

STARS AND STRIPES®

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2020

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Pfizer: Virus vaccine shot 95% effective

Associated Press

Pfizer says that more interim results from its ongoing coronavirus vaccine study suggest the shots are 95% effective, and that the vaccine protects older people most at risk of dying from COVID-19.

The announcement, just a week after Pfizer first revealed promising preliminary results, comes as the company is preparing within days to formally ask U.S. regulators to allow emergency use of the vaccine.

Pfizer initially had estimated its vaccine, developed with German partner BioNTech, was more than 90% effective after 94 infections had been counted. With Wednesday's announcement, the company now has accumulated 170 infections in the study — and said only eight of them occurred in volunteers who got the actual vaccine rather than a dummy shot. One of those eight developed

severe disease, the company said.

The company has not yet released detailed data on its study, and results have not been analyzed by independent experts.

Pfizer said its vaccine was more than 94% effective in adults over age 65, though it is not clear how the company determined effectiveness in older adults, with only eight infections in the vaccinated group to analyze and no breakdown of ages provided.

Earlier this week, Moderna, Inc. announced that its experimental vaccine appears to be approximately 94.5% effective after an interim analysis of its late-stage study.

Pfizer says it now has the data on the vaccine's safety needed to seek emergency authorization from the Food and Drug Administration.

The company didn't disclose safety de-

tails, but said that no serious vaccine side effects have been reported, with the most common problem being fatigue after the second vaccine dose, affecting about 4% of participants.

The study has enrolled nearly 44,000 people in the U.S. and five other countries. The trial will continue to collect safety and efficacy data on volunteers for two more years.

Pfizer and BioNTech said they expect to produce up to 50 million vaccine doses globally in 2020 and up to 1.3 billion doses in 2021.

U.S. officials have said they hope to have about 20 million vaccine doses each from Moderna and Pfizer available for distribution in late December. The first shots will be offered to vulnerable groups like medical and nursing home workers, as well as people with serious health conditions.

DOD details troop withdrawal plan for Afghanistan

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump will leave office with 2,500 troops in Afghanistan and 2,500 troops in Iraq after he ordered drawdowns of American forces in both those countries, which were announced Tuesday by his new acting defense secretary.

"By Jan. 15, 2021, our forces, their size in Afghanistan will be 2,500, and our force size in Iraq will also be 2,500 by that same date," acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller said Tuesday in his first public appearance at the Pentagon since taking the job Nov. 9 after Trump fired former Defense Secretary Mark Esper. "This is consistent with our established plans and strategic objectives supported by the American people and does not equate to a change in U.S. policy or objectives."

The decision would give military officials about 10 weeks to remove about 2,500 troops from Afghanistan and about 500 from Iraq.

Troops had already been steadily drawing down throughout 2020 from Afghanistan, where the United States had 13,000 troops in January. U.S. forces began 2020

with about 5,200 troops in Iraq.

The moves accelerate the rate at which U.S. troops are leaving ahead of the end of Trump's term Jan. 20 and against the backdrop of ongoing negotiations for a peace agreement between the U.S.-backed Afghan government and the Taliban. But the hastened drawdowns stop short of achieving Trump's long-promised end of American involvement in what he has dubbed "forever wars."

Defense officials said Tuesday that they had determined the U.S. could ensure Americans were protected from any threats emanating from Afghanistan or Iraq with the reduced forces. They declined to comment on any planned reductions for the hundreds of troops serving in Somalia and Syria.

Miller said he spent Tuesday morning briefing congressional leaders and allied nations on the U.S. withdrawal. The acting defense secretary did not take questions after delivering his statement and did not say what troops would leave Afghanistan or Iraq or precisely what mission the remaining forces have been assigned.

In Afghanistan, for example, U.S. troops in recent years have served two missions

— advising Afghan forces and fighting terrorist groups, namely Islamic State's affiliate there and remnants of al-Qaida. U.S. troops in Iraq have primarily served in recent years as trainers for Iraqi forces battling the remnants of ISIS.

"The United States Armed Forces remain committed to protecting the safety and security for the American people, and supporting our like-minded allies and partners worldwide," Miller said. "If the forces of terror, instability, division and hate begin a deliberate campaign to disrupt our efforts, we stand ready to apply the capabilities required to thwart them."

Despite the drawdowns ordered to be completed just five days before the end of Trump's administration, senior defense officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, insisted they were recommended by top military officials who they declined to identify. The defense officials said U.S. security officials had also determined they could quickly flow troops back into either country if needed.

Miller said Tuesday in his remarks that he celebrated Trump's decision, calling it a step toward the end of generational wars.

Report: Sex assault accountability lags

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — Despite service members reporting more sexual assaults over the past decade, courts-martial and convictions for the charge have declined, according to an investigation airing this week on CBS News.

“What we have uncovered are what we call consequential failures by leaders to change a pervasive culture of sexual assault in the military,” said Norah O’Donnell, “CBS Evening News” anchor and managing editor, who led the 1½-year-long investigation. “The bottom line is it’s time for ‘Me Too’ movement in the military.”

O’Donnell and the CBS Investigative Unit interviewed nearly two dozen victims and three whistleblowers who worked for the military sexual assault and harassment prevention program. The four-part series began Tuesday on “CBS Evening News with Norah O’Donnell” and will also air on “CBS This Morning.”

“I love and respect the military. This is not the values that the U.S. military espouses,” said O’Donnell, whose father served as an Army officer and doctor. “What we are really trying to uncover is not only to tell the stories of the men and women who have been abused and harassed after reporting the abuse, but also to look at [the] question of why does this still continue?”

By poring over hundreds of pages of court documents, criminal investigations and reports, the investigative unit uncovered that the number of reported cases of sexual assault in the military has doubled in the last 10 years. A fiscal year 2019 report from the Pentagon shows 7,825 sexual assault reports involving service members as victims or subjects, a 3% increase compared to 2018.

A 2018 anonymous workplace survey found that 20,473 service members said they experienced sexual assault in the past year — an increase of 38% from 14,900 in fiscal 2016. The workplace survey also found that 64% of women who reported a sexual assault said they experienced retaliation.

Of those who reported assaults in 2019, 57 said they faced retaliation because of the report, according to the investigation. One of those cases went to court-martial.

“It’s good that the reporting structure exists and that more and more people are feeling comfortable about reporting it,” O’Donnell said. “But has that lead to more courts-martial? No. We found fewer courts-martial, which doesn’t seem to make sense.”

At the same time, administrative actions have risen, showing that commanders are looking for routes outside of the military justice system to deal with sexual assault and rape reports, according to the investigation. These actions are kept within personnel files.

Of the nearly two dozen victims interviewed, four chose to speak on camera, O’Donnell said. The parents of another service member, Army Pvt. Nicole Burnham, also spoke to her on camera. They said their daughter died by suicide after being raped and then harassed and threatened by other soldiers for reporting the crime. The assaults occurred while serving in South Korea, and Burnham’s parents said it took 82 days for the Army to approve an expedited transfer to the U.S. During that time, Burnham told her parents she had no resources or support available to her.

The Defense Department has spent tens of millions of dollars to address the issue, O’Donnell said. The three whistleblowers interviewed for the report were hired to work at different military bases for the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Program, known commonly as Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office.

“I think the breadth and the depth of the problem is so large that they really don’t want the general public to understand that they don’t have it under control,” one said. The whistleblowers said that the people there to help victims are being retaliated against for doing their job. One whistleblower explained that because the military is like a family, reporting sexual assault can feel more emotional, because it divides the family.

2 veterans sue Navy over disability considerations

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Two veterans have filed a lawsuit against the Navy for not assigning accurate disability ratings and costing them benefits in a case that could affect thousands of sailors and Marines.

“Military disability retirement benefits are critical to veterans who are injured during their military service, and who depend on them for access to health care and other benefits for the service member and his or her family,” according to a statement by the nonprofit National Veterans Legal Services Program, whose attorneys filed the lawsuit Nov. 10 in the District Court for the District of Columbia.

The lawsuit states the Navy was not following its own regulations between April 30, 2002, and June 27, 2019, for assigning disability ratings for conditions that pre-

vented a sailor or Marine from continuing to serve in the military. The plaintiffs, former sailor Kenneth Springs and former Marine Nathaniel Reese, suffered from medical issues during their service that made them “unfit” to continue their work. They are suing the Navy because they received a combined disability rating that was lower than what they were required to receive, according to the lawsuit.

The attorneys representing Springs and Reese said they believe that based on Navy records, at least 16,851 sailors and Marines left the military within the last six years who might have received a lower total disability rating with fewer benefits than they should have because their conditions were not rated correctly.

Springs and Reese were not able to medically retire due to the lower combined disability ratings given for their medical issues. They want their military records, and

those of the thousands of other veterans who fall under the class-action suit, to be corrected to show the combined disability rating that they should have received by the Navy, and in some cases could allow them a medical retirement.

Navy officials on Tuesday did not respond to a request for comment about the lawsuit.

After a medical condition is evaluated, the Navy assigns the condition to one of four categories. The two most important for benefits are Category I, or “all unfitting conditions,” and Category II, or “those conditions that are contributing to the unfitting condition,” according to the lawsuit. So a sailor or Marine can have one main medical issue that makes them unfit for service and also have additional medical conditions that are related to the main issue. Conditions in both categories are then supposed to be given a disability rating. When combined, the rating can initiate disability benefits.

Virus robs US classrooms of teachers

Associated Press

MISSION, Kan. — In July, fourth-grade teacher Susanne Michael was ecstatic as she celebrated the adoption of a former student from a troubled home and two of the girl's brothers. For the festivities, Michael dressed them and her other children in matching T-shirts that read "Gotcha FOREVER."

By October, the 47-year-old Jonesboro, Ark., woman was dead — one of an estimated nearly 300 school employees killed by the coronavirus in the United States since the outbreak took hold.

"She just basically would eat, sleep and drink teaching. She loved it," said her husband, Keith Michael, who is now left to raise the three new additions, ages 3, 8 and 13, along with the couple's two other children, 16 and 22.

Across the U.S., the deaths of educators have torn at the fabric of the school experience, taking the lives of teachers, principals, superintendents, coaches, a middle school secretary and a security guard. The losses have forced school boards to make hard decisions of whether to keep classrooms open and have left students and staff

members grief-stricken.

Early research suggested that children are unlikely to contract or spread the coronavirus — an idea that influenced school reopenings in some communities.

But Laura Garabedian, a professor of population medicine at Harvard Medical School, said much of that research was conducted during lockdowns when children were home and testing wasn't being done on those with mild or symptomless cases.

"I think the key question is whether being at school puts teachers at increased risk of getting COVID. I don't think we know that," she said. But she added: "There are kids who definitely transmit it, and we know that."

With community spread rampant across much of the country and contact tracers overwhelmed, it is often hard to tell where teachers are becoming infected.

When cases can be traced back to their source, it is often an informal gathering, a restaurant or a sporting event, not a classroom, said Emily Oster, a Brown University economics professor whose analysis of in-school infection data from all 50 states found that bringing students together in

schools does not appear to be driving the spread.

"I don't think anyone would claim that no one has gotten COVID at a school. That would be unrealistic," she said. "But in most of the cases we are seeing among people who are affiliated with schools, the actual case was not acquired at a school."

Her database identified 17 cases per 100,000 students and 26 per 100,000 staff members as of Friday. She said the staff rate is slightly higher than the general rate in the community.

Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, which has kept count of educators killed by the virus, said the stories "break your heart."

They include 71-year-old South Carolina first-grade teacher Margie Kidd and 53-year-old Iowa special education assistant Jennifer Crawford.

Their families said they suspect the two were infected at school.

A district in Phoenix lost special education worker Nawaialoha Keli'imahiai Kalai to COVID-19 earlier this month and began its board meeting with a moment of silence before deciding to keep classrooms open.

House Dems give nod to Pelosi to remain speaker

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Democrats nominated Nancy Pelosi on Wednesday as the speaker to lead them into Joe Biden's presidency, but she'd be guiding a smaller and ideologically divided majority as she tries shepherding his agenda toward enactment.

Democrats used a voice vote to make Pelosi, D-Calif., their choice to serve two more years in her post. Scattered around the country, it was the party's first virtual leadership election, a response to the coronavirus pandemic.

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., and No. 3 party leader Jim Clyburn, D-S.C., Congress' highest ranking Black member, were reelected to their positions, like Pelosi,

without opposition. Clyburn revived Biden's faltering bid for the Democratic presidential nomination this year by helping him win the South Carolina primary, a turnaround moment in Biden's campaign.

Five of the seven Democrats who'd planned to deliver speeches backing Pelosi's candidacy were women.

The full House will formally elect the new speaker when the new Congress convenes in early January, shortly before Biden's Jan. 20 inauguration. Hoyer's and Clyburn's jobs are party positions that don't need House approval. Pelosi has won wide acclaim among Democrats as a leading foe of outgoing President Donald Trump in battles over impeachment, immigration and health care.

Michigan GOP blocks vote certification, then backtracks after outcry

Associated Press

DETROIT — In an abrupt about-face, Michigan's largest county on Tuesday night unanimously certified election results showing Democrat Joe Biden defeating President Donald Trump, hours after Republicans first blocked formal approval of voters' intentions.

The initial move was condemned by Democrats, election experts and spectators at the Wayne County Board of Canvassers online meeting as a dangerous attempt to block the results of a free and fair election.

"We depend on democratic norms, including that the losers graciously accept defeat. That seems to be breaking down,"

said Joshua Douglas, a law professor at the University of Kentucky.

The state vote certification process is usually a routine task, and the ultimate resolution in Wayne County propels Biden toward formal victory in Michigan. Still, Tuesday's chaotic developments are likely to sow more doubt among Trump's supporters in the election results and could galvanize Republicans in other states to look for ways to slow down the final steps in making his loss official.

Republicans are also trying to stop formal certification of the election results in other swing states, including Arizona, Nevada and Pennsylvania.

Judge orders halt to child immigrant policy

Associated Press

HOUSTON — A federal judge on Wednesday ordered the Trump administration to stop expelling immigrant children who cross the southern border alone, halting a policy that has resulted in thousands of rapid deportations of minors during the coronavirus pandemic.

U.S. District Judge Emmet Sullivan issued a preliminary injunction sought by legal groups suing on behalf of children whom the government sought to expel before they could request asylum or other protections under federal law.

The Trump administration has expelled at least 8,800 unaccompanied children since March, when it issued an emergency

declaration citing the coronavirus as grounds for barring most people crossing the border from remaining in the United States.

Border agents have forced many people to return to Mexico right away, while detaining others in holding facilities or hotels, sometimes for days or weeks. Meanwhile, government-funded facilities meant to hold children while they are placed with sponsors have thousands of unused beds.

Sullivan's order bars only the expulsion of children who cross the border unaccompanied by a parent. The government has expelled more than 147,000 people since March, including adults, and parents and children traveling together.

The Justice Department did not immediately say whether it would appeal. It has appealed another federal judge's order barring the use of hotels to detain children.

The Trump administration has argued in court that it must expel children who have recently crossed the border — whether they had authorization or not — to prevent the infection of border agents and others in immigration custody. The emergency declaration was made by Dr. Robert Redfield, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Justice Department on Oct. 2 cited the judgment of “the nation's top public health official” in urging Sullivan not to stop the expulsion of children.

Rapid wildfire destroys multiple homes in Reno

Associated Press

RENO, Nev. — A fast-moving wildfire driven by strong winds destroyed or damaged about 12 homes and buildings in a Reno neighborhood and forced the evacuation of hundreds more on the edge of the Sierra Nevada foothills, authorities said.

It was one of several blazes burning near the Nevada-California border.

As many as 500 homes were threatened by the blaze that grew to more than two square miles within hours of igniting in brush above the neighborhood, Reno Fire Chief David Cochran said late Tuesday.

The Reno Gazette Journal reported that one of its photographers saw at least five homes burn.

There were no immediate reports of in-

juries, and the cause of the fire was under investigation.

Winds gusting over 50 mph drove the flames but later subsided and rain fell late Tuesday night and early Wednesday.

Cochran said teams responded from fire departments in Reno and California to help battle the blaze through the night and managed to stop the fire's progress.

“We are working to protect homes to the extent that we can,” he said.

Anita Noble, of Reno, was spraying down a hillside with a garden hose near her daughter's home, telling KOLO-TV that she “could have been the one to save my daughter's house and the neighbor's house.”

“We were about ready to leave, and I saw a bunch of smoke, and my daughter said it

was coming from up in the canyon, and it wasn't, it was right below the ravine,” Noble said.

“And it was within 10 yards from her property line, so I got the hose and I started spraying. And it helped.”

Mayor Hillary Schieve signed a local emergency declaration and pleaded with residents to stay out of the area. Police Chief Jason Soto said he was increasing patrols in evacuated neighborhoods to help protect homes and businesses.

Authorities cut power to about 7,000 customers as a precaution, and several roads were closed.

Police assisted with evacuations, and the Red Cross set up an emergency shelter at the Washoe County senior center.

Ex-Army Green Beret pleads guilty to espionage charge

Associated Press

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — A former Army Green Beret pleaded guilty Wednesday to divulging military secrets to Russia about his Special Forces unit's activities in former Soviet republics.

Peter Rafael Dzibinski Debbins, 45, of Gainesville, Va., pleaded guilty to a charge under the federal Espionage Act at a hearing in U.S. District Court in Alexandria.

He faces up to life in prison when he is sentenced in February.

Debbins, a Minnesota native, had a 15-year relationship with Russian intelligence, dating back to 1996 when he was an ROTC

student at the University of Minnesota and on a visit to Russia for an independent study program gave a handler there the names of four Catholic nuns he had visited, according to the charges against him.

Shortly thereafter, Russian agents assigned him a code name, “Ikar Lesnikov.”

Debbins told Russian intelligence he considered himself a “son of Russia,” and “thought that the United States was too dominant in the world and needed to be cut down to size,” according to the indictment. He even offered to take a polygraph test to prove his Russian loyalty when one handler accused him of being a double agent for the U.S.

“Our country entrusted Debbins with the responsibility and training to protect it from its adversaries,” said G. Zachary Terwilliger, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, whose office prosecuted the case, in a statement. “Debbins betrayed that trust and betrayed his fellow service members by conspiring to provide national defense information to Russian intelligence operatives.”

Debbins' lawyer and family members who attended Wednesday's hearing did not comment after the hearing.

He joined the Army as an active duty officer in 1998 and served through 2005.

School asks people for most hated words

MI SAULT STE. MARIE — Is there a word or phrase that really bugs you? A peeve, pique or provocation?

Lake Superior State University is accepting candidates for its 46th annual tongue-in-cheek list of words that should be banished.

"It's our tradition to publish the world-famous banished words list on Dec. 31 so that people don't begin the new year by putting their foot in their mouth," LSSU President Rodney Hanley said. "No-brainer — which also made our list in the past."

The deadline to submit online entries is 8 a.m. EST on Nov. 30.

More than a dozen words or phrases were added last year, including "artisanal," "influencer," "living my best life" and "chirp."

State reports \$285M in September sports bets

IL SPRINGFIELD — The latest numbers released by the Illinois Gaming Board show bettors in the state wagered more than \$285 million on sports contests in September.

Gamblers can place bets on sporting events at seven of Illinois' casinos and one horse racing track. The state's most lucrative casino and its first to start taking sports bets, Rivers in Des Plaines, accepted about \$105 million in wagers in September, the most of any Illinois casino, according to the gaming board.

Sports betting has generated about \$3 million in tax revenue for Illinois in its first three full months. Gov. J.B. Pritzker's office has suggested it could eventually generate more than \$100 million in revenues.

County sees rise in speeding tickets amid the pandemic

MD BALTIMORE — Drivers have become more aggressive during the pandemic. And the proof is in Baltimore County.

The county has seen a 10% increase in speed camera violations so far in 2020. It issued more than 180,000 citations between January and Oct. 13. The same period last year saw 164,000 citations.

At the same time, revenue from speed cameras rose by nearly 38%. And more than \$4.56 million in speeding fines were collected compared to \$3.31 million.

Baltimore City also saw a rise in citations. Citations were up by 7% by more than 500,000 through September.

Firefighter sues alleging sexual harassment over 9 years

IA DUBUQUE — A Dubuque firefighter is suing the city because she said she has endured sexual harassment on the job since she started in 2011.

Jami Boss cited a number of incidents in her lawsuit including being told by a lieutenant that she was only hired because she was a girl. Boss said male firefighters used the women's restroom and sometimes walked in on Boss while she was in there. And in one incident, a coworker shoved his hand down the back of Boss' pants, according to the lawsuit.

Boss also said in her lawsuit that officials retaliated against her after she filed complaints about the way she was treated. And she says she was passed over for promotion in favor of male colleagues who had less experience than Boss.

Pilot hospitalized after homemade craft crashes

FL MACCLENNY — The Florida Highway Patrol said a 53-year-old Jacksonville pilot was hospitalized with life-threatening injuries after his homemade aircraft crashed in Baker County.

Officials said the pilot was alone when the single-engine red aircraft crashed. Nobody on the ground was injured, state troopers said, and the pilot's name wasn't released.

The pilot was flying east from a hangar the aircraft lost power. When the pilot turned the aircraft to fly west back to the hangar, that's when he started to rapidly descend. The nose of the craft struck the ground and injured the pilot, officials said.

The craft was not registered with the Federal Aviation Administration, which said it is not investigating the crash because it doesn't handle incidents involving unregistered aircraft.

The Highway Patrol and the Baker County Sheriff's Office are investigating.

Tribe builds 5-acre memorial to USS Arizona

AZ PHOENIX — The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community has built the 5-acre memorial near Scottsdale as a tribute to those who were aboard the USS Arizona when it was attacked and sank at Pearl Harbor in December 1941.

The USS Arizona Memorial Gardens honors each of the ship's 1,512 crew members, including the 1,177 who died in the explosion caused by one torpedo and eight bombs

hitting the battleship.

One survivor of the attack was Paul Howard Egan. He died in 1992 at age 71 and his ashes were interred on the USS Arizona in 1993.

The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community funded and built the gardens, which opened in February.

The venue honors each of those who were aboard the USS Arizona at the time of the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service's attack with metal monuments of stacked blocks with names and ranks engraved on them, according to the Republic.

Skydiver dies after parachute failed to deploy during jump

FL BOCA RATON — Authorities said a Miami skydiver died in North Florida when his parachute didn't deploy correctly during a jump.

The Bradford County Sheriff's Office said that a team of skydivers were practicing a jump when the accident happened. The group of seven men, all originally from Cuba, were practicing for a weekend event that honors the families of fallen police officers.

"We just wanted to give back thanks to law enforcement," said Perdomo. "Yuset was very big into what he considered his country and this was a way of giving back — to jump with flags on behalf of all the fallen officers."

Maj. Brad Smith of the Bradford County Sheriff's Office said rescue workers were sent to search a wooded area

Gettysburg Address to be shown at Lincoln museum

IL SPRINGFIELD — A handwritten copy of Abraham Lincoln's most famous speech will be on display for two weeks in a Springfield museum.

Officials with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum said it is only one of five surviving handwritten copies. The 1863 speech starts, "Four score and seven years ago ..." Lincoln delivered it at the dedication of a cemetery for soldiers killed in the Battle of Gettysburg.

Most of the time the document is kept in a climate-controlled vault to protect it from light and humidity.

The exhibit opens Wednesday and ends Nov. 30. An actor portraying Lincoln will visit the museum to answer questions about the speech and there'll be an online discussion on Thursday.

3 teams have personnel test positive

Associated Press

The New York Giants and Atlanta Falcons each put a player on the NFL's COVID-19 list Tuesday, while Washington had its first instance of someone in the organization testing positive for the coronavirus since the season began.

The NFL said there were 17 new confirmed positives among players and 35 among other personnel during testing from Nov. 8-14. That brings the league's total to 95 players and 175 other personnel since Aug. 1, not counting new cases this week.

After New York announced an unidentified player tested positive, Giants kicker Graham Gano landed on the reserve/COVID-19 list. The Falcons put wide receiver Laquon Treadwell on it, as well.

Gano is the second Giants player in three weeks to go on the COVID-19 list after guard Will Hernandez on Oct. 29, who was activated Nov. 10 and played Sunday against Phi-

adelphia. The Giants, who have a bye this week, said two staff members were told to remain home after coming into contact with the player who tested positive.

Treadwell is the second Atlanta player on the COVID-19 list, joining defensive end Dante Fowler Jr., who was put on it last week. Treadwell has spent the past 10 weeks on the practice squad.

Washington's positive test result was the team's first since July. A person with direct knowledge of the situation said the player who tested positive did not travel with Washington for its game at Detroit last weekend. The person spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because the team did not release specific details about the positive case.

The Giants and Washington were notified of their respective positive test results Monday night. The players self-isolated, and contact tracing began.

Washington, which is set to host Cincinnati on Sunday, was one of the few teams that hadn't had a positive and is now in the NFL's intensive protocols. Meetings will be conducted virtually this week, and the practice facility will only be open to staff with limited access for players.

Asked last week about his team getting through the first nine weeks of the season without someone testing positive for the virus, Washington coach Ron Rivera jokingly called that a jinx. He credited senior director of player development Malcolm Blacken.

"When you have a guy who's constantly (saying): 'Hey guys, don't forget we have this. Hey guys, don't forget we have that,' there's that constant reminder," Rivera said. "I think, for whatever reason, our guys have been very diligent about it, which we really do appreciate."

Seahawks' Wilson taking more hits this season

Associated Press

RENTON, Wash. — With all the yards and touchdowns he's thrown for this season, Seattle's Russell Wilson has been more exposed as a passer than at any other point in his career.

For the first five games, the Seahawks offensive line was exceptional at keeping Wilson protected enough for Seattle's quarterback to get off to one of the best starts in league history.

But since a Week 7 loss to Arizona, Wilson has been under increasing pressure. He's been sacked 15 times over the past four games, including 11 in the past two weeks. The six sacks last week by the Los Angeles Rams were the most of Wilson since last season against Philadelphia.

Now, here come the Cardinals again on Thursday night, with their array of unique blitzes that caused confusion and problems the first time the teams met.

"We've just got to be a little bit cleaner," Wilson said. "It sounds kind of crazy, but it's true, every play dictates itself. And what we've got to do is we just got to be clean in those moments. We've got to be a little crisper, myself included, all of us. We've got to be on our stuff."

Wilson was sacked only twice by the Cardinals in their first meeting and threw for 388 yards and three touchdowns in 37-34 overtime loss. But he was hit nine times by

Arizona, starting a stretch where Wilson has been continually under duress and struggled to protect the ball. He's been responsible for 10 turnovers in the past four games, beginning with three interceptions against Arizona.

Arizona's success getting to Wilson didn't come until the second half and overtime when a variety of different blitz packages and coverages seemed to catch Seattle off guard.

"They do a great job of mixing all the different guys who pressure and they change their packages so much. ... They're one of the best in football," Wilson said. "And to be honest with you, I think (defensive coordinator) Vance (Joseph) is one of the best coaches in the game in terms of how he does his pressure packages and all that stuff. I think for us it's just diagnosing it, being clear, being on the same page, communication wise. I think that's kind of what happened to us last time."

Continuity would help Seattle's protection of Wilson, and that's been lacking in recent weeks. The Seahawks have been without running backs Chris Carson and Carlos Hyde, both solid in pass protection. Left guard Mike Iupati has been in and out of lineup, and center Ethan Pocic missed last week with a concussion.

Offensive coordinator Brian Schottenheimer said they know there will be more

pressures coming on Thursday against the Cardinals.

"People see a blitz, and they're like, 'That's pretty cool, they got a free runner on the quarterback, let's take a look at that one,'" Schottenheimer said. "So you do see some teams repeating things that maybe we haven't handled really well. But it ultimately comes down to the protection unit just working together, making the calls, communicating things really well, and that's where we've been up and down."

McCaffrey won't play

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The Panthers said that running back Christian McCaffrey is not expected to play Sunday against the Detroit Lions, a big blow for a Carolina team that is trying to snap a five-game losing streak.

The team announced the news on its website Wednesday.

It will be the second straight game McCaffrey has missed because of a shoulder injury and the eighth game he's missed overall this season.

The 2019 All-Pro injured his shoulder in Carolina's Week 9 loss to the Kansas City Chiefs after being tackled late in the fourth quarter.

McCaffrey has been effective when he's played, averaging 124.7 yards from scrimmage and scoring six touchdowns.

NBA schedule includes play-in tourney

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The 2020-21 NBA schedule will feature a play-in tournament and an NBA Finals that could run all the way until July 22 — keeping some players from competing in the Olympics.

The league's 75th season, delayed and shortened because of the coronavirus pandemic, will begin Dec. 22 and look like none other. The NBA announced Tuesday how it will make up the 72-game schedule, which won't be entirely known until well after it's started.

Teams will play 42 intraconference games, with each club facing the others within its conference three times. Teams will play the remaining 30 games against the opposite conference — one at home and one on the road in a return to cross-country travel and playing in arenas after completing last season in a "bubble" environment.

When that's finished, the play-in tournament, approved Tuesday by the board of governors on a one-year basis, follows involving the teams with the seventh through 10th-best records in each conference. They will play for the final two playoff spots in the

East and the West.

The league debuted the play-in tournament this year at Walt Disney World, though it only featured the Nos. 8-9 teams in the Western Conference. Portland knocked out Memphis to earn the final seed in the playoffs.

This time, the team with the seventh-best record in each conference will host No. 8 in one game. The winner secures the No. 7 seed, while the loser hosts the winner of a game between No. 9 and No. 10. The winner of that game gets the final playoff spot.

The league plans to announce the first half of the schedule around the start of training camp in early December.

The second half will be unveiled during the latter part of the first half, featuring the remaining games along with any that need to be postponed because of the virus.

If all goes according to plan, preseason games will be held Dec. 11-19. The first half of the season then runs Dec. 22 through March 4, followed by an All-Star break March 5-10 — though the All-Star Game in Indianapolis was scrapped.

The second half is March 11 to May 16,

with the play-in tournament May 18-21. The postseason could then last for two months from May 22 to July 22.

That almost certainly eliminates a number of players from considering going to Tokyo for the postponed 2020 Olympics. The Summer Games are set to begin July 23, with the qualifying tournaments for the remaining four spots in the men's field scheduled to run from June 29 to July 4.

The pandemic is surging to record levels nationwide, with more than 100,000 new cases reported in each of the past seven days, and public health experts have warned about the likelihood of increased spread in December despite promising news from vaccine trials. The NBA plans to utilize its usual arenas, and teams will be expected to travel from market to market as in a normal season. Numerous teams have announced they will begin the season without fans in the stands.

The NBA and the National Basketball Players Association previously reached an agreement on the financial terms governing the season, setting the salary cap at \$109.1 million.

Canada reviews plan to play in Toronto amid pandemic

Associated Press

TORONTO — The Canadian government is reviewing a proposal from the NBA and the Raptors to play in Toronto amid the pandemic.

A spokesman for Health Minister Patty Hajdu said Tuesday officials have been in contact with the Raptors and will continue to engage with them "in the coming weeks." Raptors general manager Bobby Webster told Sportsnet television the team needs to know "in the coming days. This is not a next week type thing."

The Raptors and the NBA need an exemption to a requirement that anyone entering Canada for nonessential reasons must self-isolate for 14 days. The U.S.-Canada border remains closed to nonessential travel.

The federal government denied the Blue Jays' request to play in Toronto earlier this year because health officials didn't think it was safe for players to travel back and forth from the United States. The number of cases in both countries, but particularly in the U.S., has surged since then.

"The health and safety of Canadians is

our government's top priority and reducing the spread of COVID-19 must always be top of mind," Hajdu's office said in a statement. "We understand that many Canadians are eager to see their favorite professional teams return to play. We are reviewing a proposal from the NBA and the Toronto Raptors for the resumption of NBA basketball in Canada."

The NBA season is set to open Dec. 22, with training camps beginning in about two weeks. Time is running out for the Raptors.

"We are working on, as everyone knows, a kind of parallel path here which is we want to stay in Toronto but as we all know, time is of the essence and we are also working on a path to play elsewhere," Webster said on a call with reporters Tuesday.

"We want to be in Toronto. We want to play here. But we are also realistic about the timing and respectful of the protocols. ... It doesn't necessarily affect our operations. We all know we'll run a basketball team and the 72 games will get played. But just where that is probably more of a — as everyone can imagine — drain on personal decisions and families which always looms large in

this industry."

Dr. Andrew Morris, a professor of infectious diseases at the University of Toronto and the medical director of the Antimicrobial Stewardship Program at Sinai-University Health Network, doesn't think the Raptors should be allowed to play in Canada. Nor does he expect the government to approve it.

"I anticipate the Raptors will have to play south of the border," Morris said. "The logistics, the optics, make no sense."

Morris calls the U.S. a disaster and noted there won't be a bubble in the NBA this time. This season will require teams to travel in the U.S.

The Blue Jays failed to persuade the federal government to grant exemptions and played home games in Buffalo this year. Two cities in Florida — Tampa and Fort Lauderdale — along with Nashville have been reported as potential destinations for the Raptors.

The Canadian government requires a comprehensive public health plan. The plan is being reviewed by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

McCaffrey looks to rev Huskers' offense

Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Upon meeting Luke McCaffrey for the first time, Nebraska defensive lineman Ty Robinson probably hoped his new roommate would cut back on the caffeine.

"That man," Robinson said, "is a ball of energy."

Robinson lived with McCaffrey when they first arrived at Nebraska last year, and he quickly discovered the Cornhuskers' new starting quarterback doesn't know how to dial it down. There's always pep in his step, a slap on the back for everyone on the sideline, a can-do attitude regardless of the situation.

"I feel like he has that fire in him to get other guys going and I think that's going to be key for our offense," Robinson said. "He's got that fire, that competitive edge where we're going to start seeing good things happen."

The Huskers (1-2, 1-2 Big Ten) beat Penn State 30-23 last Saturday for their first win since Nov. 23, 2019. McCaffrey's starting debut was overshadowed by the defense, which made two big stops late in the game after the offense spent most of the second half sputtering.

The move from Adrian Martinez to McCaffrey wasn't a huge surprise, though. The little brother of NFL star Christian McCaffrey had flashed playmaking ability in multiple roles last year and coach Scott Frost knew his offense was better with Luke McCaffrey on the field.

Frost said in the offseason the plan was for McCaffrey to focus on being a quarterback rather than a receiver this season. The

preseason competition between Martinez and McCaffrey was neck-and-neck, and Frost said he would have been comfortable with either one as the starter, but Martinez separated himself because of his incumbency.

Martinez showed little spark in losses to Ohio State and Northwestern, making change imminent.

Frost said McCaffrey was "really solid" against Penn State. The redshirt freshman from Highlands Ranch, Colorado, threw for 152 yards and ran for 67 and, true to his personality, popped up quickly each time he was tackled. He also had a hand in two touchdowns. That doesn't mean McCaffrey has the job locked up.

"It will always be the same: whoever gives us the best chance to win is going to be out there," Frost said, "and whoever practices the best."

McCaffrey accounted for 135 yards playing three positions against Ohio State. He stood ready on the sideline against Northwestern, helmet always on, but didn't get into the game until late in the third quarter other than being a decoy for one play in the first half.

Though fans have clamored to see more of McCaffrey since the middle of last season, he said it wasn't hard waiting for his chance to start.

"I think patience is a very valuable skill for anybody, especially for an athlete," he said. "When it comes to evaluation, I consider myself my hardest critic, and moving forward there are things that can be cleaned up, and efficiency will continue to grow."

McCaffrey's signature play against Penn

State came late in the first half. With a pass rusher closing in, he switched the ball from his right to left hand and dumped it off to Marvin Scott III. The third-and-9 play netted 14 yards, and the Huskers kicked a field goal to lead 27-6 at halftime.

Frost had no problem with the play because it worked.

"I told him this morning I never want to curtail their creative ability as football payers," Frost said. "You have to be disciplined when you do those things and make sure they don't turn into negative plays."

McCaffrey said Martinez has been supportive. Martinez, who didn't play against Penn State, had started all 23 of his career games and is in his second year as a team captain.

"He's been right there by my side," McCaffrey said, "and he's been one of the best role models, best people and best leaders that I've been able to meet."

Nebraska center Cam Jurgens said the offense runs smoothly with either quarterback. McCaffrey does bring an intangible, though.

"Luke has always got an insane amount of energy," Jurgens said. "He's always bouncing around. I think some of the people feed off his energy."

McCaffrey said he gets his zest for life from his mom, Lisa McCaffrey. She was a three-year starter in soccer at Stanford and, he said, is passionate about everything she does. Luke's dad is three-time Super Bowl champion Ed McCaffrey.

Asked if Luke's energy is on all the time or if it ever wanes, his old roomie Robinson said, "All the time, and I love it."

Jackets play waiting game following 2 postponements

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Georgia Tech coach Geoff Collins is trying to make the most out of having two games postponed by COVID-19.

The Yellow Jackets were scheduled to play Pittsburgh at home last week when the Atlantic Coast Conference stepped in and moved the game to Dec. 12 after it was determined that injuries, positive tests and contact tracing left both teams unable to play.

Georgia Tech's game at No. 12 Miami, scheduled for this Saturday, then was postponed until Dec. 19, though Collins said that the Jackets would've been able to play. The

Hurricanes have had their three remaining games rescheduled because of COVID-19 cases in the program, forcing the ACC to shuffle a total of six games over the last month of the season.

"It's unfortunate," Collins said. "We were ready to play. We had an OTA-style practice this morning."

"I feel good about where we are as a program, I feel good about the protocols and the mitigation strategies that our medical professionals have put in place for us."

To keep his players as focused as possible, Collins ran the team through a light practice Tuesday, but it was more like a

spring football session than one the Jackets are accustomed to during the season. Georgia Tech's next game is scheduled for Nov. 28 at home against Duke.

The Jackets (2-5, 2-4 ACC) will spend three weeks without a game because they were coming off a bye after losing 31-13 to then-No. 4 Notre Dame on Oct. 31.

"These are unprecedented times that we're going through," Collins said. "There's no book to go back and say how do we handle coming off a bye week and coming off two games getting canceled, what is that practice schedule supposed to look like? I thought the guys handled it well."