

# STARS AND STRIPES<sup>®</sup>

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## Esper's firing raises Pentagon concerns

*Los Angeles Times*

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's decision to fire Defense Secretary Mark Esper on Monday raised concerns that he may be planning far-reaching military moves in his final weeks in office — and is putting in place new leadership more inclined to go along.

**ANALYSIS** Trump named Christopher Miller, director of the national counterterrorism center, to take over as acting Defense secretary, bypassing the normal practice of having the Pentagon's No. 2 official take charge temporarily if the top job becomes vacant.

Trump announced the move on Twitter, saying Esper “has been terminated” and that Miller would assume control immediately.

Miller showed up at the Pentagon a little over an hour later. He issued guidance telling the Pentagon's vast workforce to continue its mission without changes, a Defense Department official said.

The White House has long hinted that Trump was likely to fire several top national security aides after the election. In addition to Esper, he is said to be angry at FBI Director Christopher A. Wray for not investigating his political enemies and at CIA Director Gina Haspel for delaying the

release of classified documents about the 2016 campaign.

Before the election, Trump publicly raised the possibility that he might pull all remaining U.S. troops — roughly 4,500 — out of Afghanistan by January.

He also privately raised the possibility of withdrawing the approximately 500 American forces in Somalia, and a further drawdown in Syria.

It's unclear whether Trump is still weighing such moves. He has long been frustrated at Pentagon resistance to his goals of ending U.S. involvement in long-running overseas wars and may see the next 10 weeks as a last chance to achieve his goal of bringing forces home.

As commander in chief, Trump retains control over military decision-making until President-elect Joe Biden is sworn in at noon Jan. 20.

Democrats, who had praised Esper's reluctance to use combat troops to quell widespread protests for racial justice last summer, warned that Trump may be seeking a more pliant leader at the Pentagon.

Former Pentagon officials and Democratic lawmakers also denounced Trump's decision, arguing that an acting Defense secretary from outside the Defense Department could face a steep learning curve and myriad complex decisions if a national

security crisis erupts.

In an interview conducted before his dismissal but published after he was fired Monday, Esper suggested that his successor might be more willing than he was to go along with Trump's questionable uses of the military.

“Who's going to come in behind me?” Esper told *Military Times*, which covers the armed forces. “It's going to be a real ‘Yes man.’ And then God help us.”

Concerns that the abrupt change in Pentagon leadership might alarm allies and embolden adversaries, Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called senior military counterparts overseas Monday to reassure them that U.S. armed forces remain “ready” and were unaffected by the turmoil in Washington, according to a U.S. official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Lawrence Korb, a former senior Pentagon official, said the call to appoint Miller and bypass Deputy Defense Secretary David L. Norquist sent a troubling signal.

“The message it sends around the world is that Trump is going to continue his disruptive policies for the rest of his time in office. And usually in these cases, you at least let the No. 2 person take charge — you don't bring someone in from another agency,” Korb said.

## USS Antietam sailors returning to ‘a COVID world’

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS

*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — USS Antietam sailors came home to a new world on Tuesday after being underway for the majority of the coronavirus pandemic thus far.

The guided-missile cruiser left its homeport here on Feb. 27, exactly a month before the first sailor on the base, and first U.S. service member in Japan, contracted the coronavirus.

“Since we were already underway at the start [of the pandemic], we set a lot of standards in preventing COVID-19 at sea,” said Petty Officer 2nd Class Nico Watt, a

hospital corpsman assigned to the Antietam, according to a Navy statement Tuesday. “We were the first to run an underway quarantine and MEDEVAC as a training scenario.”

Most of the Antietam crew remained aboard throughout the entire 260-day deployment, even during “several” brief pier-restricted stops in ports, according to the statement. The ship maintained its “bubble ship” status “to prevent the introduction of COVID-19 to the crew and maintain the ship's combat readiness,” according to the statement.

As the Navy dealt with a major outbreak aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt in March, the service stopped allowing lib-

erty during port visits to prevent bringing the coronavirus aboard its vessels.

Though most Antietam sailors spent all 260 days on the ship, the crew did not break Navy days-at-sea records like others did this year because of its port visits. The current record-holder, the USS Stout, clocked 215 days without a port visit during its nine-month deployment this year.

The Antietam, as one ship of the Reagan Carrier Strike Group, escorted the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan from May to October as it patrolled the Western Pacific. The cruiser was with the Reagan in the South China Sea, East China Sea and Indian Ocean, as well as dual-carrier operations with the USS Nimitz in July.

## Experts: Biden likely will resolve rift with S. Korea

BY SETH ROBSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

A new U.S. administration will likely move quickly to resolve a rift with South Korea over the costs of supporting 28,500 American troops on the divided peninsula, defense experts said Tuesday.

President Donald Trump has consistently called on U.S. allies to pay more for their own defense as a cornerstone of his “America First” policy. Seoul and Washington have been at loggerheads over Trump’s demand that South Korea substantially increase the amount it pays to host a U.S. military presence.

Because of the stalemate, which has been going on for two years, some 9,000 South Korean base workers have been caught in the middle. The contract, known as the Special Measures Agreement, is used in large part to pay the bulk of their wages.

As recently as last month, U.S. Forces Korea warned workers that they may be furloughed again next year if the dispute isn’t resolved.

However, U.S. and South Korean defense experts said the Jan. 20 inauguration of Presi-

dent-elect Joe Biden would result in quick action on the issue.

A Biden administration would be much more reasonable about increases to host-nation support and would resolve the matter fast, Michael O’Hanlon, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, told Stars and Stripes in an email Tuesday.

A similar prediction was offered by Ralph Cossa, a former Air Force officer and president emeritus of the Pacific Forum think tank in Hawaii.

“They will likely ask for something a bit better than previously offered but there will be no appearance of ‘extortion’ and I expect both sides will come to terms relatively quickly,” he wrote in an email Tuesday.

The allies would likely settle on South Korea’s most recent offer, to increase the amount it pays to support U.S. troops by 13%, according to Kim Hyun-wook, an American studies professor at Korea National Diplomatic Academy.

Kim, in a phone interview Thursday, said a Biden administration will be preoccupied with domestic issues in a divided nation and won’t prioritize foreign policy.

## Biden might choose to keep some troops in Afghanistan

BY J.P. LAWRENCE  
*Stars and Stripes*

KABUL, Afghanistan — U.S. President-elect Joe Biden may look to keep a residual counterterrorism force in Afghanistan, a move expected to face resistance from the Taliban, analysts have said.

But even as American gears in the country shift, the Biden administration is expected to retain most aspects of the deal struck in February between the Taliban and the Trump administration, which was supposed to bring peace to Afghanistan, they said. Like President Donald Trump, the president-elect has spoken out against “forever wars,” including America’s longest, in Afghanistan. But while Trump wanted all troops home by Christmas, Biden has said he would consider keeping a small counterterrorism force there.

“I support drawing down the troops. But here’s the problem, we still have to worry about

terrorism and [Islamic State],” Biden told Stars and Stripes in a telephone interview in September.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said in a congratulatory tweet to Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris that he wanted to continue and deepen the “multilayered strategic partnership with the United States ... including in counterterrorism and bringing peace to Afghanistan.” He did not directly address whether he wanted the U.S. to maintain military presence in Afghanistan.

The Taliban, on the other hand, have told Biden he should stick firmly to the deal negotiated by his predecessor — even though they have fallen short of meeting several of the conditions — and fully withdraw international troops by the agreement’s May deadline.

U.S. military leaders have said withdrawing all international troops was contingent on the Taliban meeting the conditions in the deal.

## Barr tells DOJ to probe election fraud claims if they exist

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Attorney General William Barr has authorized federal prosecutors across the United States to pursue “substantial allegations” of voting irregularities, if they exist, before the 2020 presidential election is certified, despite no evidence of widespread fraud.

Barr’s action comes days after Democrat Joe Biden defeated President Donald Trump and raises the prospect that Trump will use the Justice Department to try to challenge the outcome. It gives prosecutors

the ability to go around longstanding Justice Department policy that would normally prohibit such overt actions before the election is certified.

Trump has not conceded the election and is instead claiming without evidence that there has been a widespread, multistate conspiracy by Democrats to skew the vote tally in Biden’s favor.

Biden holds a sizable lead in multiple battleground states and there has been no indication of enough improperly counted or illegally cast votes that would shift the outcome. In fact, election officials from

both political parties have publicly stated the election went well, though there have been minor issues that are typical in elections, including voting machines breaking and ballots that were miscast and lost.

In a memo to U.S. attorneys, obtained by The Associated Press, Barr wrote that investigations “may be conducted if there are clear and apparently-credible allegations of irregularities that, if true, could potentially impact the outcome of a federal election in an individual State.”

He said any allegations that would “clearly not impact the

outcome of a federal election” should be delayed until after those elections are certified and prosecutors should likely open so-called preliminary inquiries, which would allow investigators and prosecutors to see if there is evidence that would allow them to take further investigative measures.

Barr does not identify any specific instances of purported fraud in the memo.

States have until Dec. 8 to resolve election disputes, including recounts and court contests over the results.

# Fla. cities mop up after Eta

Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Tropical Storm Eta was squatting off western Cuba on Tuesday after drifting away from South Florida, where it unleashed a deluge that flooded entire neighborhoods and filled some homes with rising water.

The 28th named storm of a record hurricane season was the first this year to make landfall in Florida. And now a 29th named storm has formed over the northern Atlantic: Theta took shape Monday night, eclipsing the record set in 2005, when Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma struck the Gulf Coast.

After striking Nicaragua as a Category 4 hurricane and killing more than 100 people from Mexico to Panama, Eta delivered torrential rains to Cuba and South Florida before moving into the Gulf of Mexico. With no powerful steering winds to guide its way, the storm drifted west again in an unusual reverse S-curve pattern.

By Tuesday morning, it was lingering just north of the Yucatan Channel between Cuba and Mexico, with top winds of 50 mph. Forecasters said it would remain nearly stationary through the day before moving north later in the week, but they had little confidence on where it might land again.

Eta continued to swell rivers and flood coastal zones in Cuba. Some 25,000 people were evac-

uated with no reports of deaths, but rainfall continued, with total accumulations of up to 25 inches predicted.

The rain also kept falling Tuesday in South Florida, where as much as 23 inches were expected to accumulate. Eta barely hit land late Sunday as it blew over Lower Matecumbe Key on its way into the Gulf of Mexico, but dumped water over densely populated neighborhoods from Monroe to Palm Beach counties.

There were no reported deaths in Florida, unlike in Central America and Mexico, where the toll was rising.

Nearly a week after Eta crashed ashore in Nicaragua, authorities from Panama to Guatemala have reported more than 100 dead and an even higher number of missing. Extensive flooding and landslides have affected hundreds of thousands of people in countries already struggling with the economic fallout of the pandemic.

In Florida, the rain damaged one of the state's largest COVID-19 testing sites, at Miami-Dade County's Hard Rock Stadium, officials said. Throughout the pandemic, it has been one of the busiest places for people to get a coronavirus diagnosis. The site was expected to be closed until Wednesday or Thursday. At least seven other state testing sites were to remain closed on Tuesday.

# GOP tries again to get court to ax health law

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A week after the 2020 election, Republican elected officials and the Trump administration are advancing their latest arguments to get rid of the Affordable Care Act, a long-held GOP goal that has repeatedly failed in Congress and the courts.

In arguments scheduled for Tuesday, the Supreme Court will hear its third major fight over the 10-year-old law, popularly known as "Obamacare." Republican attorneys general in 18 states and the administration want the whole law to be struck down, which would threaten health care coverage for more than 23 million people.

It would wipe away protections for people with pre-existing medical conditions, subsidized insurance premiums that make coverage affordable for millions of Americans and an expansion of the Medicaid program that is available to low-income people in most states.

California is leading a group of Democratic-controlled states that is urging the court to leave the law in place.

The case comes to a court that now has three justices appointed by President Donald Trump: Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett, who joined the court late last month following her hurried nomination and confirmation to replace the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

The Supreme Court could have heard the case before the election, but set arguments for a week after.

The timing could add a wrinkle to the case since President-elect Joe Biden strongly supports the health care law.

A decision is expected by late spring.

# Russian peacekeepers go to Nagorno-Karabakh

Associated Press

MOSCOW — More than a dozen planes carrying Russian peacekeepers headed for Nagorno-Karabakh on Tuesday, hours after Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to halt fighting over the separatist region and amid signs this cease-fire would hold where others hadn't.

The truce came after significant advances by Azerbaijani forces that the Nagorno-Karabakh leader said made it impossible for their side to carry on — but angered many Armenians, who stormed government buildings overnight, demanding the Parliament invalidate the agreement. Dozens of protesters gathered again Tuesday morning in front of the parliament building in the Armenian capital of Yerevan.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have been locked in a conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh for decades. The region lies within

Azerbaijan but has been under control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since a separatist war there ended in 1994. Heavy fighting erupted in late September — the biggest escalation of the conflict in a quarter-century — and has left hundreds, possibly thousands, dead.

Several cease-fires announced over the past six weeks crumbled almost immediately, but the current agreement appeared to be holding, with neither side reporting any more fighting since it came into force.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian said on Facebook that calling an end to the fight was "extremely painful for me personally and for our people."

But on Tuesday he explained that he was left with no choice, saying the army had told him it was necessary.

"We found ourselves in a

situation when there was no alternative to signing the agreement," Pashinian was quoted by Russia's Interfax news agency as saying.

Nagorno-Karabakh's separatist leader Arayik Harutyunyan echoed Pashinian's sentiment. He said: "Had the hostilities continued at the same pace, we would have lost all of Artsakh (an Armenian name for Nagorno-Karabakh) within days."

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev referred to the agreement as a "glorious victory" on Twitter, and Azerbaijanis flooded their capital city to celebrate.

Russia's Defense Ministry said that 15 planes carrying peacekeepers and military equipment departed for the region Tuesday. A total of 1,960 Russian peacekeepers are to be deployed in Nagorno-Karabakh under a five-year mandate.

# US allows use of first virus antibody drug

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. health officials have allowed emergency use of the first antibody drug to help the immune system fight COVID-19, an experimental approach against the virus that has killed more than 238,000 Americans.

The Food and Drug Administration on Monday cleared the experimental drug from Eli Lilly for people 12 and older with mild or moderate COVID-19 symptoms not requiring hospitalization. It's a one-time treatment given through an IV.

The therapy is still undergoing additional testing to establish its safety and effectiveness. It is similar to a treatment President Donald Trump received after contracting the virus last month.

Early results suggest the drug, called bamlanivimab, may help clear the coronavirus sooner and possibly cut hospitalizations in people with mild to moderate COVID-19. A study of it in hospitalized patients was stopped when independent monitors saw the drug did not seem to be helping in that situation.

## California

SACRAMENTO — California's coronavirus cases are at their highest levels in months, a disquieting reality Gov. Gavin Newsom said Monday was "obviously sobering" and that led San Francisco Bay Area health officials to urge people who travel outside the region to quarantine for two weeks upon return.

Newsom said some of the increase could be tied to Halloween celebrations while Barbara Ferrer, the health director for Los Angeles County, urged people who gathered during the weekend to celebrate Joe Biden's victory in the presidential race to quarantine to avoid fueling the spread.

LA County is home to 10 million people, roughly one-quarter of California's population, and was seeing 750 cases per

day in September. Last week, four days saw case counts above 2,000.

California hasn't seen the even more dramatic surges other states are experiencing, but new figures are troubling. The number of confirmed cases, the infection rate, hospitalizations and intensive care patients all have reached their highest level in months, Newsom warned.

The positivity rate climbed from 2.5% to 3.7% in about three weeks, hospitalizations are 29% over 14 days and "that trendline continues up," he said. Meantime, California is nearing two grim milestones: 1 million cases and 18,000 deaths.

## Connecticut

Connecticut saw a spike in coronavirus-related hospitalization over the weekend, filling about half of the state's available COVID-19 beds in intensive care units, Gov. Ned Lamont said.

The governor reported that 496 patients were hospitalized with the virus on Monday, an increase of 94 from Friday and the state's highest figure since the end of May. The figure is double the number who were hospitalized with the virus just two weeks ago.

Connecticut's pandemic-related death toll rose by 27 over the weekend to 4,698 and there were 3,338 new confirmed or probable cases of COVID-19 reported in the state, according to the governor's office.

The 7-day rolling average of the positivity rate in Connecticut has risen over the past two weeks from 2.18% on Oct. 25 to 4.74% on Nov. 8.

## Nevada

CARSON CITY — Nevada officials reported 960 newly confirmed cases of COVID-19 and one additional death on Monday, bringing the statewide totals to 110,982 cases and 1,852 deaths since the start of the pandemic.

The virus's autumn surge has not spared rural or urban communities. After a week of a record-setting number of newly reported cases and spiking infection rates, health officials flagged 10 of the state's 17 counties as "high risk" — Clark, Churchill, Douglas, Elko, Eureka, Lincoln, Lyon, Nye and Washoe Counties as well as Carson City.

In the state's hospitals, three out of every four beds is currently occupied due to COVID-19 and other causes. The Nevada Hospital Association reported that 891 beds were occupied by confirmed or suspected COVID-19 patients — the highest number since mid-August.

## New Hampshire

CONCORD — The New Hampshire Food Bank is hosting 10 drive-through mobile food pantries over the next two weeks aimed at addressing growing need because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The food bank will bring truckloads of food to be distributed to individuals and families in their vehicles.

The first ones are scheduled for Tuesday in Claremont and Laconia. Mobile food pantries also will be in Colebrook, Gorham, Manchester and Center Ossipee. The visits run through Nov. 17.

As a result of the pandemic, the food bank estimates an additional 71,000 people are now food insecure in New Hampshire, meaning now one in seven New Hampshire residents do not know where their next meal is coming from.

## New Jersey

TRENTON — New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy said Monday that bars and restaurants must halt indoor dining from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. beginning Thursday in an attempt to control a resurgence of the coronavirus.

Takeout and outdoor dining may continue past 10 p.m., Murphy, a Democrat, said.

Another change allows restaurants to seat tables closer than 6 feet apart if they erect a barrier. He also said that all indoor interstate athletic events will be prohibited.

Over the past seven days in the state, an average of about 2,000 people per day have been infected by the virus, up from a rate of about 370 per day in August.

## Utah

SALT LAKE CITY — Deeply conservative Utah began a major shift in fighting the coronavirus pandemic Monday, implementing a statewide mask mandate for the first time and planning a dramatic increase in testing.

Republican Gov. Gary Herbert said the timing right after the presidential race was called for Democrat Joe Biden wasn't political, but rather an essential move to avoid disaster with a surge already threatening to overwhelm hospitals ahead of the holiday season.

Biden has been imploring people to wear masks, a stark contrast to President Donald Trump largely eschewing them. Trump won the state with 58% of the vote, though Utah Republicans tend to be put off by his brash style.

State authorities have repeatedly prevailed upon people to wear masks, but resisted requiring them even as case counts began breaking records earlier this fall. Utah joins more than 30 other states that have implemented statewide mask orders since the pandemic began.

Leaders in the GOP-dominated Legislature are backing the new rules, which also put most school sports on hold and ban social gatherings outside the household for two weeks, he said. Herbert didn't impose any new restrictions on businesses. He cited data that says most people are catching the virus during personal gatherings, where they tend to be more lax about social distancing and mask wearing.

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Argument over dog led to shooting; 8 wounded

**TN** NASHVILLE — An argument that started over a dog led to a shooting that left eight people wounded in Nashville, and police said they were looking for two male suspects.

Authorities responded to reports of gunfire shortly after 1 a.m. Sunday, the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department said in a news release. None of the injuries were life-threatening.

The statement said the two suspects began arguing. One of them had a dog with him. The suspect with the dog allegedly pulled out a handgun. The second suspect left, then returned a short time later with a gun and several other men. An exchange of gunfire ensued.

Police said they recovered a handgun from the scene and that the investigation is ongoing.

## Sea turtle lays eggs unseasonably late

**NC** BUXTON — A green sea turtle has laid eggs unseasonably late in the year on a beach in North Carolina's Outer banks.

The Virginian-Pilot reported Friday that it marks the first time in more than two decades that a turtle has laid a nest this far past summer.

The eggs were laid Halloween morning near the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse. Female sea turtles typically lay nests during the warmer months. Nests laid after Aug. 20 are considered late.

Meaghan Johnson of the National Park Service said that the baby turtles are unlikely to survive. But she said they could stand a chance if there's a mild winter.

## 6 charged in interstate gun trafficking case

**MA** BOSTON — Six men have been indicted on interstate gun trafficking, state Attorney General Maura Healey's office said Monday.

The men, two of whom are from Florida and four who are from Massachusetts, allegedly transported guns, primarily from Florida and Michigan, to sell in Massachusetts.

Healey's office said the investigation, led by the state police, also uncovered drug trafficking and illegal firearms.

A statewide grand jury returned indictments against the men last week for a range of firearm charges. They're set to be arraigned in Bristol and Plymouth superior courts at later dates, according to Healey's office.

## Task force studies how to control island rats

**SC** KIAWAH ISLAND — A task force of wildlife agents, university researchers and leaders in pest control is studying how the poison used to control rats on a South Carolina island is also killing the bobcats that eat them for food.

The South Carolina SGA Rodenticide Task Force said its goal is to balance the needs of businesses and people on Kiawah Island with protected wildlife, Clemson University said in a news release.

The chemical used in rat poison prevents the rodents' blood from clotting. But that same chemical has also been found in dead bobcats, who eat the rats, the state Department of Natural Resources said.

Scientists are mapping the island's rat population and the task force plans to study that data to determine how to use the chemicals sparingly, but still prevent rats from

spreading diseases, said Mike Weyman, deputy director of Clemson University's Regulatory Services.

## Pedestrian dragged into street by U-Haul dies

**GA** SUWANEE — Police in Georgia are searching for two suspects accused of fatally dragging a pedestrian behind a U-Haul van while trying to escape from an alleged shoplifting incident.

Suwanee police were called to a Walmart at around 9 p.m. Saturday where witnesses reported seeing two men shoplifting from the store then running into the parking lot, news outlets reported.

Witnesses told investigators the suspects got into a U-Haul van with Arizona tags and hit a pedestrian, the agency said. The victim was dragged into the street and was killed, police said.

## Delayed military funeral honors will be given

**KY** RADCLIFF — Dozens of veterans who did not receive military funeral honors during the coronavirus pandemic will be honored during ceremonies in Kentucky this week.

The belated funeral honors for 65 veterans who died during the pandemic will be given Tuesday at Kentucky Veterans Cemetery-Central at Radcliff, Fort Knox said.

The post and the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs worked together to provide the honors.

Four ceremonies are scheduled in order to provide social distancing for attending family members. Face coverings are required, and Centers for Disease Control guidelines will be enforced.

## Renovated vets museum expected in early 2021

**AL** ATHENS — Construction has begun on the new Alabama Veterans Museum and Archives, and officials said the project could be completed as early as January.

The museum is being built into half of the former Limestone County Event Center in Athens, The Decatur Daily reported. The renovated 20,000-square-foot facility will offer a larger space for the museum's growing collection, a library, meeting space and gift shop.

The other half of the building will be available for event rental. It will seat up to 300, Sandra Thompson, the museum's director, told The Decatur Daily.

The cost of the project is \$750,000, Thompson said. Around \$900,000 has been raised so far.

## Teens shot over alleged stolen Trump signs

**KS** TOPEKA — A Kansas man has been charged with shooting three teenagers he believed stole Donald Trump campaign signs.

Shawnee County District Attorney Mike Kagay said Robert Sinner, 39, turned himself into police Saturday and is being held on \$75,000 bond. Sinner is charged with criminal discharge of a firearm and two counts of aggravated battery in connection with the Oct. 31 incident in Topeka.

Police said the shooting happened after Sinner confronted the teens because he believed they had previously stolen Trump campaign signs. When officers responded to the shooting, they found Robert Sinner and Justin Sinner, 34, armed with guns. A few blocks away, a silver Acura was found wrecked and abandoned.

From wire reports

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# Golfers adjust to Masters without fans

Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Take away a few white scoreboards in their usual places behind the greens, and the green television stands behind the 12th tee and a few other strategic locations, and this is what Augusta National looks like in November.

It looks bigger because hardly anyone is there.

The grandstands are gone. The ropes are missing, replaced by painted lines — dark green, of course — around the tee boxes and greens and marking spots along the fairway to show the few people allowed at the Masters where they can stand.

Instead of Augusta National members and their guests, the course was filled Monday with Tiger Woods and Justin Thomas, Bubba Watson and Jordan Spieth, all of them playing a practice round on a course that only looked the same.

“We’re used to coming here on Monday already and seeing lots of people,” Francesco Molinari said. “So it looks different already. I don’t know. We’ll have to see how everyone adapts to the differing conditions. It’s hard not to have the

fans around, but it’s amazing to have the opportunity to be back here for us as players.”

It was a lost opportunity for Sergio Garcia and Joaquin Niemann, both of whom tested positive for the coronavirus and had to withdraw, another reminder why the Masters moved to a November date in the first place.

The COVID-19 pandemic that shut down golf for three months forced a reconfigured major championship schedule unlike any other, particularly at the Masters. The annual rite of spring is now a strange passage into autumn.

The 1,600 azalea bushes on the 13th hole have no blooms. Neither do the pink dogwoods down the right side of the second fairway. It’s not without color, of course. The Firethorn berries on the 15th were bursting with color, as they are prone to do in late summer and early fall.

Under those towering Georgia pines is a mixture of pine straw and fallen leaves.

Mostly, however, it’s the lack of patrons that makes it look — and sound — so different.

“There’s no doubt the miss-

ing gallery is going to be the biggest difference,” Adam Scott said. “The things that will be the same is it still means the same to us all, and maybe even more so because we return to Augusta National every year. Everything that the club does to make this a special event for everybody who gets to watch it — whether that’s on TV, the patrons who come to the grounds or the players — it’s an incredible experience.

“So we’ll be missing one element. But it’s a huge element to the experience of playing the Masters.”

Late in the afternoon, three women were strolling along toward the edge of Amen Corner with a drink called “Azalea” and not a care in the world. Their husbands were in the field, but they weren’t sure if they were playing at the moment. It was a nice day. It was easy to get around. It was peaceful.

This is the Augusta National hardly anyone gets to see.

And it won’t change much over the next six days, except for the forecast. Rain was expected at least for the next two practice rounds, and possibly throughout the week.

The course already is softer than it usually is in April because the rye grass planted over the dead Bermuda has only had a month or so to take root. It’s still pristine, and it will look that way on TV. Even so, the weather has been so warm that splotches of Bermuda grass are evident on the slopes and collection areas off the greens.

That will have a small effect on chipping.

“I’m anxious to see over the next couple of days how tight some of the run-off areas get because the grass has been a little thicker and longer than we see in April,” Spieth said.

He played the front nine on Monday, and when he finished his round with former champion Zach Johnson and newcomer J.T. Poston, he noticed a huge difference in how the ball responds if it comes up short.

“Sometimes it rolls back 20, 25 yards short of the green,” Spieth said. “Right now, it’s only going to go 5 or 10, making the next shot a bit easier. It will be interesting to see how that changes because that changed a lot from this weekend to today.”

## DeChambeau’s drives the talk of Augusta National

Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Ga. — The scene was straight out of the World Long Drive Championship spectacle. Bryson DeChambeau would consider that a compliment.

He took a slow practice swing, then the next one at full force. Eyes focused, deep breath, chest fully expanded, exhale. Another violent practice swing. And another. Just then, a leaf blew in front of his ball. He stooped over to flick it away, and started the routine over until he was ready to smash his tee shot at the TPC Summerlin in Las Vegas.

Wait.

DeChambeau walked over to his bag, removed a wrench

and tightened the screws on the bottom of his driver.

Joaquin Niemann couldn’t suppress a smile as he watched this unfold. It was worth the wait. The golf ball came off the club at 198 mph. It hit a small tree right of the fairway, dropping straight down and robbing DeChambeau of what he figured would have been a 400-yard drive.

“I killed it,” he said.

Moments like these are why DeChambeau is the talk of golf going into the Masters.

It has been this way since golf returned in June from the COVID-19 pandemic and DeChambeau showed up with his incredible bulk, more than 40 pounds of muscle and mass, all to support a swing that is pro-

ducing prodigious shots. He has driven into groups on the green on a par 4. He powered (and putted) his way to the lowest score ever at Winged Foot to win the U.S. Open by six shots.

And he says he is just getting started.

“He went to the nth degree of everything we have available to us — science, TrackMan, biomechanics, everything,” Rory McIlroy said. “Now that we have all that, Bryson is the personality that goes down that rabbit hole more than anyone else. I think that’s credit to him. He’s worked his (tail) off and it’s paying off hugely.”

“He’s definitely the most talked about man in golf right now.”

Next stop: Augusta National,

where DeChambeau hopes to unveil a 48-inch driver, the legal limit typically seen only in long drive competitions.

That’s where this latest experiment all began. It was a year ago in September when DeChambeau watched Kyle Berkshire win the World Long Drive Championship with his final blast that carried 400 yards.

“The real light-bulb moment,” DeChambeau said. “I said, ‘If I could do that and hit it straight, what would happen?’ ‘That was the question that inspired me to go down this road.’”

Berkshire said he has never met DeChambeau in person, only over the phone to share ideas.

# NBA will start schedule on Dec. 22

Associated Press

It's official: The NBA is coming back Dec. 22.

The NBA and the National Basketball Players Association announced Monday night that they've struck a deal on rules for this coming season, setting the stage for what will be a frenzied few weeks before games resume.

Teams will play a 72-game schedule, which will be revealed in the coming weeks. The league said a new system will be used to ensure that the split of basketball-related income continues, one of the many details that had to be collectively bargained with the union because the current agreement between the sides had a great deal of language that needed reworking because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Negotiations with free agents will be allowed to begin at 6 p.m. on Nov. 20, with signings permitted starting at 12:01 p.m. on Nov. 22 — an extraordinarily fast window for the NBA, which typically has about a week spanning the start of talks and the beginning of signings. But with training camps this year beginning Dec. 1, both sides evidently feel there isn't a need to draw out the process any longer than necessary.

Many rosters could be considerably reshaped by then, with trades likely to be permissible again in the coming days — the exact details there still being worked out — and the NBA draft set to take place Nov. 18. Player and team options likely will be settled around that same time. Free agency

starts two days after the draft, with around 100 players set for unrestricted status.

The salary cap and tax level will remain unchanged. The cap was \$109.14 million this past season, with the tax level at \$132,627,000. The real numbers will be affected by the shortened schedule — last year's numbers were based on the standard 82-game season, a threshold that won't be reached this year.

The salary cap for 2021-22 is guaranteed to rise somewhere between 3% and 10%, the league said, which means it'll be somewhere between \$112.4 million and \$120.1 million.

The league's board of governors will vote to finalize the deal, which is a formality. NBA general managers also have a meeting Tuesday afternoon to discuss matters.

Meyers Leonard, a free-agent-to-be who spent this past season with the Miami Heat and served as the team's player rep to the NBPA, said he had some concerns about getting all the logistical matters completed in time for a Dec. 22 opening night. He resumed his offseason workouts Monday after he and his wife took a 4,000-mile tour-bus trip arranged by Coors Light from Miami to Los Angeles with many stops along the way.

"Without knowing all the ins and outs, Dec. 22nd, from a money standpoint, you play more games, you play your Christmas games, it probably makes sense," Leonard said. "But there's a lot of logistical things that I know cannot be easy. And the discussions that are being had are very dynamic

and very difficult conversations."

There are countless other issues to work out, such as all the health and safety protocols now that games won't be played in the safety of a bubble and teams will be traveling to various cities once again.

Players were tested daily in the bubble, and nobody tested positive because of the very strict protocols. It'll be much tougher to avoid a COVID-related issue with the league back to some sort of normalcy this season.

"There's going to be people testing positive," Leonard said. "I don't know about left and right, but it's going to happen. And then what happens? It's a tough time we're all dealing with. The disease is very strange. It's going to be interesting to see how the league rolls with the punches, so to speak."

For the NBA champion Los Angeles Lakers and Eastern Conference champion Heat, it will be the shortest offseason in NBA history — with seven weeks separating the end of the NBA Finals and the planned Dec. 1 start of training camp.

But for the eight teams that didn't make the restart bubble at Walt Disney World in Lake Buena Vista, Fla., this summer, it has been a marathon offseason, with none of those teams — Atlanta, Chicago, Cleveland, Charlotte, Golden State, Minnesota, New York and Detroit — having played since the second week of March. The NBA shut down because of the coronavirus pandemic on March 11, then took 22 of its 30 teams to Disney to resume the season in July.

## Top rookies: Lewis earns AL honor, Williams takes NL

Associated Press

Much like one of his lofty leaps at the wall, Kyle Lewis soared above the field.

The center fielder for the Seattle Mariners won the AL Rookie of the Year award Monday night, and Milwaukee Brewers reliever Devin Williams took home the NL honor.

The 25-year-old Lewis received all 30 first-place votes in balloting by the Baseball Writers' Association of America. He is the 12th unanimous winner of the AL award, joining a prestigious list that includes Carlton Fisk, Derek Jeter, Mike Trout and Aaron Judge.

"It's just a great first step for me and being in that category,

it's just really special," Lewis said.

Williams made his own history, becoming the first pitcher to win Rookie of the Year without recording a save or making a start during his award-winning season — reflecting the increased importance of the bullpen in today's game. He is the first Rookie of the Year for Milwaukee since Ryan Braun in 2007.

"I don't really think that saves are the end-all be-all," Williams said on a conference call during a vacation in Jamaica. "If I come up in the seventh inning and I go through one through five, I think that that can be pretty valuable as well."

The 25-year-old Lewis was

one of baseball's breakout stars during the pandemic-shortened season, batting .262 with 11 homers and 28 RBIs in 58 games. He led big league rookies with 37 runs, 90 total bases and a .364 on-base percentage.

Lewis also made a couple of memorable plays in center, robbing Oakland's Ramon Laureano of a grand slam on Sept. 14.

San Diego Padres second baseman Jake Cronenworth and Philadelphia Phillies infielder Alec Bohm tied for second in NL balloting by the Baseball Writers' Association of America. Chicago White Sox center fielder Luis Robert finished second in the AL race, followed by Houston Astros

right-hander Cristian Javier.

Lewis and Robert had similar seasons, with fast starts followed by slow finishes. Lewis batted just .147 in September, and Robert hit .136 with 32 strikeouts in 23 games in the final month. Lewis was selected by Seattle with the No. 11 overall pick in the 2016 amateur draft out of Mercer University. He broke into the majors last year, appearing in 18 September games with the Mariners.

The Georgia native is the beginning of what could be a formidable young outfield in Seattle. Jarred Kelenic, who was acquired in a trade with the New York Mets, and Julio Rodriguez are ranked among baseball's top prospects.

# Patriots storm back to down Jets

Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Cam Newton and the New England Patriots appeared headed to a fifth straight loss — this one against the winless New York Jets, of all teams.

Then came the fourth quarter, and potential embarrassment turned into big-time relief.

Nick Folk kicked a 51-yard field goal as time expired to win it 30-27 on Monday night after Newton rallied the Patriots from a 10-point deficit to avoid the franchise's first five-game skid since 1995.

"It shows the character of this team," said Rex Burkhead, who had a 1-yard touchdown run in the third quarter. "Just battling, fighting. It shows the strength we have. We're not going to quit. We're not going to lay down."

Newton had two touchdown runs, with the second tying it at 27 with 1:57 remaining. He also brushed off his struggles of the past few weeks, including a fumble against Buffalo last week that sealed a loss.

"I'm getting tired of sucking," said Newton, who was 27-for-35 for 274 yards passing. "It's simple. As a competitor, you know what your standard is. Taking pride in your work, that's what it comes down to."

After the Jets (0-9) went three-and-out for the first time all night, New England (3-5) got the ball back with 47 seconds left and went to work.

Newton had a 5-yard run on third-and-1 from the Patriots 42 and then spiked the ball with 8 seconds remaining. He followed with a 20-yard pass to Jakobi Meyers to put Folk — who made several big kicks for the Jets from 2010-16 — in position for the winning field goal.

"I had a lot of good memories here at MetLife (Stadium)," said Folk, who had been dealing with a back injury. "I just added one to the other sideline tonight."

Meanwhile, New York dropped to 0-9 for the first time in franchise history, and this was one that was particularly agonizing.

"It's a tough pill to swallow," said wide receiver Jamison

Crowder, whose 20-yard TD catch shortly before halftime gave the Jets a 20-10 lead. "That was a tough loss right there. That was a game we should've won."

After Folk's 29-yarder with 6:04 left cut New England's deficit to 27-20, quarterback Joe Flacco — having a solid night until that point while starting for an injured Sam Darnold — tried to put the game away.

Instead, he swayed the momentum in the Patriots' favor.

Flacco's deep pass down the middle for Denzel Mims was picked off by J.C. Jackson. That set up Newton's tying TD — and deflated the Jets.

"I don't think I would've made a different decision in the moment," Flacco said. "But, obviously, I'd like to have that one back."

Flacco was 18-for-25 for 262 yards and three touchdown passes — two to Breshad Perriman and one to Crowder — but had the game-changing interception.

With New England down by 10, Newton marched them down the field to open the sec-

ond half, capping a 14-play drive with Burkhead's 1-yard plunge into the end zone to make it 20-17.

But New York answered, with Flacco finding a wide-open Perriman in the end zone for a 15-yard touchdown and a 27-17 lead with 30 seconds left in the third quarter. A miscue by the Jets on special teams kept the Patriots' next drive alive.

After Newton stumbled on third-and-1 and was stopped for a 4-yard loss, New England appeared to have to settle for a 32-yard field goal. But New York was called for 12 men on the field — resulting in a first down for the Patriots. The defense made up for the mistake, getting a red-zone stop — with an assist from a holding penalty on New England right tackle Mike Onwenu — and holding the Patriots to a field goal to make it 27-20 with 6:04 left.

But New England got the ball right back when Flacco was picked off by Jackson, who has interceptions in four straight games.

## Browns get RB Chubb back, wait on Mayfield

Associated Press

BEREA, Ohio — There was a buzz on the practice field Monday as the Browns returned from their bye with several starters, including star running back Nick Chubb, returning from injuries.

However, there was a noticeable absence: the quarterback.

Baker Mayfield remains away from the team after being placed on the COVID-19 list because he came in close contact with a staff member who tested positive for the coronavirus. Mayfield has tested negative to this point and he could return Wednesday as the Browns (5-3) get ready to host the Houston Texans (2-6) on Sunday.

"I can't really get into it," coach Kevin Stefanski said of Mayfield's status. "We are just following all the protocols. In this day and age, all of our guys are doing their absolute best. Nothing is foolproof, but we will make sure that we just follow all of the rules."

Stefanski said Mayfield participated virtually in team meetings. It's impossible to predict whether he'll practice, let alone play, this week.

"Anytime you are not out there, you wish you had all of your guys out there to get the reps, that is just natural," Stefanski said. "But we will make sure we bring him up to speed as soon as he is back in the building."

Mayfield's tenuous situation underscores the importance of players adhering to protocols inside and outside the team's facility. Stefanski doesn't think there was anything more the team could have done to protect Mayfield.

"We try to be very careful and try to make sure at every moment we are reminding the guys," he said. "At some points, there are going to be some unfortunate moments, but I can promise you all of our guys are being diligent about this."

"No one, I can promise you, is flippant in any way about the rules, protocols, etc.

All of us have to make sure that we stay on top of it."

Chubb's return was the most noteworthy, but the Browns are closer to full strength than they've been in some time with right guard Wyatt Teller (calf) and tight end Austin Hooper (appendectomy) also practicing with the starting offense for the first time in weeks.

"It is awesome having Wyatt Teller back and just the juice he brings and the physicality and the nastiness," Hooper said of his teammate. "Definitely a guy that is a lot of fun to play with on game day when he is burying people."

Wearing a knee brace, Chubb changed directions quickly while doing individual drills during the portion of practice open to media members. He's been out since spraining his right medical collateral ligament in the first quarter of Cleveland's Oct. 4 win at Dallas. As long as he doesn't have any setbacks, Chubb could return to the lineup this week.