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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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2nd COVID-19 vaccine shows success in tests

Associated Press

Moderna said Monday its COVID-19 vaccine is proving to be highly effective in a major trial, a second dash of hope in the global race for a shot to tame a resurgent virus that is killing more than 8,000 people a day worldwide.

The company said its vaccine appears to be 94.5% effective, according to preliminary data from Moderna's ongoing study. A week ago, competitor Pfizer Inc. announced its own COVID-19 vaccine appeared similarly effective — news that puts both companies on track to seek permission within weeks for emergency use in the U.S.

The results are “truly striking,” said Dr. Anthony Fauci, the U.S. government's top infectious diseases expert. Earlier this year, Fauci said he would be happy with a COVID-19 vaccine that was 60% effective.

A vaccine can't come fast

enough, as virus cases topped 11 million in the U.S. over the weekend — 1 million of them recorded in just the past week — and governors and mayors are ratcheting up restrictions ahead of Thanksgiving. The pandemic has killed more than 1.3 million people worldwide, over 245,000 of them in the U.S.

Dr. Stephen Hoge, Moderna's president, welcomed the “really important milestone” but said having similar results from two different companies is what's most reassuring.

“That should give us all hope that actually a vaccine is going to be able to stop this pandemic and hopefully get us back to our lives,” Hoge told The Associated Press. He added: “It won't be Moderna alone that solves this problem. It's going to require many vaccines” to meet the global demand.

The National Institutes of Health helped create the vaccine Moderna is manufacturing,

and NIH's director, Dr. Francis Collins, said the exciting news from two companies “gives us a lot of confidence that we're on the path towards having effective vaccines.”

But “we're also at this really dark time,” he warned, saying people can't let down their guard during the months it will take for doses of any vaccines cleared by the Food and Drug Administration to start reaching a large share of the population.

If the FDA allows emergency use of Moderna's or Pfizer's candidate, there will be limited, rationed supplies before the end of the year. Both vaccines require people to get two shots, several weeks apart. U.S. officials said they hope to have about 20 million Moderna doses and another 20 million doses of the vaccine made by Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech to use in late December.

Exactly who is first in line is yet to be decided. But Health

and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said the hope is that enough doses are available by the end of January to vaccinate adults over 65, who are at the highest risk from the coronavirus, and health care workers. Fauci said it may take until spring or summer for enough for anyone who is not high risk and wants a shot to get one.

Another important message: Additional vaccines that work in different ways are still in testing — and despite the promising news about Moderna's and Pfizer's shots, more volunteers are needed for those studies.

Moderna's vaccine is being studied in 30,000 volunteers who received either the real thing or a dummy shot. On Sunday, an independent monitoring board examined 95 infections that were recorded after volunteers' second dose, and they discovered all but five illnesses occurred in participants who got the placebo.

Navy nonprofit backs ecstasy study to combat PTSD

BY CHAD GARLAND

Stars and Stripes

A nonprofit that supports Navy special operations troops and their families has pledged \$50,000 to back research into the use of the main component of the drug ecstasy to help treat post-traumatic stress disorder.

The grant made by the Navy SEAL Foundation to the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies is expected to assist with large-scale trials of the psychoactive drug MDMA, also known as Molly, coupled with psychotherapy. It was made in partnership with author, entrepreneur and podcaster Tim Ferriss, who has already contributed around \$1 million to MAPS, the foundation said in a statement on Vet-

erans Day.

“It should come as no surprise that a foundation that exists to support Navy SEALs, some of the most high-performing individuals on the planet, would become the first military-serving nonprofit to step up and fund critical research into MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD,” Ferriss said in the statement.

Proponents of the MAPS research believe it could revolutionize treatment of the disorder, which affects an estimated 8 million people in the U.S. each year. More than 2,500 donors have given \$30 million to fund it.

The Food and Drug Administration granted breakthrough therapy status to MDMA-assisted psychotherapy in 2017,

but the compound remains a Schedule 1 drug alongside LSD, heroin and marijuana, which the government says have no “accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse.”

The privately funded MAPS hopes to change that and is in the midst of Phase 3 trials at 15 sites in the U.S., Canada and Israel, which is the final clinical research step before the FDA decides whether to approve MDMA for prescription as a PTSD treatment.

“This pioneering work has shown great promise and has now made its way into the mainstream,” said Robin King, the foundation's CEO. “We're leaning in to help [Naval Special Warfare] and other veterans overcome the debilitating effects of PTSD.”

The protocol uses a pure form of the drug, not the street version, along with outpatient psychotherapy sessions and a residential stay.

The foundation's support for the research was spurred by SEALs who have “found relief from PTSD” through such treatment outside the U.S., MAPS founder and executive director Rick Doblin said.

The drug appears to increase feelings of trust, help patients access traumatic memories and reduce the fear response to those memories. But it may only be necessary for those who don't find relief through more traditional methods, Louise Morgan, a lead researcher at the Centre for Veterans' Health in London, wrote in an article this spring.

Oldest operational warship in Navy turns 50

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The Navy's oldest operational warship turned another year older on Saturday, marking a half-century of service on the seas.

The 7th Fleet flagship USS Blue Ridge over the weekend commemorated the 50th anniversary of its commissioning on Nov. 14, 1970, according to a Navy statement on Saturday. The command ship has been stationed in Yokosuka since 1979.

"There is no better ship to support us as our flagship," 7th Fleet commander Vice Adm. Bill Merz said in the statement.

"Year after year, she has enabled operations of the largest forward fleet, while at the same time participating in enduring joint service and multi-national exercises and supporting disaster relief operations."

Merz added: "Everyone knows Blue Ridge; she has a rich history here in the region."

Commissioned at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard, the ship was the first of the Navy's two Blue Ridge-class amphibious command ships, which also includes the 6th Fleet's USS Mount Whitney, according to the Navy. At about 19,000 tons, it can accommodate about 1,200 enlisted and 250 officers.

The Blue Ridge is likely to keep its oldest-operational

ship title for at least another 18 years. Its service life was extended an additional two decades after completing a 23-month maintenance period in May 2018.

The 223-year-old frigate USS Constitution is the Navy's oldest commissioned warship, but its mission is education and outreach in Boston Harbor.

Command ships are used as central planning vessels for fleet leaders. During times of peace, they are often used for both diplomatic engagements and humanitarian efforts.

Before the coronavirus pandemic, the Blue Ridge made frequent port visits, bringing 7th Fleet leadership to regional nations to send messages of

support to allies and partners. In 2019, it visited 11 ports in nine Indo-Pacific countries during a four-month patrol.

In January, the Blue Ridge stopped in Japan, South Korea and Thailand before the Navy halted port visits in response to the coronavirus's spread.

The ship later broke its personal days-at-sea record with 70 days in a row without a port visit before returning from deployment in June. Its prior at-sea record of 64 days was set in 1972 during the Vietnam War.

The Blue Ridge also takes part "in numerous annual U.S. and allied training exercises, routine patrols and special operations," according to the statement.

USPS online customs form is unpopular on overseas bases

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN
AND NANCY MONTGOMERY
Stars and Stripes

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany — Online postal customs forms that were trumpeted as an innovation that would slash the time customers spend in line at the post office have instead proven to be a headache for customers and postal workers at U.S. military bases overseas.

Many customers have struggled to complete the new, glitch-filled electronic forms, and military postal clerks are having to input data on the forms manually at the post office, leading to longer wait times for customers and longer working hours for the clerks.

The problem, said military postal workers in Germany and Italy, is with the U.S. Postal Service website where customers have attempted to fill out the new customs declaration form.

"It's not user-friendly at all," said Senior Airman Ronnie Crawford, a postal clerk at

the Northside Post Office on Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

Forms have been kicked back if "road" or "street" are abbreviated, Crawford said.

Some customers who try to pay online have had their transactions blocked "because it flags that they're overseas," he said.

Sometimes, the system doesn't recognize a U.S. postal address, said Master Sgt. D'Andre Broderick, the Northside post office postmaster.

And "it doesn't like math," Crawford said. When customers fill in how many items are in a parcel and what the total weight of all those items is, the system "multiplies the quantity by the total weight," he explained.

The problems have not only frustrated customers, but have also strained overseas military post offices already dealing with changes and delays caused by the coronavirus, increased volume for postal voting and now the beginning of holiday mail traffic.

Trial for extremist foiled by Americans on train begins

Associated Press

PARIS — Head lowered, an Islamic State operative listened silently as a Paris judge Monday detailed his alleged plot to unleash mass slaughter on a high-speed train before he was tackled and subdued by American vacationers.

Opening a monthlong trial for Ayoub El Khazzani, the judge said the 31-year-old Moroccan with ties to a notorious terror mastermind intended to "kill all the passengers" aboard the Amsterdam to Paris train on Aug. 21, 2015, but "lost control of events."

One of the Americans who tackled the bare-chested gunman, who was laden with an arsenal of weapons and shot another passenger, told investigators that he seemed high on drugs and "completely crazy," the judge said.

"This terror attack could have killed up to 300 people based on the number of ammunition that was found on the terrorist and in his bag," said attorney Thibault de Montbrial, who is representing the

two U.S. servicemen and their friend.

El Khazzani boarded the train in Brussels armed with a Kalashnikov, nine clips with 30 rounds each, an automatic pistol and a cutter, according to investigators.

He is charged with attempted terrorist murder. If convicted, he faces a maximum sentence of life in prison.

His lawyer, Sarah Mauger-Poliak, said El Khazzani "regrets having allowed himself to become indoctrinated" by extremist propaganda and wants "to demonstrate his remorse."

Bilal Chatra, 24, an Algerian member of Islamic State, would have been the second man on the train but dropped out of the plot a week earlier. He left Syria for Europe a week before to set up the exit route.

Mohamed Bakkali allegedly sheltered the attackers in Budapest, Hungary, which he denies. The two were arrested in Germany in 2016. A third man, Redouane El Amrani Ezzerrifi, allegedly piloted a boat to help in their return to Europe.

States renew efforts to fight increase in coronavirus cases

Associated Press

Michigan and Washington on Sunday joined several other states in announcing renewed efforts to combat the coronavirus as more than 11 million cases of COVID-19 have now been reported in the United States — with the most recent million coming in less than a week — and as many Americans prepare to observe a Thanksgiving holiday marked by the pandemic.

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's administration ordered high schools and colleges to stop in-person classes, closed restaurants to indoor dining and suspended organized sports — including the football playoffs — in an attempt to curb the state's spiking case numbers. The order also restricts indoor and outdoor residential gatherings, closes some entertainment facilities and bans gyms from hosting group exercise classes.

Whitmer said Monday she has the authority to issue a second stay-at-home order to curb the spiking coronavirus if necessary and called a comment by an adviser to President Donald Trump urging people to “rise up” against Michigan's latest restrictions “incredibly reckless.”

The Democratic governor spoke with Capitol reporters a day after announcing limits amid a surge of COVID-19 cases that has led to increased hospitalizations and deaths. Other Midwest states are facing similar second waves as the weather cools, and she has urged the public to “double down” with precautions to avoid a shelter-in-place order like what was instituted in the spring.

Under the new restrictions that start Wednesday, Michigan high schools and colleges must halt in-person classes, restaurants must stop indoor dining

and entertainment businesses must close for three weeks. Gathering sizes also will be tightened.

The directives from Michigan came on the same day that Washington Gov. Jay Inslee announced the state would enforce new restrictions on businesses and social gatherings for the next month as it, too, continued to combat a rising number of cases.

Starting Tuesday, gyms and some entertainment centers in Washington will be required to close their indoor services. Retail stores, including grocery stores, will be ordered to limit indoor capacity and multiple-household, indoor social gatherings will be prohibited unless attendees have quarantined for 14 days or tested negative for COVID-19 and quarantined for a week. By Wednesday, restaurants and bars will again be limited to outdoor dining and to-go service.

Alabama city to hold Mardi Gras celebration

Associated Press

MOBILE, Ala. — The city of Mobile is moving ahead with plans to hold Mardi Gras celebrations in early 2021 despite the coronavirus pandemic, which is quickly worsening.

Some groups already have called off parades and events over concerns about spreading the virus, but news outlets report that Mayor Sandy Stimpson's office has released a memo saying Mardi Gras isn't being canceled in the port city.

Instead, the city is getting ready to issue permits for parades that will wind through downtown streets. Stimpson's memo, which was released publicly by a City Council member on social media, said the number of people riding on floats will be limited, and participants will need to wear face masks. “This is a fluid situation, and we're in uncharted waters,” said the note, which also said that organizations which rent city facilities for Mardi Gras balls will be able to cancel events as late as one week beforehand without a penalty.

Fat Tuesday is Feb. 16, and celebrations typically begin weeks before that. Mobile's Mardi Gras celebration, while far smaller than the one held in New Orleans, is vital to the tourist economy around Mobile, where tens of thousands of people visit during a usual Mardi Gras.

New Orleans hasn't said whether parades will be permitted, but some groups already have called off festivities because of the pandemic. Mayor LaToya Cantrell has said Mardi Gras will be celebrated, but differently than in a usual year.

Mobile County has recorded the second-highest number of cases of COVID-19 in the state since the pandemic began.

Alabama on Friday added almost 3,000 COVID-19 cases.

65 cases in WHO Geneva staff found

Associated Press

GENEVA — The World Health Organization has recorded 65 cases of the coronavirus among staff based at its headquarters, including at least one cluster of infections, an internal email obtained by The Associated Press shows, despite the agency's past assertions that there has been no transmission at the Geneva site.

The revelation comes amid a surge of cases in Europe, host country Switzerland, and the city of Geneva, in particular, and the email said about half of the infections were in people who had been working from home. But 32 were in staff who had been working on premises at the headquarters building, indicating that the health agency's strict hygiene, screening

and other prevention measures were not sufficient to spare it from the pandemic.

Farah Dakhllallah, a WHO spokeswoman, confirmed the accuracy of the information about the case count in an email to the AP and said that officials were still investigating.

“We have not yet established whether transmission occurred on campus, but are looking into the matter,” Dakhllallah said.

Raul Thomas, who heads business operations at WHO, emailed staff on Friday noting that five people — four on the same team and one who had contact with them — had tested positive for COVID-19. While the email did not use the term “cluster,” one is generally defined as two or more cases in the same area, and the five cases indicate basic infection control and social distancing

procedures were likely being broken.

A previous email he sent on Oct. 16 indicated that no clusters had been found at the site.

“As per standard protocols, these colleagues are receiving the necessary medical attention and are recovering at home,” the email Friday said. “These last five cases bring the total reported number of affected members of the Geneva based workforce to 65 since the beginning of the pandemic.”

The email did not specify who was infected, but a WHO staffer with direct knowledge of the situation who spoke on condition of anonymity because she was not authorized to speak to the press said the cluster included a member of the WHO director-general's leadership team who is also an infection control specialist.

SpaceX launches 2nd crew aircraft to ISS

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — SpaceX launched four astronauts to the International Space Station on Sunday on the first full-fledged taxi flight for NASA by a private company.

The Falcon rocket thundered into the night from Kennedy Space Center with three Americans and one Japanese, the second crew to be launched by SpaceX. The Dragon capsule on top — named Resilience by its crew in light of this year's many challenges, most notably COVID-19 — reached orbit nine minutes later. It is due to reach the space station late Monday and remain there until spring.

“By working together

through these difficult times, you've inspired the nation, the world, and in no small part the name of this incredible vehicle, Resilience,” Commander Mike Hopkins said right before liftoff.

Once reaching orbit, he radioed: “That was one heck of a ride.”

Sidelined by the coronavirus himself, SpaceX founder and chief executive Elon Musk was forced to monitor the action from afar. He tweeted that he “most likely” had a moderate case of COVID-19. NASA policy at Kennedy Space Center requires anyone testing positive for coronavirus to quarantine and remain isolated.

Sunday's launch follows by just a few months SpaceX's

two-pilot test flight. It kicks off what NASA hopes will be a long series of crew rotations between the U.S. and the space station, after years of delay. More people means more science research at the orbiting lab, according to officials.

Cheers and applause erupted at SpaceX Mission Control in Hawthorne, Calif., after the capsule reached orbit and the first-stage booster landed on a floating platform in the Atlantic.

The flight to the space station — 27½ hours door to door — should be entirely automated, although the crew can take control if needed. SpaceX had to deal with pressure pump spikes once the capsule reached orbit, but quickly resolved the issue.

With COVID-19 still surging, NASA continued the safety precautions put in place for SpaceX's crew launch in May. The astronauts went into quarantine with their families in October. All launch personnel wore masks, and the number of guests at Kennedy was limited. Even the two astronauts on the first SpaceX crew flight stayed behind at Johnson Space Center in Houston.

Vice President Mike Pence, chairman of the National Space Council, joined NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine to watch the launch.

“I didn't start breathing until about a minute after it took off,” Pence said during a stop at SpaceX Launch Control to congratulate the workers.

Trump campaign retreats from key claim in Pa. suit

Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. — President Donald Trump's campaign is withdrawing a central request in its lawsuit seeking to stop the certification of the election results in Pennsylvania, where Democrat Joe Biden beat Trump to capture the state and help win the White House.

Ahead of a Tuesday hearing in the case, Trump's campaign dropped its request in the lawsuit that hundreds of thousands of mail-in and absentee ballots — 682,479, to be precise — be thrown out because they were processed without its representatives able to watch. The campaign's revised lawsuit, filed in federal court on Sunday, maintains the aim of blocking Pennsylvania from certifying a victory for Biden in the state, and it maintains its claim that Democratic voters were treated more favorably than Republican voters. The campaign still contends in the lawsuit that hundreds of thousands of ballots weren't properly processed.

“Our lawsuit in Pennsylvania absolutely still makes an issue

of the 682,479 mail-in and absentee ballots that were counted in secret,” Trump campaign spokesman Tim Murtaugh tweeted.

The campaign said in a statement Monday that it “strategically decided to restructure its lawsuit to rely on claims of violations of the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.”

The Trump campaign isn't making that claim on the hundreds of thousands of mail-in and absentee ballots, however. Instead, in the revised suit, it targets the practice of giving voters an opportunity to fix mail-in ballots that were going to be disqualified for a technicality. It contends some Democratic-run counties allowed voters to do that, while Republican counties did not, arguing Democratic voters were treated more favorably than Republican voters.

The Associated Press on Nov. 7 called the presidential contest for Biden after determining that the remaining ballots left to be counted in Pennsylvania would not allow Trump to catch up.

Lawyers: Ga. recount yields few changes in vote totals

Bloomberg News

Georgia's hand audit of ballots cast in the presidential election is proceeding rapidly with little change in the results so far, according to lawyers working for President-elect Joe Biden's campaign.

Some 48 of the state's 159 counties have finished their examination of the ballots with either no change or minor shifts — differences of fewer than five votes in some instances, they said. Four counties that have finished their tallies reported having no changes.

Biden won the first count by over 14,000 votes. Election officials on Saturday started auditing almost 5 million ballots.

“More Georgians voted for President-elect Biden than voted for President Trump,” said Marc Elias, a prominent Democratic lawyer who's aiding the campaign. “There is nothing that the recount's going to do to change that.”

Because of the closeness of the result, less than 0.3 percentage points, Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, a Republican, ordered a state-wide, hand recount of ballots.

The process is due to be completed by Nov. 20 though a superior court judge could move the deadline if needed.

The Trump campaign has said it's found widespread voting irregularities but has cited little evidence to substantiate its claims. Trump and his allies have also launched lawsuits in the state. One, alleging fewer than 60 absentee ballots in Chatham County were improperly counted, has already been dismissed, while two others are pending.

The president tweeted on Sunday that Georgia's “recount is a scam, means nothing.” The post was flagged as “disputed” by Twitter.

Biden's lawyers were confident the various Trump suits wouldn't succeed. “The Trump campaign's claims about the elections do not survive first contact with the facts on the ground,” said Patrick Moore, deputy general counsel for the campaign, said Sunday.

The lawyers praised Georgia's voting system, and credited it with the very small number of inaccurately counted votes.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Jury deadlocks in case of ex-girlfriend's death

AZ PRESCOTT — A jury decided it could not reach a verdict in the case of an Arizona man charged in the 1997 shooting and killing of his ex-girlfriend.

The jury in the case of Cecilio Cruz deadlocked after 10 hours of deliberation, said Yavapai Superior Court Deputy Administrator Julie Malinowski. Prosecutors have 60 days to retry the case.

Cruz, 40, was charged in the 1997 killing of Marisol Gonzalez, who was shot in the head when the two were 17 years old, the Verde Independent reported. Cruz was charged with second-degree murder in the death of Gonzalez, and manslaughter in the death of her baby, Andrew, who she was scheduled to deliver the next day.

Cruz's defense attorney said the lack of a murder weapon found was an important facet of the case.

Hiker's heart stops after rescue, then recovers

WA SEATTLE — A hiker who was rescued after being lost overnight in a whiteout in Mount Rainier National Park was brought back to life after what his medical team is calling an amazing recovery.

The Seattle Times reported that Michael Knapinski, 45, of Woodinville, died in the emergency room at Harborview Medical Center after being airlifted off the mountain.

He had a pulse when he arrived at the hospital but soon his heart stopped, said Dr. Jenelle Badulak, one of the first people to start treating him.

The medical team repeatedly performed CPR and hooked him up to an extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) machine, which

pumped blood out of his body into a heart-lung machine that removes carbon dioxide, and then back into the body.

His heart remained stopped for 45 minutes. After the doctors restarted it, the medical team spent the night beside him to make sure he continued to stabilize. Two days later, Knapinski woke up. Trauma nurse Whitney Holen was there and said the first thing he wanted was to call his family.

Body found inside clothing donation bin

MD RIVERDALE PARK — Law enforcement authorities said a body was found inside a clothing donation bin in a District of Columbia suburb in Maryland.

Police in Riverdale Park said they received a report about a foul odor coming from the outdoor donation bin near an intersection, news outlets reported. Responding officers found the body inside the white bin.

Police said the death investigation will be handled by the homicide unit of the Prince George's County Police Department.

Popular wolfdog, Yuki, dies at 13 years old

FL NAPLES — Yuki, a 13-year-old wolfdog who became an internet sensation because of his resemblance to a canine creature on the TV show "Game of Thrones," has died, according to a Southwest Florida animal sanctuary.

Shy Wolf Sanctuary Education and Experience Center in Collier County tweeted that Yuki passed away from blood cancer.

"We have some very sad news to share about our beloved wolfdog, Yuki. He was loved by millions all over the world," the facility tweeted.

The Naples Daily News reported that the 13-year-old dog did not show for his medicine during morning rounds. When workers entered his enclosure, they discovered him dead. He was diagnosed three years ago with hemangiosarcoma, a blood cancer.

Police: 9-year-old girl hurt in rolling gunbattle

MO INDEPENDENCE — A 9-year-old girl was shot and wounded during a rolling gunbattle between two vehicles in Independence, police said.

The Independence Police Department said in a Facebook post that officers responded to numerous calls of shots fired.

The wounded girl and her mother were dropped off by the driver of one of the involved vehicles at a Walmart in Kansas City, just south of the area where gunshots had been reported, the Kansas City Star reported. The injured girl is believed to have been in one of the involved vehicles when she was shot, police said.

Officials raise alarms amid 'frenzy' of poaching

OR EUGENE — Oregon police are seeking help in tracking down the people behind "a frenzy" of poaching cases, including one in which a black bear was found decapitated in October.

The bear's body was found Oct. 15 on the Roseburg Forest Products property west of Eugene and outside of Veneta, according to Oregon State Police. The majority of the bear's body was left to waste, KOIN-TV reported.

Police said multiple deer and elk have also been reported as poached this season. The carcasses of three deer were found on Oct. 15 alone, police said.

"There is no excuse for poaching," State Department of Fish and Wildlife administrator Doug Cottam said in a statement. "I am very concerned about people who kill wild animals just to satisfy their desire to kill something."

Thousands of pythons removed from Everglades

FL FORT MYERS — Less than a year after two state agencies decided to combine forces and remove invasive snakes from the Everglades, contractors caught a record number of Burmese pythons.

The News-Press reported that the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the Southwest Florida Water Management District removed nearly 2,000 invasive pythons in the first eight months of 2020, surpassing 2019 totals. As of mid-October, the teams removed nearly 4,000 snakes, bringing the total snakes removed since the program's inception in 2017 to 6,278.

Breeders and owners introduced pythons to the Everglades by dumping the unwanted snakes into the wild.

Pearl Harbor ceremony to be closed to public

HI HONOLULU — The annual Remembrance Day ceremony to commemorate the attack on Pearl Harbor will be closed to the public this year and streamed online as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

The ceremony will begin at 7:50 a.m. on Dec. 7 at the Pearl Harbor National Memorial's Contemplation Circle. A small number of veterans will be in attendance on site, Hawaii News Now reported. A moment of silence will be observed at 7:55 a.m., the time when the Japanese attack began.

From wire reports

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Johnson masterful in win at Augusta

Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Ga. — In this one-of-a-kind Masters that had no fans and no roars, Dustin Johnson made sure it had no drama. And when he polished off his five-shot victory Sunday with the lowest score in tournament history, he had no words.

Only tears.

Looking smart in his Masters green jacket he dreamed his whole life of winning, Johnson spoke to a small gathering on the putting green in absence of the official ceremony, but only briefly. In control of every aspect of his game on a course that never allows anyone to relax, he couldn't speak when it was over. Instead, he turned to wipe his eyes.

"I've never had this much trouble gathering myself," Johnson finally said. "On the golf course, I'm pretty good at it."

No one was better. Not even close.

Johnson overcame a nervous start that conjured memories of past majors he failed to finish off, and then delivered a command performance that added his own touch to a Masters unlike another.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was the first played in November. It was the first without ropes and without roars because patrons were not allowed, only one guest for each player, coaches, Augusta National members and officials.

Leading by two shots heading into Amen Corner, the world's No. 1 player got through the 12th hole — where Tiger Woods earlier hit three balls in Rae's Creek and made 10 — and then ran off three straight birdies to pull away from Cameron Smith and Sungjae Im, the only players who had a chance.

All that mattered was that green jacket. Nothing ever comes easily for Johnson in the majors. Nothing looked so natural as seeing Woods, the defending champion, help him into that size 42 long in Butler Cabin.

"Having Tiger put it on was awesome. You wouldn't want it any other way," Johnson said. And then he smiled before adding, "But any guy could put it on me and I'd be just fine."

His five-shot victory was the largest at the Masters since Woods won by 12 in 1997. All that was missing were the roars from a crowd for any of his pivotal putts early and his birdie putts on the back nine that put it away.

It wasn't the loneliest walk up the hill to the 18th green. About 250 people offering warm applause and partner Paulina Gretzky rushed onto the green to celebrate with Johnson and his brother, caddie Austin Johnson.

Johnson now has two majors to go along with his 25 victories worldwide, a combina-

tion that validates him as one of the greats of his generation.

Gone are the doubts that he could hold a lead in the major on the final day. Four times he had gone into the final round with at least a share of the lead without winning. Johnson had questions, too. His only major was the U.S. Open at Oakmont in 2016 when he rallied from four shots behind.

"I'm sure a lot of you all think ... there were doubts in my mind, just because I had been there. I'm in this position a lot of times," Johnson said. "When am I going to have the lead and finishing off a major? It definitely proved that I can do it."

Johnson became the 12th Masters champion to never trail after any round, and his closing 68 broke another record held by Woods — it was his 11th consecutive subpar round at Augusta National.

No one had a better finish than Woods, but only after the five-time Masters champion posted the highest score of his career on the 12th hole. He finished with five birdies over the last six holes to salvage a 76.

The betting favorite and biggest basher in golf, Bryson DeChambeau, couldn't even beat 63-year-old Bernhard Langer, who shot 71 and wound up one shot ahead of the U.S. Open champion.

These were only sideshows on a quiet Sunday at Augusta National.

Briefly

NCAA in talks to move men's tourney to Indianapolis

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — The NCAA announced Monday it plans to hold the entire 2021 men's college basketball tournament in one geographic location to mitigate the risks of COVID-19 and is in talks with Indianapolis to be the host city.

The Final Four is already set to be held in Indianapolis next year and the NCAA has its headquarters in the Indiana capital.

The association said it is relocating early-round games that had been scheduled to be played at 13 already-determined sites. The NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Committee said hosting all 68 teams in one place would "enhance the safety and well-being of the event."

Source: Lakers close to deal for Schroder

The NBA offseason, such as it was, is over. A wild few days of decisions and player movement await.

Teams were allowed to begin making trades Monday, according to a memo sent to teams and obtained early Sunday by The Associated Press. And the first deal known to be tentatively agreed upon would send guard Dennis Schroder from Oklahoma City to the champion Los Angeles Lakers for Danny Green and the No. 28 pick in Wednesday's draft, a person with knowledge of that agreement told the AP.

That trade is likely to be finalized after the draft, the per-

son said Sunday on condition of anonymity because the swap cannot be formally announced until it is completed and has league approval. ESPN first reported the details of the trade.

The "temporary transaction moratorium" across the league ended Monday at noon Eastern.

In other NBA news:

■ The Detroit Pistons agreed to trade Bruce Brown to the Brooklyn Nets for Dzanan Musa and a 2021 second-round draft pick, according to a person familiar with the deal.

The 6-foot-4 Brown, drafted in the second round in 2018, averaged 8.9 points per game this past season for Detroit. The 6-foot-9 Musa was a first-round pick in 2018. He averaged 4.8 points in 40 games last season.

Schilling, Clemens, Bonds lead Hall ballot

NEW YORK — Curt Schilling, Roger Clemens and Barry Bonds are the leading candidates returning to baseball's Hall of Fame ballot in a year without any favorites among the new names.

Schilling was third behind Derek Jeter and Larry Walker with 278 of 397 votes last year, finishing at 70% and 20 votes shy in balloting by the Baseball Writers' Association of America.

Clemens had 242 votes for 61% and Bonds 241 for 60.7%, both well short of the 75% needed, which was 298 votes last year.

NFL roundup

Brady, Bucs bounce back, beat Panthers

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Tom Brady said the message this week from coach Bruce Arians was about having “mental toughness.”

The Bucs showed plenty of it on Sunday.

After having practices delayed by storms earlier in the week, a mechanical issue that delayed their flight to Charlotte by 6½ hours on Saturday, and the lingering memory of a 38-3 loss to the Saints last week, Tampa Bay rebounded nicely with its most impressive win of the season.

Brady threw for 341 yards and three touchdowns, Ronald Jones set a franchise-record with a 98-yard touchdown run, and the Buccaneers bounced back from a dreadful defeat with a resounding 46-23 win over the Carolina Panthers.

“He said from the beginning, there’s no excuses,” Brady said of Arians’ message. “We played better than we did last week, obviously. We just have to do it consistently, continue to make plays and run the ball like we ran it today.”

Coming off the most lopsided loss of his illustrious career, Brady threw touchdown passes to Cameron Brate, Mike Evans and Rob Gronkowski, then ran for another score in the fourth quarter to seal the win.

Steelers 36, Bengals 10: Ben Roethlisberger threw for a season-high 333 yards and four touchdowns in the Pittsburgh’s win at home, despite being forced to stay away from the team facility all week due to COVID-19 protocols.

Roethlisberger, one of four Steelers put on the COVID-19 list last Monday following contact tracing after tight end Vance McDonald tested positive for the coronavirus, completed 27 of 46 passes on a blustery afternoon at Heinz Field. Roethlisberger connected with Diontae Johnson and JuJu Smith-Schuster for touchdowns in the first half and found rookie Chase Claypool twice in the second half as Pittsburgh improved to 9-0.

Cincinnati rookie quarterback Joe Burrow struggled to generate any momentum behind a patchwork offensive line. Two weeks after a promising victory over Tennessee, the Bengals (2-6-1) were reminded how much work remains under second-year head coach Zac Taylor. Cincinnati went 0-for-13 on third down and Burrow spent much of the second half under duress. T.J. Watt collected two of the Steelers’ four sacks as they won their 11th straight meeting with their division rival.

Rams 23, Seahawks 16: Jared Goff passed for 302 yards, Darious Williams

made two interceptions and host Los Angeles took a share of the NFC West lead with Arizona and Seattle.

Malcolm Brown rushed for two touchdowns and Darrell Henderson had another score as the Rams (6-3) returned from their bye and held Seattle to three points after halftime to win for the fifth time in the rivals’ past six meetings.

Russell Wilson passed for 248 yards and rushed for 60 more for the Seahawks (6-3), who have lost three of four after a 5-0 start. Wilson threw two interceptions and lost a fumble, giving him 10 combined turnovers in Seattle’s three losses.

Saints 27, 49ers 13: Drew Brees was pulled at halftime with a rib injury after passing for just 76 yards and one touchdown, but Alvin Kamara scored three times and New Orleans’ defense largely stifled visiting San Francisco (4-6).

Brees’ injury appeared to occur when defensive tackle Kentavious Street was called for a personal foul on a sack in which he got a clean shot at the 41-year-old quarterback and landed directly on top of him. Officials ruled Street violated the NFL’s “bodyweight rule,” which bans defenders from landing on a defenseless passer with all or most of their weight.

Brees missed just two plays after the hit and returned for a third-down pitchback to Kamara that resulted in a 2-yard touchdown that tied it at 10.

Dolphins 29, Chargers 21: Tua Tagovailoa had help from a less-heralded rookie while Justin Herbert struggled against a blitz-happy defense as surprising Miami, playing at home, earned its fifth consecutive victory.

Salvon Ahmed, making his first career start, ran for 85 yards on 21 carries and scored a 1-yard touchdown on the Dolphins’ first play. The undrafted Ahmed filled in with two other running backs injured and sparked a ground game ranked fourth worst in the league.

Herbert threw a costly interception and was outplayed in the matchup of high draft picks by Tagovailoa, who passed for 169 yards with two scores and improved to 3-0 since taking over for Ryan Fitzpatrick. Herbert struggled against Miami’s blitzing defense and threw for a season-low 187 yards.

Raiders 37, Broncos 12: Josh Jacobs ran for 112 yards and two TDs and Jeff Heath had two of Las Vegas’ five takeaways in a defeat of visiting Denver.

Derek Carr didn’t have to do much for the Raiders (6-3) offensively for a change as the running game and an opportunis-

tic defense that came into the game last in the league with five takeaways carried the load.

Heath intercepted Drew Lock twice in the first half, Carl Nassib and Nick Kwiatkoski got picks in the fourth quarter and Nevin Lawson forced and recovered a fumble by DaeSean Hamilton to send the Broncos (3-6) to their third loss in four games.

Packers 24, Jaguars 20: Aaron Rodgers threw two touchdown passes and ran for a third score as Green Bay overcame numerous mistakes to rally to a win at home.

Rodgers put the Packers (7-2) ahead for good with 9:11 left by throwing a 6-yard TD pass to Davante Adams, who had left with an ankle injury earlier in the second half. Rodgers also had a 5-yard touchdown run and a 78-yard scoring strike to Marquez Valdes-Scantling, who caught four passes for a career-high 149 yards.

Keelan Cole scored on a franchise-record 91-yard punt return and a 12-yard reception for Jacksonville (1-8), which lost its eighth straight. The Jaguars’ James Robinson rushed for 109 yards on 23 carries.

Lions 30, Washington 27: Matt Prater made a 59-yard field goal as time expired to lift Detroit to a win at home.

Matthew Stafford threw two of his three touchdown passes in the first half and directed the winning drive with just 16 seconds left. Rookie defensive end Chase Young was called for roughing the passer, giving the Lions the ball at midfield. Stafford threw a 9-yard pass to Marvin Jones to set up the kick.

Giants 27, Eagles 17: Daniel Jones threw for 244 yards and ran for a touchdown, and Wayne Gallman Jr. had two TD runs as New York won at home.

The Giants improved to 3-7 under first-year coach Joe Judge with their second straight win, snapping an eight-game losing streak against Philly. The Eagles (3-5-1) still lead the NFL’s worst division, the NFC East. Dallas and Washington are each 2-7.

Browns 10, Texans 7: Nick Chubb returned from a stint on injured reserve and scored a touchdown early in the fourth quarter — topping 100 yards rushing along with teammate Kareem Hunt to lead Cleveland past visiting Houston.

Chubb reeled off a 59-yard run with 1:07 left and then smartly ran out of bounds at the 2-yard line instead of scoring so the Texans, who were out of timeouts, wouldn’t get the ball back. Chubb finished with 126 yards on 19 carries in nasty weather. Hunt finished with 104 yards.

Cards top Bills on 'Hail Murray' pass

Associated Press

GLENDALE, Ariz. — DeAndre Hopkins knows that football fans might view his final, winning catch on Sunday as some sort of miracle. Even the players and coaches for the Arizona Cardinals couldn't hide their disbelief when he jumped over three Buffalo defenders and came down with the ball.

But the three-time All-Pro insists there was no magic needed. Just skill.

"Two plus two equals four," Hopkins said in his usual low-key delivery. "Go downfield. Throw it up."

And that's exactly what the Cardinals did. Kyler Murray completed a stunning 43-yard desperation pass to Hopkins with 2 seconds left to lift Arizona to an improbable 32-30 victory over the Bills. The catch was as sensational as the throw, which was quickly dubbed a "Hail Murray."

The game appeared lost for the Cardinals until Murray rolled out to his left as the seconds ticked off the clock. He flung the ball toward the end zone, where Hopkins was waiting with three Buffalo defenders draped all over him.

"I knew when it left my hand it had a chance," Murray said. "You play quarterback, you can tell the trajectory, the touch of the ball."

Somehow, Hopkins ripped the ball away from the mass of bodies, and Arizona started a wild celebration in the end zone.

"I'm still kind of at a loss for words," Cardinals coach Kliff Kingsbury said. "What a phenomenal play."

Josh Allen threw a 21-yard touchdown pass to Stefon Diggs with 34 seconds left that looked like it would win it for the Bills (7-3). But Murray and the Arizona (6-3, tied for the NFC West lead) ended Buffalo's winning streak at three games with the improbable throw and catch.

It was a crazy ending to another entertaining Cardinals game, which usually have come down to the final seconds in recent weeks. Murray threw for 245 yards, one touchdown and one interception. Hopkins had seven catches for 127 yards — and he'll remember the last one for a long, long time.

"It was on three people. They were in position. It was just a better catch by I," Hopkins said.

Arizona trailed 23-9 midway through the third quarter but responded with two touchdown drives sandwiched around a field goal to take a 26-23 lead by the beginning of the fourth. Murray, wearing bright yellow cleats, ran for both of the touchdowns, including a 15-yard dash up the middle that gave the Cardinals their first lead of the day.

"He is playing at a ridiculous level," Kingsbury said. "You have seen it the last few weeks after that first month. Offensively, we have really settled in. Mixing in tempo making great decisions whether it is with his feet, his arm. It is fun to watch. He's making us right on a lot of plays."

Allen was having a mediocre game until the late drive that lasted 12 plays and went 73 yards. The quarterback capped the series with a perfect throw to a diving Diggs,

who finished with 10 catches for 93 yards. But it wasn't enough for the Bills, who couldn't stop Hopkins in the end zone.

"Yeah, I thought we guarded it pretty well," Buffalo safety Jordan Poyer said. "We had three people around him . . . It's really not a whole lot of anything else to say, just got to find a way to get that ball out of his hands some way, somehow."

Allen completed 32 of 49 passes for 284 yards, two touchdowns and two interceptions. Cole Beasley had 11 catches for 109 yards and a touchdown.

"You're not gonna win every game, but to lose this one the way we did — it hurts," Allen said.

The Bills pushed ahead 23-9 when Allen hit Beasley for a 22-yard touchdown after Arizona's Kenyan Drake lost a fumble.

But the Cardinals responded with a nine-play, 85-yard drive that ended with Murray's 1-yard touchdown run. Zane Gonzalez followed with a 45-yard field goal and Murray ran for a 15-yard score for the 26-23 lead.

Allen handed the ball off to Isaiah McKenzie, who then turned and threw it back to the quarterback, who ran 12 yards for Buffalo's opening score. Allen is the 11th Bills player to catch a touchdown pass this season, a franchise record.

Tyler Bass added field goals from 58, 55 and 54 yards for a 16-9 halftime lead. The rookie's 54-yarder bounced off the right upright before going through for three points. They were the three longest field goals of his career.

Patriots, Newton reign over Ravens

Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — The New England Patriots have had trouble finishing off games at times this season. They got an assist from Mother Nature to help close out their biggest victory.

Cam Newton threw a touchdown pass and ran for another score and New England fought through rain and wind to hold off the Baltimore Ravens 23-17 on Sunday night.

Damien Harris ran for a career-high 121 yards to help the Patriots (4-5) win consecutive games for the first time this

season. Newton was 13-for-17 for 118 yards. His touchdown pass, on a short sprint-out to Rex Burkhead in the first quarter, was his first since Week 3 — a span of four games.

"Just finding ways to win. That's pretty much been it," Newton said about the past two wins. "Having good weeks in practice and following it up with in-game performances . . . We've just got to keep doing that moving forward."

The Ravens' road winning streak ended at 10. Baltimore (6-3) is 0-6 in the regular season in New England.

Lamar Jackson was 24-for-34 for 249 yards and two touchdowns for Baltimore.

"We're ticked off. Nobody likes losing," Jackson said. "We have a lot of talent on our team. We've got to regroup."

The Patriots bottled him up on the ground for most of the game, limiting him to just 11 rushes for 55 yards.

"Overall certainly we played it much better than we did last year," New England coach Bill Belichick said.

Down 23-17, the Ravens had a chance to take the lead with 7:09 left in the fourth quarter. But the possession quickly fell

apart after an errant snap by center Matt Skura resulted in a 16-yard loss.

The Patriots got the ball back and were able to pick up enough first downs to run down the clock to just over a minute to play before punting the ball back.

As rain and wind pelted the field, Baltimore started the drive with a penalty, pushing it back to its own 9. Facing fourth-and-26 on the 21, Jackson had J.K. Dobbins open along the sideline, but Dobbins bobbled the ball for an incompletion and turnover on downs.