting charges. Police are trying to identify a second woman they believe may have been involved in the fight.

Barber gives haircut, saves customer's life

IN KOKOMO — A barber is being credited with saving the life of an 80-year-old customer who had a heart attack after a haircut.

Archie Whitton had asked his Kokomo barber, Jeff Smith, if he could use an outdoor spigot to add water to his car radiator.

Smith agreed but after a few minutes didn't see Whitton. He went outside and found him on the ground.

"I was praying under my breath and just going by what I had learned 30-something years ago on CPR when I'd taken a class somewhere," Smith told the Kokomo Tribune. "You know how adrenaline is. In the moment, you're not really thinking about it. You just do what you feel like needs to be done."

It worked. A police officer with a machine took over before Whitton was rushed to a hospital.

Flag from when Lincoln lay in repose displayed

OH COLUMBUS — A flag that flew over the Ohio Statehouse when the body of President Abraham Lincoln lay in repose is on display for

the next few months, the Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board announced.

The historic Thirty-Six Star American flag is part of an exhibit of Civil War artifacts related to the 1865 Lincoln funeral train. The exhibit is open to the public in the rotunda of the Ohio Statehouse through Veterans Day.

The flag originally was presented to David Nevin Murray of Portsmouth for his contributions to the Union war effort.

Puerto Rican Veterans Memorial damaged

MA BOSTON — Boston police are investigating vandalism to the Puerto Rican Veterans Memorial in the South End that happened the day before Memorial Day.

Two stone pillars at the entrance to the monument were damaged and a Puerto Rican flag was lowered.

"(It's) disrespectful not because this is a Puerto Rican veterans memorial, this is a monument for veterans who gave their lives," Tony Molina, president of the Puerto Rican Veterans Monument Square Association, told the Boston Herald.

Death of loggerhead turtle investigated

NC MANTEO — The National Park Service said it is investigating after a nesting loggerhead sea turtle was found dead on the Cape Hatteras National Seashore beach, with signs that the creature was run over by a vehicle.

The female turtle came onto the beach early in the morning and had begun to lay eggs in a nest in the sand, according to a news release from the federal park. That's when it is believed, based on evidence found at the scene, that a motor vehicle

struck the turtle, the news release said.

Intact eggs thought to be viable were discovered nearby, the park said. Loggerheads are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

3 caught after escaping through jail's vent shaft

AL TUSCALOOSA — Three men who escaped from a west Alabama jail were recaptured.

The Tuscaloosa County Sheriff's Office told The Tuscaloosa News that Richard Lancaster, 38, was found hiding under a mobile home in Northport.

Lancaster escaped the Tuscaloosa County Jail along with Seth Schuyler Williams and Cameron Keith Newell. They were believed to have escaped through a vent shaft on the roof. Williams and Newell were captured in Fulda.

A tracking dog led deputies to Lancaster, who surrendered.

5 ducklings rescued from storm drain

NY SOUTHAMPTON — Five ducklings were rescued from a Long Island storm drain as their mother looked on, police said.

The ducklings were first spotted in the drain on Flanders Road in Riverside, about 14 miles west of Southampton.

It took about an hour for police officers, firefighters and wildlife rescuers to pull the ducklings to safety using nets, Southampton police said in a news release. The mother duck "watched over the entire rescue," the department said.

On May 10, a Suffolk County police officer pulled seven ducklings to safety from a drain behind a West Babylon church, also on Long Island.

From wire reports

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NHL unveils 24-team playoffs in return

Associated Press

Rosy as the news might sound, Gary Bettman made no promises in announcing the NHL has the framework of a plan in place to return to the ice.

“We hope,” the commissioner said, “that this is a step back toward normalcy.”

The league and its players overcame a significant hurdle Tuesday when Bettman formally unveiled a 24-team expanded playoff format in which games could start as early as late July in two yet-to-be-determined cities.

The plan — as with anything involving forming a timetable around the coronavirus pandemic — comes with no certainties.

“Obviously, there are lots of things to be done,” Bettman said, noting health and safety come first. “But this marks a very important step along the journey that we’re undertaking.”

Under the plan, the top four teams in each conference have already qualified for the round

of 16, and will play a round-robin tournament to determine seeding. The remaining eight teams in each conference will be seeded and take part in best-of-five series to determine the remaining playoff teams.

The NHL might be ahead of Major League Baseball and the NBA in terms of when and how it might return to action, but numerous questions remain before a puck is dropped in a meaningful game for the first time since hockey was put on pause in March.

“You have to do these in a sequence. You have to prepare for what we hope is going to be a consensus that we can and should play,” NHL Players’ Association executive director Don Fehr told The Associated Press. “This is but a meaningful start, I think. But it’s only a start.”

Timing is an issue. The NHL projects players might be allowed to begin returning for voluntary workouts next week.

Another concern is how long it might take players, including the dozens who have spent the past few months with their

families overseas, to return to their home cities and whether they will have to spend two weeks self-quarantining upon their return. There might be a solution for that.

“We’ve reached an understanding with the Canadian government that players can cross the Canadian border as well both internationally from overseas but also from the United States so they can return to their home city without problem,” Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly said.

The next phase will feature a roughly three-week training camp starting no earlier than July 1. The league hopes all 24 teams are cleared to hold full practices based on local health regulations.

There are also outstanding questions on health and safety protocols, and determining which two cities will serve as hubs. Bettman announced the NHL has narrowed the list to 10: Chicago, Columbus, Ohio, Dallas, Las Vegas, Pittsburgh and Minneapolis/St. Paul in the U.S. and Edmonton, Toronto and Vancouver in Canada.

Should all those issues be resolved, the NHL can then proceed with playing games.

On the bright side, the NHL still has time on its hands in the event of needing a contingency plan, with Bettman saying the 2020-21 season could start as late as January.

“If it has to slide more, then it’ll slide,” Bettman said, referring to the timetable. “There’s a reason that we’re not giving you dates now because anybody who gives you a date is guessing, and we think we’d rather take a more holistic approach to doing this.”

Hockey is benefiting from what’s been an effective and collaborative approach conducted by its Return to Play committee, which features player and league representatives. The committee not only proposed the 24-team format, but also devised a list of protocols for teams to follow once players return to their facilities.

Teams will be responsible for testing players during workouts and training camp, with the league taking over when games begin.

Sports briefs

Pac-12 to allow voluntary workouts at schools next month

Associated Press

The Pac-12 Conference will allow voluntary workouts on campus for all sports beginning June 15, subject to the decision of each individual school and where allowed by local and state guidelines, the conference announced Tuesday.

The decision was made by the presidents and chancellors of the conference schools and followed the announcement last week by the NCAA that schools can reopen for voluntary activities beginning next Monday. The Pac-12’s COVID-19 medical advisory committee created a series of guidelines and protocols for schools to follow once they decide to open for individual workouts.

“As states have either already opened or begin to open up access to parks, gyms and other training facilities, student-athletes should have the option at this time to be in, what for many, will be a much safer environment on campus, where they can have access to the best available health, well-being and training support,” Pac-12 Commissioner Larry Scott said.

It’s unlikely all 12 schools will open their doors at the same time. States with schools in the conference are reopening at difference paces.

NWSL settles on 25-game tournament

Pro soccer returns to the U.S.

next month when the National Women’s Soccer League starts a 25-game tournament in a pair of stadiums in Utah that will be kept clear of fans to protect players from the coronavirus.

Players from the nine teams will train and live at two Salt Lake City-area hotels, the league announced Wednesday. All players will be tested for COVID-19 before leaving for Utah, and then will be regularly screened during their monthlong stay.

No fans will be allowed into the Zions Bank or Rio Tinto stadiums, two suburban Salt Lake City venues that will host the action.

The tournament begins June 27, with games to be televised

and streamed by CBS and its online and broadcast affiliates.

Premier League clubs approve training plan

MANCHESTER, England — The Premier League is on course to restart next month after clubs approved plans on Wednesday to resume contact training even as some players are concerned about taking to the field again during the coronavirus pandemic.

The vote by the 20 clubs came after gaining clearance from the government for players to work together as a squad as restrictions are eased across England.

Players disappointed by MLB proposal

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A rookie at the major league minimum would keep about 47% of his original salary this year while multimillionaire stars Mike Trout and Gerrit Cole would lose more than 77% under a sliding-scale proposal by big league teams that players found “extremely disappointing.”

Major League Baseball made the proposal to the players’ union on Tuesday during a digital meeting rather than the 50-50 revenue-sharing plan that owners initially approved for their negotiators on May 11, several people familiar with the plan told The Associated Press. The people spoke on condition of anonymity because details were not announced.

In addition to its reaction on the economics, the union said “the sides also remain far apart on health and safety

protocols” aimed at starting the pandemic-delayed season around the Fourth of July. The sides have been grappling with how to aim for an opening day originally scheduled for March 26 but pushed back because of the new coronavirus.

“We made a proposal to the union that is completely consistent with the economic realities facing our sport,” MLB said in a statement. “We look forward to a responsive proposal from the MLBPA.”

Players agreed March 26 to a deal in which they would receive prorated shares of their salaries based on what percentage of each team’s 162-game schedule is played. In exchange, players were guaranteed that if no games are played they would receive service time for 2020 matching what they accrued in 2019.

MLB has proposed an 82-

game schedule and says the March 26 deal would result in huge losses because it did not necessarily account for a season with no fans in ballparks.

Under the plan given the union Tuesday, a player would keep 90% of his salary up to the \$563,500 big league minimum, including those with lower salaries while on optional or outright assignments in the minor leagues, according to information obtained by the AP.

The amount would decrease to 72.5% from \$563,501 though \$1 million, to 50% from \$1,000,001 through \$5 million, to 40% from \$5,000,001 through \$10 million, to 30% from \$10,000,001 through \$20 million and to 20% from \$20,000,001 and up.

Each player’s figure then would be prorated by the 82/162 formula agreed to in March, causing a loss of 49.4%.

There would be an additional \$200 million in postseason bonus money that would be given in a higher proportion to players with larger salaries.

As a result, a player at the minimum would earn \$262,217, according to calculations MLB gave the union. A \$1 million salary would be cut to \$434,143, \$5 million to \$1,642,113, \$10 million to \$2,947,895, \$15 million to \$4,049,497, \$20 million to \$5,151,099, \$25 million to \$6,048,520, \$30 million to \$6,945,942 and \$35 million to \$7,843,363.

MLB estimates 2020 player salaries would drop from roughly \$4 billion to \$1.23 billion, including the postseason bonus pool.

The revenue-sharing plan earlier this month was met with immediate hostility from the union the day owners gave their negotiators the go-ahead.

Elliott ends Busch’s seven-race Truck Series streak

Associated Press

CONCORD, N.C. — Chase Elliott gained a measure of revenge against Kyle Busch on Tuesday night — and then let him know about it.

Elliott snapped Busch’s seven-race Truck Series winning streak and earned a \$100,000 bounty at Charlotte Motor Speedway before imitating Busch’s victory celebration by bowing to the camera.

“Hopefully nobody gets their feelings hurt over it,” Elliott chuckled.

Busch appeared noticeably upset after the race, but it had nothing to do with the bow.

He cursed in an interview with Fox after the race. It wasn’t aired live, but Busch said “it sucks when you start the race with broken pieces after you’ve been sitting for six months. There’s going to be some (expletive) talking when I get home.”

Busch was upset over a splitter problem that caused problems for his No. 51 Toyota all

night long. Later, on a Zoom call, he was informed about Elliott’s bow.

“Imitation is the strongest form of flattery or whatever it is. But, hmmm, that’s cute,” Busch said sarcastically.

“It was a spur-of-the-moment thing,” Elliott said. “I thought we had so much fun with this with Kevin (Harvick) putting up the money and Kyle was a good sport. It’s not a dig at anybody. It’s just having fun. It was about beating him and we did and had some fun with it.”

Harvick pledged before the race to donate \$50,000 to Covid-19 relief for any full-time Cup driver who finished ahead of Busch. Marcus Lemonis, the CEO of Gander RV & Outdoors, which sponsors the Truck Series, agreed to match Harvick’s pledge.

The win comes six days after Busch wrecked Elliott in a Cup Series race at Darlington and two days after Elliott’s decision to pit late in the Coca-Cola 600 opened the door for Brad Keselowski to steal an almost cer-

tain win.

“It doesn’t make up for Sunday but it was still a really good night,” Elliott said.

It was Elliott’s first Truck Series race since 2017, when he won at Martinsville.

He said he wanted to race at Charlotte just to beat Busch.

“It was about beating Kyle and we did that so I guess I can quit now,” Elliott said.

Zane Smith finished third and Brett Moffitt was fourth in the first truck race since Feb. 21.

Busch had won 57 Truck Series races entering the night, the most of any driver in history, and appeared to be the favorite. But he could never chase down Elliott on a long green flag stretch to close the race, getting no closer than 0.3 seconds of the leader.

Busch started 16th and quickly made a move to sixth place before splitter issues forced him to pit and dropped him back to 33rd place. But the winner of 210 races across NASCAR’s three top series quickly moved back into con-

tention with a strong second stage and took the lead on lap 69.

But when Busch pitted with 34 laps to go it dropped him all the way back to 23rd and he could never regain the lead. Busch said the problem involved some front travel limiters that prevent the splitter from crashing to the ground.

He said “they just broke. First lap.”

Busch called the problems self-inflicted.

“Threw it away,” Busch said. “Had six months to prepare and screwed it up.”

This was Busch’s third race in three nights. He followed up a fourth-place finish in the Coca-Cola 600 on Sunday by winning the Xfinity Series race on Monday in overtime after passing Austin Cindric on the final lap.

For Elliott, the win ended a string of bad luck and should help his confidence heading into the second Cup race in four days at Charlotte Motor Speedway on Wednesday night.