

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Protests continue, spread into Europe

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Americans awoke Sunday to charred and glass-strewn streets in dozens of cities after another night of unrest fueled by rage over the mistreatment of African Americans at the hands of police, who responded to the chaos with tear gas and rubber bullets.

Tens of thousands marched peacefully to protest the death of George Floyd, a black man who died last Monday after a white Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee on his neck until he stopped breathing. But many demonstrations sank into mayhem as night fell: Cars and businesses were torched. The words “I can’t breathe” were spray-painted all over buildings. The damaged buildings include many near the White House.

The scale of the protests, extending to nearly every part of the country and unfolding on a single night, seemed to rival the historic demonstrations of the civil rights and Vietnam eras. And by Sunday morning, the outrage had spread to Europe, where thousands gathered in London’s Trafalgar Square. Despite government rules barring crowds because of the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrators clapped and waved placards as they offered support to U.S. demonstrators.

“We’re sick of it. The cops are out of control,” protester Olga Hall said in Washington, D.C. “They’re wild. There’s just been

too many dead boys.”

People set fire to squad cars, threw bottles at officers and busted windows of storefronts. They carried away TVs and other items even as some protesters urged them to stop. In Indianapolis, two people were reported dead after multiple shootings that happened during downtown violence. Those slayings added to deaths reported in Detroit and Minneapolis in recent days.

In Minneapolis, the city where the protests began, police, state troopers and National Guard members moved in soon after an 8 p.m. curfew took effect to break up the demonstrations.

On Sunday, maintenance crews near the White House worked to replace windows that had been completely shattered with large pieces of wood. Buildings for blocks were marked with graffiti, including curses about President Donald Trump and anti-police sentiments. The damaged buildings included the Department of Veterans Affairs, directly across the street from the White House.

Cleanup soon began in cities across the country. In Madison, Wis., hundreds of volunteers gathered to pick up after the violence that included setting a police squad car on fire, stealing from businesses and breaking windows at dozens of stores and an art museum.

Few corners of America were untouched, from protesters setting fires inside Reno’s

city hall, to police launching tear gas at rock-throwing demonstrators in Fargo, N.D. In Salt Lake City, demonstrators flipped a police car and lit it on fire. Police said six people were arrested and an officer was injured after being struck in the head with a baseball bat.

Overnight curfews were imposed in more than a dozen major cities nationwide, including Atlanta, Denver, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, San Francisco and Seattle.

At least 13 police officers were injured in Philadelphia, and at least four police vehicles were set on fire. In New York City, dangerous confrontations flared repeatedly as officers made arrests and cleared streets. A video showed two NYPD cruisers lurching into a crowd of demonstrators who were pushing a barricade against one of them and pelting it with objects. Several people were knocked to the ground. It was unclear if anyone was hurt.

Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp authorized the deployment of up to 3,000 National Guard troops to Athens, Savannah and any other cities where more demonstrations were planned Sunday.

“The protesters need to know we’re going to support their efforts in a peaceful, nonviolent protest,” the Republican told television station WSB late Saturday. “The agitators need to know that we’ll be there ... to take them to jail if they’re destroying lives and property.”

Massive protests raise fears of new virus outbreaks

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The mayor of Atlanta, one of dozens of U.S. cities hit by massive protests in recent days, has a message for demonstrators: “If you were out protesting last night, you probably need to go get a COVID test this week.”

As more beaches, churches, schools and businesses reopened worldwide, civil unrest in the United States over repeated racial injustice is raising fears of new coronavirus outbreaks in a country that has seen more infections and

deaths than anywhere else in the world.

Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms warned that “there is still a pandemic in America that’s killing black and brown people at higher numbers.”

Violent protests over the death of George Floyd, a black man who died May 25 in Minneapolis after a white police officer pressed a knee into his neck, have shaken the country from New York City to Minneapolis, from Atlanta to Los Angeles.

Health experts fear that silent carriers of the virus who

have no symptoms could unwittingly infect others at protests where people are packed cheek to jowl, many without masks.

“Whether they’re fired up or not, that doesn’t prevent them from getting the virus,” said Bradley Pollock, chairman of the Department of Public Health Sciences at the University of California, Davis.

The U.S. has seen over 1.7 million infections and nearly 104,000 deaths in the pandemic, which has disproportionately affected racial minorities in a nation that does not have universal health care.

The Minnesota health commissioner warned that the protests are almost certain to fuel new infections.

“We have two crises that are sandwiched on top of one other,” Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey said.

Even for the many protesters wearing masks, those don’t guarantee protection. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says cloth masks keep infected people from spreading the virus but are not designed to protect wearers from getting it.

Trump delays G7, considers more members

Associated Press

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE — President Donald Trump said Saturday that he will postpone until the fall a meeting of Group of 7 nations he had planned to hold next month at the White House despite the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. And he said he plans to invite Russia, Australia, South Korea and India as he again advocated for the group's expansion.

Trump told reporters that he feels the current makeup of the group is "very outdated" and doesn't properly represent "what's going on in the world."

He said he had not yet set a new date for the meeting, but thought the gathering could take place in September, around the time of the annual meeting of the United Nations in New York, or perhaps after the U.S. election in November.

Alyssa Farah, White House director of strategic communications, said that Trump wanted to bring in some of the country's traditional allies and those impacted by the

coronavirus to discuss the future of China.

The surprise announcement came after German Chancellor Angela Merkel's office said Saturday that she would not attend the meeting unless the course of the coronavirus spread had changed by then.

The leaders of the world's major economies were slated to meet in June in the U.S. at Camp David, the presidential retreat in Maryland, but the coronavirus outbreak hobbled those plans. Trump announced in March he was canceling the summit because of the pandemic and that the leaders would confer by video conference instead. But Trump then switched course, saying a week ago that he was again planning to host an in-person meeting.

"Now that our Country is 'Transitioning back to Greatness', I am considering re-scheduling the G-7, on the same or similar date, in Washington, D.C., at the legendary Camp David," Trump tweeted. "The other members are also beginning their COMEBACK. It would be a great sign to all — normalization!"

The G7 members are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States. The group's presidency rotates annually among member countries.

Trump has repeatedly advocated for expanding the group to include Russia, prompting opposition from some members, including Canada's Justin Trudeau, who told reporters he had privately aired his objection to Russian readmittance.

"Russia has yet to change the behavior that led to its expulsion in 2014, and therefore should not be allowed back into the G7," he said at a news conference.

The House also passed a bipartisan resolution in December 2019 that supports Russia's previous expulsion from the annual gathering.

Russia had been invited to attend the gathering of the world's most advanced economies since 1997, but was suspended in 2014 following its invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea.

SpaceX rocket delivers astronauts to Space Station

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — SpaceX delivered two astronauts to the International Space Station for NASA on Sunday, following up a historic liftoff with an equally smooth docking in yet another first for Elon Musk's company.

With test pilots Doug Hurley and Bob Behnken poised to take over manual control if necessary, the SpaceX Dragon capsule pulled up to the station and docked automatically, no assistance needed.

It was the first time a privately built and owned spacecraft carried astronauts to the orbiting lab in its nearly 20 years. NASA considers this the opening volley in a business revolution encircling Earth and eventually stretching to the moon and Mars.

The docking occurred just 19 hours after a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket blasted off Saturday afternoon from Kennedy Space Center, the nation's first astronaut launch to orbit from home

soil in nearly a decade.

Thousands jammed surrounding beaches, bridges and towns to watch as SpaceX became the world's first private company to send astronauts into orbit, and ended a nine-year launch drought for NASA.

A few hours before docking, the Dragon riders reported that the capsule was performing beautifully. Just in case, they slipped back into their pressurized launch suits and helmets for the rendezvous.

The three space station residents kept cameras trained on the incoming capsule for the benefit of flight controllers at SpaceX headquarters in Hawthorne, Calif., and NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston.

Gleaming white in the sunlight, the Dragon was easily visible from a few miles out, its nose cone open and exposing its docking hook as well as a blinking light. The capsule loomed ever larger on live NASA TV as it closed the gap.

Hurley and Behnken took

over the controls and did a little piloting less than a couple hundred yards out as part of the test flight, before putting it back into automatic for the final approach. Hurley said the capsule handled "really well, very crisp."

SpaceX and NASA officials had held off on any celebrations until after Sunday morning's docking — and possibly not until the two astronauts are back on Earth sometime this summer.

NASA has yet to decide how long Hurley and Behnken will spend at the space station, somewhere between one and four months. While they're there, the Dragon test pilots will join the one U.S. and two Russian station residents in performing experiments and possibly spacewalks to install fresh station batteries.

In a show-and-tell earlier Sunday, the astronauts gave a quick tour of the Dragon's sparkling clean insides, quite spacious for a capsule. They said

the liftoff was pretty bumpy and dynamic, nothing the simulators could have mimicked.

The blue sequined dinosaur accompanying them — their young sons' toy, named Tremor — was also in good shape, Behnken assured viewers. Tremor was going to join Earthy, a plush globe delivered to the space station on last year's test flight of a crew-less crew Dragon. Behnken said both toys would return to Earth with them at mission's end.

An old-style capsule splash-down is planned.

After liftoff, Musk told reporters that the capsule's return will be more dangerous in some ways than its launch. Even so, getting the two astronauts safely to orbit and then the space station had everyone breathing huge sighs of relief.

As always, Musk was looking ahead.

"This is hopefully the first step on a journey toward a civilization on Mars," he said Saturday evening.

Mosques reopen in Saudi Arabia, Jerusalem

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Tens of thousands of mosques across Saudi Arabia reopened Sunday for the first time in more than two months, but worshipers have been ordered to follow strict guidelines to prevent the spread of the coronavirus as Islam's holiest site in Mecca remained closed to the public.

The Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, the third-holiest site for Muslims after Saudi Arabia's Mecca and Medina, also reopened for prayers for the first time since it closed in mid-March. Throngs waited outside the holy site's gates before it opened early Sunday, with many wearing surgical masks. As they were allowed to enter, the faithful stopped to have their temperature measured.

The mosque was one of Jerusalem's many holy sites, including the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Western Wall, that were restricted to worshipers at the height of Israel's coronavirus outbreak. Throughout that period, worshipers continued to pray in the alleyways outside the mosque.

In Saudi Arabia, the government prepared for the reopening of around 90,000 mosques after sanitizing prayer rugs,

washrooms and shelves holding copies of the Quran, the Muslim holy book.

The Ministry of Islamic Affairs said that millions of text messages were sent to people in multiple languages to inform them about the new rules for public prayer, which include keeping a 6-foot distance between people during prayer, wearing face masks at all times and abstaining from greeting one another with handshakes or hugs.

Children under 15 years-old will not be allowed inside mosques. The elderly and those with chronic conditions are being told to pray at home. People are also being advised to perform the mandatory ablution at home since washrooms at mosques will be closed, to use hand sanitizers and to bring their own prayer rugs and copies of the Quran.

The restrictions call for mosques to open just 15 minutes before each of the five daily prayers and to close 10 minutes after they conclude. Friday sermons and prayers are to last no longer than 15 minutes.

The new measures come as Saudi Arabia and other countries around the world begin to loosen restrictions and stay-at-home orders following weeks of curfews and lockdowns.

The Grand Mosque in Mecca, however,

which houses the cube-shaped Kaaba that Muslims around the world pray toward, will remain closed to the public. The city has been under a strict lockdown for several weeks. The mosque in Medina where the Prophet Muhammad is buried will be partially opened to the public to pray outside.

The continued closure of Mecca points to the increasing likelihood that the kingdom may suspend this year's annual Muslim hajj pilgrimage, which falls in late July. Already, a senior Saudi official has told prospective pilgrims not to plan for the hajj this year amid the global pandemic.

Despite taking early and unprecedented measures to curb the spread of the virus, Saudi Arabia has recorded more than 83,000 people contracting the virus, including 480 deaths.

Meanwhile, Israel has weathered the coronavirus better than other harder-hit countries. It has recorded fewer than 300 deaths and has managed to mostly keep its daily infection count to the low dozens since the beginning of May. But it also imposed severe restrictions that battered its economy and sent its unemployment rate skyrocketing. Many of those restrictions, including on places of worship, began to be eased earlier this month.

While asking for more, states slow to spend virus aid

Associated Press

Many states have yet to spend the federal funding they received more than a month ago to help with soaring costs related to the coronavirus crisis, complicating governors' arguments that they need hundreds of billions more from U.S. taxpayers.

The Associated Press reviewed plans from governors or lawmakers on how they plan to use the money from the coronavirus relief bill, and found that at least a dozen states have started distributing the money. But far more have not.

The reasons vary. Some governors want permission to use the federal aid to plug budget holes after business closures and stay-at-home orders eroded the tax revenue that pays for government operations. Others are holding back because they fear that a resurgence of the virus could mean another wave of expenses. And in other

states, governors and lawmakers are wrestling over who controls the spending decisions.

"If I knew today that another billion dollars was coming to Rhode Island to help solve our budget deficit, I'd spend the \$1.25 billion now," Democratic Gov. Gina Raimondo said about the state's portion of the money.

Of other states that started spending the aid, she said: "They're taking a gamble, and I'm just not ready to do that yet."

Congress approved \$150 billion for state and local governments in late March as part of a \$2.2 trillion response to the virus outbreak, and the money was distributed within a month.

In May, the House approved an additional \$3 trillion aid package, with nearly a third of that dedicated to state and local governments. Republicans have said that it's too much and want to move slowly in the Sen-

ate, preferring to see how states spend the first batch of money.

"We need to slow down a little bit here, see what works best in the CARES Act, see what mistakes were made, weigh the consequences of having debt this size in terms of the future of our country and then cautiously make a decision about whether there should be another bill," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said this past week at a news conference in his home state of Kentucky.

On a call with governors, Vice President Mike Pence said that a majority of states had not yet sent money to cities and counties, some of which had to furlough staff as tax revenue dropped sharply. He encouraged them "with great respect" to get money out the door.

The AP survey found that at least 32 states are considering sharing a portion of the federal aid with local governments.

Governors have said that

more federal help is important because they need to approve balanced budgets before the start of the fiscal year. Several states are projecting deficits equal to about 20% of the budgets they proposed before the virus took hold.

Congress intended for the money to primarily address governments' rising costs to respond to the virus outbreak. U.S. Treasury Department guidance says states must use most of it for that purpose, not to make up for lost tax revenue.

Some states are using part of their federal aid as reimbursement for the costs of coronavirus testing, contact tracing and other health-related costs of the pandemic. Others have plans to replenish fast-depleting unemployment insurance funds, buy more laptops so that government employees can work remotely and help schools cover the costs of holding classes online.

China blasts US action on Hong Kong

Associated Press

BEIJING — The mouthpiece newspaper of China's ruling Communist Party said that the U.S. decision to end some trading privileges for Hong Kong "grossly interferes" in China's internal affairs and is "doomed to fail."

The Hong Kong government called President Donald Trump's announcement unjustified and said it is "not unduly worried by such threats," playing down concern that they could drive companies away from the Asian financial and trading center.

Trump's move came after China's ceremonial parliament voted Thursday to bypass Hong Kong's legislature and develop and enact national security legislation on its own for the semi-autonomous territory. Democracy activists and many legal experts worry that the laws could curtail free speech and opposition political activities.

The Chinese government issued no official response Saturday, but has said previously it would retaliate if the U.S. went ahead with its threat to revoke trading advantages granted to Hong Kong after its handover from British to Chinese rule in 1997.

In Hong Kong, small groups of Beijing supporters marched to the U.S. Consulate on Saturday carrying Chinese flags and signs protesting "American interference in China's internal affair" and calling Trump "shameless and useless."

Elsewhere in the city, youthful activists including Joshua Wong held a news conference to welcome Trump's announcement and try to downplay any economic fallout.

Trump said Friday that his administration would begin eliminating the "full range" of agreements that had given Hong Kong a relationship with the U.S. that mainland China lacked, including exemptions from controls on certain exports.

ISIS claims bombing attack on TV station bus, 2 killed

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Islamic State took responsibility Sunday for a roadside bomb attack against a bus belonging to a local TV station that killed two employees.

Marwa Amini, the deputy spokeswoman for the Afghan interior ministry, said four other station employees were wounded in Saturday afternoon's attack in Kabul.

In a statement on an ISIS-affiliate website, the group said the attack was against a bus carrying employees of Khurshid TV, a station it described as "loyal to the Afghan apostate government."

Both the Taliban and ISIS are active in the area, but ISIS has claimed the recent attacks on civilian targets while the Taliban has taken responsibility for military targets. ISIS has been increasingly active in Afghanistan after suffering battlefield losses to government and U.S.

forces, as well as its Taliban rivals.

Mohammad Rafi Sediqi, an official with Khurshid, confirmed the deaths of two employees. He said two of the wounded were in critical condition from a bombing that took place on the station's eighth anniversary.

The attack came after the expiration of a truce that Taliban and Afghan national security forces reached during the three-day Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr, which ended Tuesday.

Sediq Sediqqi, a spokesman for Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, tweeted that the Afghan government strongly condemned the heinous and cowardice attack on Khurshid TV crew in Kabul and "stand by the Afghan media."

Afghanistan is among the most dangerous countries in the world for reporters. The Afghan Journalists Safety Committee reported that five journalists were killed in 2019. The year before, 17 journalists and media workers were killed.

Poland hit by fake news days before drills

BY JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

Poland was hit with a barrage of fake news stories last week, including a phony interview with a U.S. commander ridiculing allied militaries, days before a major NATO exercise kicks off in the country, Polish officials said.

"The attack coincided with the beginning of the next phase of (the) Defender Europe-20 military exercise hosted by Poland," Polish government spokesman Stanislaw Zaryn said in a lengthy statement Thursday, in which he blamed Moscow.

Hackers used "cyberattack tools" to post fake content on various news websites, including prominent Polish media groups, Zaryn said.

Among the bogus reports was a fabricated interview with U.S. Army Europe commander Lt. Gen. Christopher Cavoli, which was published on a website notorious for spreading disinformation and was then picked up by other sites, Polish officials said.

The flurry of fake news comes as Poland prepares to host the Agile Spirit exercise this month, the first large-scale exercise with the U.S. since the coronavirus pandemic forced most major training events to be canceled.

The drill is part of the Defender Europe-20 effort, which was to be the largest Army exercise on the Continent in more than 25 years but was significantly scaled back when the coronavirus hit.

Defender Europe was one of the topics covered in the fake interview with Cavoli, with fabricated statements about a lack of preparedness for the exercise among Polish and Baltic militaries attributed to the USAREUR commander.

USAREUR, in a Twitter post, quickly dismissed the information as fake.

Another phony story focused on U.S. troops who had unflattering things to say about their Polish counterparts. Among the websites that picked up the fake news stories was the official site of the town of Orzysz

in northeastern Poland, where U.S. troops are based as part of a NATO mission, Polish officials said.

The disinformation campaign is an attempt to break down alliance cohesion, "destroy the image of the U.S." and weaken its engagement in Europe, and raise doubts about the reliability of countries on NATO's eastern flank, Zaryn said.

Russia is suspected of being behind the ongoing attacks, which bear the hallmarks of previous disinformation campaigns led by the Kremlin, Zaryn said.

"The military cooperation between the U.S. and Poland is constantly targeted by Russian activities," he said.

Other alliance members on the eastern flank, including the Baltic states — which were annexed by the Soviet Union after World War II — have also been targeted in recent months by fake news stories, some of which have seized on the coronavirus to try to undermine NATO.

NY permits front-line worker death benefits

Associated Press

NEW YORK — New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed a bill Saturday granting death benefits to the families of police officers, public health workers and other front-line workers who have died of the coronavirus.

The bill passed by state lawmakers this past week provides an accidental death benefit that is more substantial than the regular death benefit public workers' families receive. Dozens of police officers, public health workers, transit workers and paramedics have died of COVID-19 since New York became the epicenter of the pandemic in the United States.

Cuomo said that 67 people died of COVID-19 in the state Friday, the same number as Thursday and a steep drop from the height of New York's outbreak in April when more than 700 people were dying of the virus daily.

Arkansas

LITTLE ROCK — The number of confirmed coronavirus cases in Arkansas has surpassed 7,000 and one additional death is reported due to COVID-19, the Arkansas Department of Health reported Saturday.

The department said that there are now at least 7,013 cases and 133 deaths, up from 6,777 cases and 132 deaths reported Friday.

The state health department reported that 5,166 people have recovered from the virus and that 104 were hospitalized, down from 113 hospitalizations reported Friday.

Delaware

WILMINGTON — A federal judge and a federal appeals panel have rejected a request from a Delaware preacher for an emergency injunction to lift state restrictions on church worship to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

Neither the ruling Friday from a judge in Wilmington nor the 2-1 ruling Saturday from the

federal appeals court in Philadelphia have ended the matter. They only leave the restrictions in place while a judge considers the merits of the issue.

Christopher Allan Bullock, a well-known Wilmington pastor and community activist, had requested an emergency injunction to lift the restrictions ahead of Sunday, which was Pentecost.

Judge Colm Connolly said that the pastor could not prove he would be irreparably harmed, a legal standard that is required for issuing an injunction. But he made clear in his ruling that Bullock's claims "implicate one of our most treasured rights protected by the Constitution — the right to exercise freely one's religion." And he said that he would give Bullock's arguments full consideration.

Iowa

DES MOINES — Iowa reported another 345 coronavirus cases Saturday, surpassing 19,000 total for the pandemic, with another nine COVID-19-related deaths.

The state Department of Public Health reported that the number of coronavirus cases rose 1.8% since Friday afternoon, bringing the total to 19,243. The number of COVID-19-related deaths in the pandemic rose 1.7% to 531, the department said.

More than half of the state's confirmed cases were concentrated in six counties: Polk, Woodbury, Black Hawk, Linn, Marshall and Dallas.

The state health department said that 43% of cases were in adults 18 to 40, and another 36% in adults 41 to 60. While adults 61 and older accounted for 19% of confirmed cases as of Saturday, they were 87% of the deaths.

Kansas

WICHITA — Hundreds of people in Kansas' largest city flocked to bars and clubs on the first weekend they were open after Gov. Laura Kelly and

local officials lifted restrictions meant to check the spread of the coronavirus.

By 11 p.m. Friday, bars in the Old Town district of downtown Wichita were packing in customers for a celebration after being closed for two months, The Wichita Eagle reported. Knots of people moved through the streets, hugging friends they met and, in some cases, even turning cartwheels.

Bars and clubs in Wichita reopened as the state reported Friday that coronavirus cases had surpassed 9,200. Johns Hopkins University on Saturday reported more than 9,600 cases, with 215 COVID-19-related deaths.

Kelly last week converted her directives for a phased reopening of the Kansas economy into recommendations for local officials to follow. Her reopening plan would have kept bars and nightclubs further closed over the weekend.

Maryland

COLLEGE PARK — The 12 state schools that constitute the University System of Maryland will use a mix of in-person and remote learning when they reopen in the fall.

The system, which includes the flagship University of Maryland at College Park, announced a framework Friday for schools to respond to the coronavirus.

Each school will announce its own plans in the next two weeks as to how they'll adjust their calendars and classroom settings. The release said that all schools will provide at least some on-campus, in-person instruction in combination with remote learning.

Some schools may adjust calendars to start the fall semester as early as July so that the semester can conclude by Thanksgiving. All schools will enact plans to reduce crowding in residence and dining halls.

Mississippi

JACKSON — The Mississippi Department of Corrections

said that it will soon restart the transfer of inmates from county jails into state prisons and from one prison to another — a practice that has been on hold for about two months because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The department said in a news release Friday that transfers will be done in a "limited, controlled and safe manner," beginning in mid-June.

Mississippi has about 18,000 prisoners in custody. As of Friday, 28 inmates and 17 employees had tested positive for COVID-19, the department said. Advocates for inmate safety have questioned whether Mississippi is doing enough testing for the highly contagious virus.

Inmates will be quarantined for least 14 days before being moved out of South Mississippi Correctional Institution, Central Mississippi Correctional Facility or the privately run Tallahatchie County Correctional Facility. The release did not mention the transfer of inmates out of the other large state-run prison, the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman.

South Carolina

COLUMBIA — Hundreds more cases of the coronavirus were reported Saturday in South Carolina. The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control announced 266 new cases and four additional deaths. Those numbers bring the total number of people confirmed to have COVID-19 in South Carolina to 11,394 and those who have died to 487.

Two elderly individuals in Williamsburg County were among the latest deaths, in addition to one elderly person in Clarendon County and one in a middle-aged individual from Florence County.

As of Saturday, the data also shows that 199,735 total tests have been conducted in the state. To reach more people in underserved and rural communities, the state has scheduled 103 mobile testing events through July 2.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Unknown object breaks GOP office window

AZ BULLHEAD CITY— An unknown object broke through a window at a Republican Party office in northwestern Arizona while volunteers were hosting an organizing event for President Donald Trump, according to police and the Trump campaign.

The initial call reported a “weapons offense,” but police do not believe the window was struck by gunfire, said Emily Fromelt, a spokeswoman for Bullhead City police. Six people were in the building at the time. No one was injured.

No one was seen fleeing the area, and no arrests have been made, Fromelt said.

Animal control allows bystanders to ride gator

SC HILTON HEAD ISLAND — A worker for an animal control company allowed bystanders to ride and pose for pictures and videos with an alligator that was captured on a South Carolina miniature golf course, drawing condemnation from town leaders.

Hilton Head Island Town Manager Steve Riley issued a statement saying officials were “deeply concerned about the egregious and unacceptable behavior,” after the alligator was trapped, news outlets reported.

Joey Maffo, 19, led the capture of the gator at Legendary Golf in front of a crowd of about 100 people, The Island Packet of Hilton Head reported.

“As soon as I taped the gator, I thought it was a good opportunity to get people to understand how big and powerful it was,” Joey Maffo told the newspaper.

Both Joey and Joe Maffo apologized for the incident.

Dispatcher aids woman with runaway SUV

OH CAMBRIDGE — A wild ride on an interstate in central Ohio came to a safe end when a highway patrol dispatcher calmly instructed a driver how to stop her runaway SUV.

The driver, named Emma, 20, called 911 for help when her SUV would not slow down or stop on Interstate 77 due to a mechanical problem, the Ohio State Highway Patrol said.

“Take ahold of your emergency brake and just gradually pull that a little bit and see if it slows you down at all,” the dispatcher said. “Emma, does it slow you down at all?”

The SUV began to slow down and came to a stop near the median. No one was injured.

Man arrested for trying to make healthy meth

CO LONGMONT — A Colorado man is facing drug charges after police say he told them he was attempting to create a healthy meth substance with acai berries inside a meth lab in his garage.

Craig William Rogers, 49, was arrested on suspicion of controlled substance possession, possession of drug paraphernalia and unlawful distribution, manufacturing, and dispensing of a controlled substance, the Longmont Times-Call reported.

Investigators found a “berry-like substance” inside the lab,

“No amount of meth is safe, whether it has a berry in it or not,” Longmont Deputy Chief Jeff Satur said. “It’s a highly addictive, life-destroying drug.”

Investigators said no meth was found inside the garage but believe Rogers had the tools to

make up to an ounce of meth a day. Satur said police will test the duplex where Rogers was living for meth contamination.

Officials: Lawnmower death second in a week

ME APPLETON— A riding lawnmower apparently tumbled from a retaining wall, killing a woman in the town of Appleton, officials said.

Doreen Robbins, 59, was discovered underneath the lawnmower by a family member, said Knox County Chief Deputy Patrick Polky. Emergency medical technicians performed CPR but were unable to revive the woman, officials said.

The exact circumstances of the death are being investigated, but investigators believe the mower fell from a 5-foot retaining wall. It was the second lawnmower death in a week in Maine.

Man stomps Chihuahua to death, leaves at lake

MA WEYMOUTH — A Massachusetts man stomped his family’s pet Chihuahua to death and tried to hide the body, police said.

Shykeim Basden, 19, of Weymouth, faces arraignment after his arrest on several charges including animal cruelty, Weymouth police said in a statement.

A witness told responding officers that Basden had stomped on the Chihuahua named Coco several times, then fled the apartment with the dog in his arms.

A family member told police they thought Basden was going to throw the dog in a nearby pond. Police searched the pond’s shoreline and found the dog’s body near a residence.

War memorial graffitied on Memorial Day

PA PITTSBURGH — Authorities in western Pennsylvania are investigating vandalism of a Pittsburgh war memorial on the eve of Memorial Day.

The statue of a World War I doughboy in the city’s Lawrenceville neighborhood was splashed with red paint during the night and also appeared to have been sprayed with a logo similar to that of a hammer and sickle.

A message spray-painted at the base of the memorial read “June 19, 1986! Glory to the Day of Heroism!” The phrase has been used by some groups in reference to 1986 Peruvian prison uprisings by imprisoned Maoist revolutionaries.

Police spokeswoman Cara Cruz said that investigators are reviewing “all available video footage” from the area. She also said that arrangements are being made to clean the memorial.

Snake interrupts online school lesson on Zoom

NM LAS CRUCES — A New Mexico elementary school teacher on Zoom with students had a lesson interrupted thanks to an uninvited guest: a bullsnake.

The desert animal surprised Sunrise Elementary School fourth-grade teacher Annette Otero Nunez during a class May 12 via Zoom from her backyard in Las Cruces, the Las Cruces Sun-News reports.

Animal control officer Juan Valles captured the animal and then gave students a quick lesson on identifying desert snakes and snake safety.

The bullsnake, prevalent in the American Southwest, is not venomous

From wire reports

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Mayfield refocused after difficult 2019

Associated Press

Baker Mayfield went back to his roots during this strange offseason, a time he's used to reflect and forget a season that didn't go well for the Browns' brash quarterback.

He's also worked on his golf game.

"I've always been a high-effort guy," he said. "I am swinging hard still, but it is still not going straight."

Neither is his NFL career, and Mayfield's spent the past two months trying to get it back on the proverbial fairway.

After an electrifying rookie season, he regressed significantly with Cleveland. On Wednesday, Mayfield, who will be playing for his fourth coach in three years in 2020, spoke to reporters for the first time since January, when the Browns' 6-10 let-down was followed by yet another coaching change, front-office purge and renewed questions about whether he's a franchise QB.

Mayfield knows the upcoming season is vital.

"There's no doubt Year 3 is always a big year in these contracts and timing-wise, everybody knows that," Mayfield said on a Zoom call from his home in Texas, where he's been holed up during the COVID-19 pandemic. "I'm not going to put any added pressure on myself. There's no need for that. Because if I win, good things will happen. That's the most important part."

"That's why quarterback is one of those positions that's the hardest in sports. If I play better, our team's going to do better. So I put that pressure on myself. So it doesn't matter what year it is, I have to be

way better each year."

Mayfield was way worse in 2019 than 2018. He followed a record-setting rookie season by throwing 21 interceptions, completing just 59.4% of his passes, with a paltry 78.8 passer rating. He lacked confidence in the pocket, never got on the same page with star receiver Odell Beckham Jr., and had a handful of minor media meltdowns.

Nothing went as planned for him or the Browns, who fell flat on their collective face masks.

Mayfield is determined to learn from those mistakes. And, as he's done throughout his football life, prove people wrong.

To start, he's been noticeably low key. For him, that's a major change.

"I have a different approach this year," he said. "Everybody who has been interviewed on our team has hit the nail on the head over and over about this is time to work. It is time to do our thing, instead of talking about it. This is the first media thing I have done, just because there is no need to be talking about it. It is just time to go do it and right now."

"It is moving in silence, which is fine with me. That is how I used to do it before getting on a bigger stage, so I am happy to get back to those roots, get back to the fundamentals to where I can accomplish the goals when the season comes around."

Never one to mince words — on or off the field, — Mayfield feels time at home has given him perspective and a greater appreciation of his profession.

Circumstances have changed and so has he.

"You only get so many opportunities in

this game that I have been blessed to play," he said. "It does not last forever. To be able to take advantage of that and enjoy the moments, I think it is going to be good for me, getting back to that and having fun and enjoying the process of how to get to winning, because that is the most enjoyable thing looking back on it."

In addition to down time playing board games or boating with his wife, Emily, Mayfield has spent a major chunk of the past two months getting to know new Browns coach Kevin Stefanski, the former Minnesota offensive coordinator replacing Freddie Kitchens.

Mayfield is impressed with Stefanski, who recently moved his family to Ohio after being stuck in Minnesota when coronavirus changed normalcy and shut down pro sports.

"Kevin is obviously an extremely sharp guy," Mayfield said. "He's able to relate to everybody. That is one of the best parts about him and being around him so far. Just hearing his message, everything he does is with a purpose."

Mayfield was able to implement some of Stefanski's new offense recently after he invited nine teammates, including backup quarterback Case Keenum and newly signed Pro Bowl tight end Austin Hooper, to join him in Texas for workouts.

"A lot of them were here last year, but it was good for everybody to be around, speaking the same terminology and just kind of hanging out during all this," he said. "You are kind of stuck at home, but we had a chance to get outside and throw a little bit."

Goodell: 'Urgent need for action' remains

Associated Press

NEW YORK — NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell says "there remains an urgent need for action" following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the protests around the country that have followed.

From New York to Los Angeles and several cities in between, thousands protested Floyd's death and repeated police killings of black men. Floyd was a handcuffed black man who died Monday after a Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee into his neck for several minutes even after he stopped mov-

ing and pleading for air.

Officer Derek Chauvin, 44, was charged with third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter.

Floyd's death and the ensuing protests have prompted many sports figures — including athletes, coaches and league officials — to speak out in recent days.

"As current events dramatically underscore, there remains much more to do as a country and as a league," Goodell said in his statement Saturday. "These tragedies inform the NFL's commitment and our ongoing

efforts. There remains an urgent need for action. We recognize the power of our platform in communities and as part of the fabric of American society.

"We embrace that responsibility and are committed to continuing the important work to address these systemic issues together with our players, clubs and partners."

Goodell added that the protesters' reactions "reflect the pain, anger and frustration that so many of us feel." He also sent condolences to Floyd's family — as well as those of Breonna Taylor in Louisville, and Ah-

maud Arbery in Georgiad.

NFL Players Association executive director DeMaurice Smith sent a letter to all of the league's players Saturday, addressing the events around the country.

"The country is hurting, there is uncertainty and there is danger," Smith wrote. "It is also clear that the pain, while shared by so many, has a history of being (borne) more by some than others. It is as wrong to be willfully ignorant to this pain as it is to use this pain as cover for inflicting pain on others."

Burns dominates in UFC's Vegas return

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Gilbert Burns dominated former UFC welterweight champion Tyron Woodley to win a unanimous decision on Saturday night in the mixed martial arts promotion's return to Las Vegas.

Brazilian heavyweight Augusto Sakai employed some unpunished gamesmanship to eke out a split-decision victory over Bulgaria's Blagoy Ivanov in the penultimate bout of the UFC's first show in its hometown since the coronavirus pandemic began.

The event was held without fans at the UFC Apex, a small gym with broadcast facilities on the promotion's corporate campus. The UFC used minimal personnel to stage the fight, and the promotion said everyone involved was subject to strict health and safety protocols.

The 33-year-old Burns (19-3) dominated on his feet and on the ground, finishing his first main-event bout with likely the biggest win of his career and his sixth consecutive victory since July 2018, including four straight since moving back up to welterweight.

From a first-round knockdown to a strong finish, the Florida-based Brazilian sound-

ly defeated one of the most accomplished welterweights in UFC history and made his case for a shot at champion Kamaru Usman, who happens to be his training partner.

"I trained so hard for this fight, and I knew I could do it," said Burns, who entered the bout ranked sixth in the crowded 170-pound division. "I was calling these guys out for a reason. I'm coming to stay. That was a former champion right there. You saw a dominant performance against a former champion. I'm ready. I feel so good right now."

The judges all gave all five rounds to Burns, scoring it 50-45, 50-44 and 50-44.

"I love the champ, my training partner," Burns said. "But come on, give me a shot. A lot of respect, a lot of love for you, but I think I'm next. ... If they want to make a fight in July, come on. I don't have a scratch."

Burns dropped the ex-champ in the opening seconds and gained a full mount. A gaping cut opened in Woodley's left eyebrow in the opening minutes, and Burns again overcame Woodley's famously strong takedown defense to drop Woodley in the second round.

Woodley (19-5-1) hadn't fought since losing his title in

a one-sided thrashing from Usman in March 2019. Woodley had reigned atop the division for nearly three years, and the 38-year-old University of Missouri graduate said he dealt with depression while debating whether to stay in MMA or to pursue a music career.

Burns' victory capped an entertaining show at the Apex, where the octagon is only 25 feet in diameter, compared to 30 feet in most competitive cages. The compact dimensions typically lead to more aggressive fighting, and this card featured six finishes in its 11 bouts.

Burns was fighting in a fan-free arena for the second time in 2½ months. He stopped veteran Demian Maia in Brasilia on March 14 in the UFC's final show before it halted competition.

After an eight-week break, the UFC returned to competition in May with three shows in eight days in Jacksonville, Fla.

Although this card was fairly light on star power, the promotion will stage UFC 250 next Saturday night from the same gym. Two-division champion Amanda Nunes' featherweight title defense against Canada's Felicia Spencer headlines the pay-per-view card.

UFC President Dana White continues to promise additional

shows this summer from the so-called "Fight Island," an undisclosed private isle where the promotion intends to host bouts between fighters who can't enter the U.S. due to health restrictions.

Sakai (15-1-1) remained unbeaten in the UFC with his fourth straight victory when two judges favored him 29-28 after a lively bout with Ivanov (18-4).

Sakai escaped punishment from referee Jason Herzog in the third round when he blatantly grabbed the chain-link wall of the cage while attempting to avoid a takedown attempt by Ivanov.

Grabbing the cage is illegal and punishable by a point deduction, but Herzog merely warned Sakai verbally. The decision was met with audible disbelief by Daniel Cormier, the former UFC heavyweight champion working in the quiet arena as a color commentator.

Strawweight contender Mackenzie Dern opened the main card by finishing Hannah Cifers with a knee bar that was the first leg-lock submission victory by a woman in UFC history. Dern (8-1) earned her first win since giving birth to her daughter last year.

Virus leads 4-year colleges to cut 97 sports programs

Associated Press

Four-year colleges facing budget shortfalls stemming from the pandemic are approaching an unwelcome milestone: In coming days, the number of eliminated sports programs will almost surely pass 100.

Research by The Associated Press found a total of 97 teams eliminated at four-year schools through Friday. The count includes only teams cut with the coronavirus outbreak and its impacts cited as all or part of the reason.

Of the 78 teams lost in Divisions II and III and the NAIA, 44 were from three schools that closed at least in part because of financial fallout from the pandemic.

No Power Five conference school is

known to have dropped any sports. Most of the 19 Division I teams cut — 15 men's, four women's — are from schools in the so-called Group of Five conferences.

Some of the cuts might not have been made, critics say, if decision-makers had considered the benefits those sports brought to the schools as a whole.

"College presidents are just not thinking this through," former University of Idaho president Chuck Staben said. "I cannot believe they are making all these probably bad financial decisions for their university when what we need them to do in the face of this pandemic and pending budget cuts from tuition shortfalls and state funding shortfalls is to make good financial decisions that benefit students."

Staben argues athletes often pay more

than the value of their partial scholarships for tuition, room and board and books, and bring diversity to campuses. This, he said, is especially important at a time when enrollment declines are accelerating as budget woes hit higher education.

Akron athletic director Larry Williams was ordered to chop 23%, or \$4.4 million, from his budget. Akron depends on student fees for 40% of its athletic budget and enrollment is expected to be down 20% this fall. The school dropped men's cross country and golf and women's tennis two weeks ago, and there will be other spending and staff reductions.

Williams noted the accounting system used by his and other universities often consider the athletic department a cost center and revenue is generally not considered.