

## Rocket attack in Kabul kills 8 civilians

By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN  
*Stars and Stripes*

KABUL, Afghanistan — At least eight people were killed and dozens wounded when rockets landed on various parts of the Afghan capital Saturday morning, a government official said.

The attack followed two magnetic bomb blasts in other parts of the city earlier in the day and add to a spate of violence that's continued throughout the country despite ongoing peace talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government.

The sound of rocket fire followed by explosions could be heard shortly before 9 a.m. in densely populated areas around Kabul's heavily fortified Green Zone, where the U.S. Embassy and NATO's Afghanistan headquarters are located.

One of the rockets landed on the Iranian Embassy compound, but wounded no one, the embassy said in a statement.

Aliya Azizi, a resident of the Qala-e-Musa neighborhood, said at least two rockets fell near her house and shattered its windows.

"We were having breakfast and suddenly there was some noise and then large explosions that shook the entire house," Azizi told Stars and Stripes, adding that the blasts injured some of her neighbors.

In the nearby area of Shar-e-Now, several businesses and a bakery van were destroyed, with donuts and glass littering the street.

The Taliban, who have pledged not to attack cities as part of a February deal with the U.S., quickly denied involvement and no other group immediately claimed responsibility.

The attack included 23 rockets fired from two vehicles parked north of the city, Interior Ministry spokesman Tariq Arian said. In addition to the deaths, at least 31 people were wounded, Arian said.

Afghan peace negotiator Abdullah Abdullah condemned the violence on Twitter, calling it "cowardly."

"Terrorizing and targeting the civilians must stop," Abdullah said.

Earlier in the day, two separate magnetic bombs exploded, with one in eastern Kabul killing a police officer and wounding three others, Kabul police spokesman Ferdous Faramarz said.

The U.S. Embassy in Kabul on Saturday advised Americans in Afghanistan to maintain a high level of vigilance.

"The security situation in Afghanistan is extremely unstable, and the threat to all U.S. citizens in Afghanistan remains critical," the security alert said.

Saturday's attacks came just hours before Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was to hold separate meetings with Taliban and Afghan government negotiators in Qatar amid stalled peace talks between the sides.

## Experts: Freeze US troop level in Afghanistan

By COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon should freeze troops levels in Afghanistan until the Taliban agrees to stop fighting the Afghan military or the United States risks the country falling back into the fundamentalists' hands, a trio of foreign policy experts told lawmakers on Friday.

The experts told the House Armed Services Committee that without continued U.S. military support — especially air power — the Afghan national security forces were unlikely to win the ongoing war with the Taliban, which would likely return to power.

The hearing came just days after acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller announced President Donald Trump had ordered a drawdown of U.S. troops in Afghanistan from about 5,000 to 2,500 by Jan. 15 — five days before President-elect Joe Biden is to be inaugurated.

"Absent a peace deal, the further withdrawal of U.S. forces will likely continue to shift the balance of power on the ground in

the military campaign in favor of the Taliban and other militant groups, including al-Qaida," said Seth Jones, a senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank.

"The drawdown will have an impact on the U.S.'s ability to train, advise and assist the Afghan national defense and security forces in the middle of the war against the Taliban, a group which we should all remember is an extremist organization committed to establishing an Islamic emirate in the country... Is that what we want to leave behind in Afghanistan?"

Jones testified Friday alongside Ryan Crocker, who served as an ambassador to several nations for former Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, and Stephen Biddle, an international and public affairs professor at Columbia University and a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

The hearing did not include officials from the Pentagon or other federal agencies.

Despite nearly 20 years of U.S. training, the Afghan military is not strong enough to

stand on its own against the Taliban, said Biddle, who implored Trump to rescind his withdrawal order and allow Biden to begin his presidency with 5,000 troops in Afghanistan.

Biddle argued the troops remaining in the country were just as important to backing ongoing negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban as to boosting Afghan troops' battlefield success.

The presence of American troops, he argued, was a "critical bargaining chip" in those negotiations that have achieved little since beginning in September.

"I believe our interests are best served by no further withdrawals without a settlement to end the war," Biddle said.

"We should be prepared to withdraw those troops entirely in exchange for negotiating concessions from the Taliban precisely in order to increase our ability to get such concessions," he said.

Like the witnesses, most House Armed Services Committee members who spoke Friday agreed some American troops should remain in Afghanistan.

# US deaths reach highest level since May

*Associated Press*

The surging coronavirus is taking an increasingly dire toll across the U.S. just as a vaccine appears close at hand, with the country now averaging over 1,300 COVID-19 deaths per day — the highest level since the calamitous spring in and around New York City.

The overall U.S. death toll has reached about 254,000, by far the most in the world. Confirmed infections have eclipsed more than 11.8 million, after the biggest one-day gain on record Thursday — almost 188,000. And the number of people in the hospital with COVID-19 hit another all-time high at more than 80,000.

With health experts deeply afraid

Thanksgiving travel and holiday gatherings next week will fuel the spread of the virus, many states and cities are imposing near-lockdowns or other restrictions. California ordered a 10 p.m.-to 5-a.m. curfew starting Saturday, covering 94% of the state's 40 million residents.

The Texas border county of El Paso, where more than 300 people have died from COVID-19 since October, is advertising jobs for morgue workers capable of lifting bodies weighing 175 pounds or more. Officials are offering more than \$27 an hour for work described as not only physically arduous but “emotionally taxing as well.”

The county had already begun paying jail inmates \$2 an hour to help move corpses

and has ordered at least 10 refrigerated trucks as morgues run out of room.

COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. are at their highest level since late May, when the Northeast was emerging from the first wave of the crisis. They peaked at about 2,200 a day in late April, when New York City was the epicenter and bodies were being loaded onto refrigerated trucks by forklift.

Among the newly infected was President Donald Trump's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., who a spokesman said Friday has no symptoms and has been quarantining since learning of his diagnosis earlier this week.

Amid the bleak new statistics, Pfizer said Friday it is asking U.S. regulators to allow emergency use of its COVID-19 vaccine.

## Biden wants coronavirus aid in lame-duck session

*Associated Press*

WILMINGTON, Del. — President-elect Joe Biden is pushing Congress to approve billions of dollars in emergency COVID-19 assistance before he takes office, saying in a meeting Friday with the top Democrats in the House and Senate that such a package should be approved during the lame-duck session.

Biden held his first in-person meeting since winning the presidential election with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer, hosting them at his makeshift transition headquarters in a downtown Wilmington, Del., theater.

Biden's new governing team is facing in-

tense pressure to approve another coronavirus relief bill and come up with a clear plan to distribute millions of doses of a prospective vaccine. That comes as Biden is just days away from unveiling the first of his Cabinet picks, which are subject to Senate confirmation.

“In my Oval Office, mi casa, you casa,” Biden, who sat with Schumer, Pelosi and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris, all wearing masks and spaced out around a bank of tables, said during the brief portion of the meeting journalists witnessed. “I hope we're going to spend a lot of time together.”

According to a readout of the meeting later released by Biden's team, the group

“agreed that Congress needed to pass a bipartisan emergency aid package in the lame duck session,” which is the period after Election Day but before Congress adjourns for the year.

It added that the “package should include resources to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, relief for working families and small businesses, support for state and local governments trying to keep frontline workers on the payroll, expanded unemployment insurance, and affordable health care for millions of families.”

The sense of urgency in the meeting was echoed in comments earlier Friday by Biden transition aide Jen Psaki, who warned that “there's no more room for delay.”

## DOD officials not quarantining after virus exposure

*The Washington Post*

WASHINGTON — The acting Pentagon chief and several other senior defense officials who were exposed to the novel coronavirus last week will not be quarantining, citing ongoing testing and safety precautions that appear to have been applied unevenly.

The officials, including acting defense secretary Christopher Miller, attended a meeting at the Pentagon on Nov. 13 with the Lithuanian defense minister, Raimundas Karoblis, whose embassy on Thursday said he had tested positive for the novel coronavirus, according to chief Pentagon spokesman Jonathan Hoffman.

Additional tests on Thursday showed that retired Brig. Gen. Anthony Tata, who performs the duties of the undersecretary of defense, also has the virus. He will isolate at home for the next 14 days, Hoffman said.

The Pentagon said others are tested, and did not disclose any other positive tests.

Hoffman's statement said the Pentagon recently “recommitted to fastidiously following” guidelines outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, including face coverings, social distancing, contact tracing, hand washing and virtual engagements.

Most of the Joint Chiefs of Staff quarantined early last month when Adm. Charles

Ray, the vice commandant of the Coast Guard, tested positive for the virus after a meeting at the Pentagon. Gen. Gary Thomas, the assistant commandant of the Marine Corps, also later tested positive after attending the same meeting.

But CDC guidelines have not been uniformly enforced since then, according to photographs, videos and other materials released by the Defense Department. When Karoblis arrived at the Pentagon, he reached out to shake Miller's hand, according to a report released by the Pentagon. Miller greeted him with an elbow bump “before committing to a handshake,” the report said. The CDC does not recommend handshakes.

# Iran warns allies not to provoke US

*Associated Press*

BAGHDAD — Iran has instructed allies across the Middle East to be on high alert and avoid provoking tensions with the U.S. that could give an outgoing Trump administration cause to launch attacks in the U.S. president's final weeks in office, Iraqi officials have said.

The request — delivered by a senior Iranian general to allies in Baghdad this week — reflects the growing regional anxiety over President Donald Trump's unpredictable behavior and the uncertainty in the chaotic transition period until President-elect Joe Biden takes over in two months.

Iran's allies have collectively welcomed Trump's election defeat. Under his presidency, tensions with Iran escalated, reaching a fever pitch at the beginning of the year with the U.S. airstrike that killed Iran's top general, Qassem Soleimani, at the Baghdad airport. Iran launched a ballistic missile attack in response to the fatal drone strike, targeting U.S. soldiers in Iraq and

wounding dozens.

Trump also unilaterally withdrew America in 2018 from Iran's nuclear deal with world powers, meant to prevent it from developing nuclear weapons, and re-imposed punishing sanctions on Iran, crippling its economy. The incoming Biden administration has stated plans to rejoin or renegotiate the 2015 accord.

But there is growing concern over what Trump might do in the last days of his presidency — including a potential strike on America's enemies abroad. On Thursday, an adviser to Iran's supreme leader warned in an interview with The Associated Press that any American attack on Iran could set off a "full-fledged war" in the region.

The concern does not appear to be rooted in anything concrete — Trump has, in fact, ordered a drawdown of U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan to be completed by mid-January — but rather in general nervousness about the unpredictability of Trump's actions. His firing of Defense Secretary Mark

Esper two days after the election triggered a flurry of speculation about whether it was related to a broader plan to strike abroad.

With two months to go until a Biden administration takes over, Iranian Gen. Esmail Ghaani, head of the Guard's expeditionary Quds Force, delivered Tehran's request during a meeting with Iranian-backed Iraqi militia factions and Shiite politicians in Baghdad this week, according to two senior Iraqi Shiite politicians who attended the meetings in Baghdad.

The message: Stand down to avoid giving Trump the opportunity to initiate a fresh tit-for-tat round of violence. And to the Iraqi Shiite paramilitaries: Be calm and cease attacks for now against American presence in Iraq.

But only hours after Ghaani delivered Iran's message in Baghdad — and while he was still in Iraq — a barrage of Katyusha rockets were fired at the Iraqi capital's heavily fortified Green Zone, landing a few hundred yards from the U.S. Embassy.

## Biden turns 78, set to become oldest US president

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — President-elect Joe Biden turned 78 on Friday. In two months, he'll take the reins of a politically fractured nation facing the worst public health crisis in a century, high unemployment and a reckoning on racial injustice.

As he wrestles with those issues, Biden will be attempting to accomplish another feat: demonstrating to Americans that age is but a number, and he's up to the job.

Biden will be sworn in as the oldest president in the nation's history, displacing Ronald Reagan, who left the White House in 1989 when he was 77 years and 349 days old.

The age and health of both Biden and President Donald Trump — less than four years Biden's junior — loomed throughout a

race that was decided by a younger and more diverse electorate and at a moment when the nation is facing no shortage of issues of consequence.

Throughout the campaign, Trump, 74, didn't miss a chance to highlight Biden's gaffes and argue that the Democrat lacked the mental acuity to lead the nation. Both critics and some backers of Biden worried that he was sending the wrong message about his stamina by keeping a relatively light public schedule while Trump barnstormed battleground states. Biden attributed his light schedule to the pandemic.

Biden's relatively advanced age also puts a greater premium on the quality of his staff, Ross Baker, a political scientist at Rutgers University who has advised legisla-

tors from both parties, said. His choice of Sen. Kamala Harris, nearly 20 years younger than him, as his running mate effectively acknowledged his age issue.

His physician, Dr. Kevin O'Connor, in a medical report released by the campaign last December, described Biden as "healthy, vigorous ... fit to successfully execute the duties of the Presidency, to include those as Chief Executive, Head of State and Commander in Chief."

A September article by a group of researchers in the Journal on Active Aging concluded that both Biden and Trump are "super-agers" and are likely to outlive their American contemporaries and maintain their health beyond the end of the next presidential term.

## Revolutionary Guard launches warship amid tensions with US

*Associated Press*

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard said it launched a heavy warship Thursday capable of carrying helicopters, drones and missile launchers amid ongoing tensions with the U.S.

Photographs of the ship, named after slain Guard naval commander Abdollah

Roudaki, showed it carrying truck-launched surface-to-surface missiles and anti-aircraft missiles. It also carried four small fast boats, the kind the Guard routinely uses in the Persian Gulf. Sailors manned deck-mounted machine guns.

The commander of the Guard's navy, Adm. Ali Reza Tangsiri, suggested his

forces wanted to move beyond the waters of the Gulf into deep-water patrolling.

The ship appears to be an answer to U.S. Navy patrols in the region by its Bahrain-based 5th Fleet. U.S. aircraft carriers routinely travel through Mideast waters. Iran sees those missions, as well as Israel's expanding presence in the region, as a threat.

# Trump's eldest son tests positive for virus

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Saturday his eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., is doing “very well” in quarantine after becoming infected with the coronavirus.

“My son Donald is doing very well. Thank you!” the president tweeted, following Friday’s disclosure that the 42-year-old Trump scion had become one of the nearly 12 million Americans infected by the virus.

More than 250,000 Americans have lost their lives to the virus, the highest death toll of any country.

Donald Trump Jr. learned of his positive test result earlier this week, has had no symptoms and was following all medically recommended guidelines for treating the illness, said a spokesperson, who was granted anonymity to discuss private medical information.

President Trump, first lady Melania Trump and their son Barron all recovered from their coronavirus infections in October. The president spent three days in a military hospital, where he was treated with experimental drugs; the first lady weathered her illness at the White House.

## California

SACRAMENTO — One of Gov. Gavin Newsom’s children may have been exposed to the coronavirus at school and is in quarantine, a spokesman said Friday.

The child began a 14-day quarantine “from the date of exposure” after the family was told a classmate at the private school had tested positive for COVID-19, Nathan Click said in an emailed statement.

The rest of the governor’s family is not quarantining because they weren’t directly exposed.

The governor, his wife and all four of their children have tested negative for the virus, Click said. He didn’t identify the child who was in quarantine.

Newsom had a rapid test this week that was negative, and he will get a regular test this weekend, Click said.

Newsom said last month that his children had returned to their private school in Sacramento, sparking criticism even as millions of public school children continue to study online or through other distance learning measures because of concerns.

## Oregon

PORTLAND — The Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association is seeking a court or-

der from a federal judge to block Gov. Kate Brown’s “two-week freeze” that bans dining in restaurants in response to a spike in COVID-19 cases.

The association, which represents 10,000 food service and 2,000 lodging businesses across the state, argues the new restrictions will cause devastating effects for its members and their employees, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.

The association and the public policy group Restaurant Law Center filed the lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Portland on Friday, two days after the governor’s new executive order took effect.

The order, expected to last at least through Dec. 2, limits social get-togethers to no more than six people from no more than two households and limits restaurants to take-out and delivery only.

## Mississippi

GULFPORT — A Mississippi Gulf Coast casino has become one of many businesses nationwide to sue its insurer for refusing to cover business losses because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Island View Casino Resort in Gulfport contends in the federal lawsuit that its insurer owes it \$10 million for business losses caused by a 65-day COVID-19 shutdown in the spring.

Gulfside Casino Partnership, Island View’s owner, is also demanding \$90 million in punitive damages, attorney’s fees and interest.

Island View says it lost \$46.2 million in revenue when it was closed from March 16 until May 21 under orders from the Mississippi Gaming Commission. However, its policy only covers up to \$10 million.

Insurance companies argue the property must suffer actual physical damage, as it would in a hurricane, to recover losses under their policies.

## Kentucky

LOUISVILLE — Kentucky reported 3,825 new confirmed coronavirus cases and 20 more virus-related deaths Friday, as new restrictions went into effect aiming to slow the virus’s spread.

“Remember, your decisions are going to be what determines how many people live or die. Do your part,” Gov. Andy Beshear said, urging Kentuckians to follow the new requirements.

Starting Friday, private indoor gatherings are being limited to two households, with a maximum of eight people. For rough-

ly three weeks, bars and restaurants must close indoor dining, though they are permitted to continue curbside pickup, delivery and outdoor dining services.

Event venue capacity is limited to 25 people. Gym capacity is lowered to 33%, and group classes, team practices and competitions are prohibited. Beshear has also encouraged houses of worship to refrain from in-person services.

## Idaho

BOISE — Hunting license sales in Idaho are up as more residents seek a way to safely get out of the house without contracting COVID-19, but that has led to inexperienced hunters misidentifying and killing moose and a grizzly bear, wildlife officials say.

“Hunting is that outdoor activity that follows all the COVID recommendations and gets people outside,” Idaho Department of Fish and Game Enforcement Chief Greg Wooten said Friday. “They’re doing what they’re being asked to do. They just need to comply with the (wildlife hunting) laws.”

Wooten said the most shocking incident for him has been the illegal killing of three moose in Valley County over a two-week period this fall. Two appear to be hunters who thought the moose was some other animal. Wooten said the third appeared to be a case of someone shooting a large bull and just leaving it to rot.

Idaho has also had at least two federally protected grizzly bears shot and killed. In September, a hunter in northern Idaho mistook a grizzly bear for a black bear. The hunters reported the mistake to Fish and Game.

## New York

NEW YORK — Renewing restrictions on indoor dining in New York City amid surging coronavirus infections could deal a crippling financial blow to restaurants and their workers and should come with financial support, an industry group said Friday.

The NYC Hospitality Alliance made the plea as Mayor Bill de Blasio said Friday that he expected the state to impose restrictions in the city around the first week of December that would limit restaurants to outdoor dining.

The alliance had not seen any contact tracing data showing that indoor dining, which resumed this fall under tight restrictions, is causing recent infections, executive director Andrew Rigie said.

He called for the city, state and federal governments to provide financial support for business owners and workers.

## Robbers scared away by man's antique walking stick

**IL** NILES — An 81-year-old former Marine from suburban Chicago used his grandfather's antique Irish walking stick to chase off three burglars and deliver one a thump in the head for his trouble.

Dan and Barbara Donovan told the Pioneer Press newspaper group that a man in a reflective vest and mask knocked on their door in Niles on Nov. 4 and said he was a utility worker who needed to check their fuse box due to a recent fire in the area.

Barbara Donovan said while they were in the basement with the man, who was looking at their electric circuit panel, she heard squeaking floorboards upstairs realized something wasn't right.

When the couple reached the main floor, they found two other men inside, one holding a pillowcase from their bedroom.

Donovan struck the man with the pillowcase in the back of the head with his grandfather's shillelagh — an antique Irish walking stick. The man held onto the pillowcase as he followed his two cohorts outside.

## 'Tiger King' star accused of inhuman treatment of animals

**OK** MUSKOGEE — Netflix's "Tiger King" star Jeff Lowe has been accused of recurring inhumane treatment and improper handling of endangered species of animals, according to a civil complaint.

The U.S. Justice Department filed the complaint in federal district court in Muskogee, Okla., against Lowe, his wife Lauren Lowe, the Greater Wynnewood Exotic Animal Park he took over from founder Joe Exotic in 2016 and Tiger King, LLC.

After closing the Wynnewood zoo, the Lowes agreed to pay more than \$100,000 in delinquent state sales taxes from sales at the zoo. Then, the federal complaint alleges they created an illegal, unlicensed wildlife park on a 33-acre tract in Thackerville, Okla., named "Tiger King Park."

The complaint accuses the Lowes of violating the Endangered Species Act "by illegally taking, possessing, and transporting protected animals," according to a Justice Department statement.

## Woman receives \$17M after being injured in Walmart

**WV** CHARLESTON — The West Virginia Supreme Court affirmed a nearly \$17 million jury verdict for a woman who was injured in 2019 when staffers tried to detain a shoplifter in Walmart.

The court rejected the retail giant's appeal.

A lawyer for Diane Ankrom, 53, said employees were trying to detain a shoplifter when he ran into Ankrom's shopping cart, which was carrying her granddaughter. Ankrom fell to the ground with the cart falling on top of her.

Ankrom's lawyers said she has had multiple surgeries and has been admitted to the hospital over 20 times.

## Residents escape burning house; arson suspect arrested

**NE** OMAHA — Several people escaped harm when they managed to get out of a burning Omaha house, and a man was later arrested on suspicion of arson, fire officials said.

The fire broke in a north Omaha garage and quickly consumed the house next to it, Battalion Chief Scott Fitzpatrick said in a news release. Four adults and three children managed to escape, fire officials said.

Investigators believe the fire was intentionally set, and police arrested a 33-year-old man who lived at the home but was found a short distance away. Police said the man faces several counts of arson.

## Man suspected of stalking co-worker is shot and killed

**NV** LAS VEGAS — Authorities are investigating after a man was killed in an exchange of gunfire outside a Las Vegas home.

A woman who lives in the home told investigators she was afraid a male co-worker was following her and had another man walk her to her door.

According to Lt. Ray Spencer, the male co-worker showed up and the woman and the other man ran inside. The co-worker then fired one round into the door. The other man was also armed and returned fire through the door. The bullet hit the co-worker.

Police arrived on the scene and found him outside and pronounced him dead.

## Ex-school district secretary indicted in \$40,000 theft

**AZ** JOSEPH CITY — A state grand jury has indicted a former Joseph City Unified School District secretary who is accused of stealing more than \$40,000 of district funds.

In addition to her duties as attendance secretary, Tonnie Rae Pugh was responsible for depositing funds raised through student activities and those raised by auxiliary

operations like athletic event ticket sales.

Pugh is accused of using her position to take cash payments she collected from faculty, students and parents for her own use.

## Driver arrested following long pursuit and crash

**ND** FARGO — A Fargo man is accused of leading authorities on a lengthy pursuit.

Clay County deputies chased the vehicle into Cass County where they lost sight of the car. Cass County deputies later spotted the car which fled at a high rate of speed on a gravel road, KFGO reported.

A short time later, a North Dakota state trooper spotted the vehicle and chased it on County Road 15 just south of Horace.

Spike strips were used on the roadway to stop the driver. He lost control of his car, entered a ditch and rolled over.

## Chicago's Shedd Aquarium closing through end of year

**IL** CHICAGO — The Shedd Aquarium will voluntarily close to the public through the new year as part of a commitment to the health and safety of the Chicago community, the attraction announced.

"We are taking this action proactively for the positive influence it may have for all," said the aquarium's president and CEO, Bridget Coughlin.

The Shedd Aquarium is home to 32,000 aquatic animals representing 1,500 species of fishes, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, birds and mammals from waters around the globe.

## Company to pay \$16M to employees over breaks

**OR** PORTLAND — Thousands of Les Schwab Tire Centers employees in Oregon will receive \$2,500 checks as part of a settlement over a lawsuit that said the chain hadn't given workers enough time for lunch.

The suit alleged the Schwab employees hadn't received the full, 30-minute lunch breaks that Oregon law requires for hourly employees, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.

The Bend-based company continues to maintain that it provides the requisite lunch breaks but agreed to pay \$16 million to over 3,700 employees to settle the case.

The two plaintiffs who brought the case in 2017 will receive \$15,000 each. Twenty-five others who submitted declarations in support of the lawsuit will receive a \$1,000, in addition to the \$2,500.

# Pats hope resurgence equals playoffs

Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — Cam Newton was adamant at the trade deadline that the answers to the Patriots turning things around were already within their locker room. Over the past two weeks his teammates have done their best to fulfill their quarterback's prophecy.

From Jakobi Meyers becoming Newton's new go-to receiver to Damien Harris fortifying the running game, the Patriots' offensive production is trending upward.

Currently sitting at third in the AFC East and in 10th place in the conference, it will take more than a couple of wins to get New England back into the playoff conversation, with matchups with the Cardinals, Rams, Dolphins and Bills — all owning winning records — still on tap. But the best news for their prospects is Newton says he's experiencing a comfort level under center he hasn't felt since before he tested positive for the coronavirus in early Oc-

tober.

"Ever since coming back from corona, to be honest with you, I felt stagnant in my thought process," Newton said. "The pre-snap production wasn't happening fast enough for me in games. Did it happen in practice? Yeah, but still not fast enough. Even still now I can get better. So each day, each week is an opportunity for me to really hone in on this offense and just do my job. That's what it really boils down to."

Newton remains adamant that his struggles aren't tied to any lingering effects from COVID-19. He instead believes the lost continuity was the biggest factor in his throwing seven interceptions in his first five games, and virtually being reduced to a running back in the offense.

"It showed, coming back pretty much dry," he said. "Identifying, communicating with the offensive line, with the receivers, with the running backs — it's my job to do so. Coming back, I just felt behind.

The production here of late is nothing to blame; more or less than me just taking ownership and responsibility that I've just got to be better."

Since New England's 33-6 loss to San Francisco in Week 7, Newton hasn't thrown an interception. His quarterback rating has also increased from a season-low 39.7 against the 49ers to a season-best 114.3 rating last week against Baltimore.

It's been a remarkable resurgence considering Newton has managed to do it without veteran receiver Julian Edelman, who has been on injured reserve since Oct. 31. Stepping up to fill the void have been Meyers and Harris.

Harris has rushed for more than 100 yards twice over the past three games, including a career-high 121 yards against the Ravens.

Meyers was instrumental in the Patriots' win over the Jets on Nov. 9, catching a career-high 12 passes for 169 yards to help them snap a four-game skid. The 2019 undrafted rookie was

at it again last week in Sunday's 23-17 win over the Ravens. He not only led his team with five catches for 59 yards, but also showed off his skills as a former high school quarterback, throwing a 24-yard, go-ahead touchdown pass to Rex Burkhead in the second quarter.

It's the fulfillment of the "star" potential Newton says he saw in the then-16-year-old when Meyers participated in the 7-on-7 tournaments Newton's foundation sponsored for players outside of Atlanta. Alums of those camps include Texans quarterback Deshaun Watson as well college players such as Auburn quarterback Bo Nix, Georgia receiver George Pickens and Oklahoma receiver Jadon Haselwood.

It's that same potential that prompted Newton to pull Meyers aside for a pep talk prior to the Patriots' Week 6 matchup with Denver. Meyers was inactive for that game and had caught only one pass in his first three appearances of the season.

## QB Brees to miss next three games for Saints

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — The Saints placed quarterback Drew Brees on injured reserve Friday, meaning he'll miss at least three games with rib injuries.

Brees was unable to finish last Sunday's game after absorbing a heavy hit on a sack attempt by 287-pound San Francisco defensive tackle Kentavious Street, who was penalized for roughing on the play.

Street landed on the right side of Brees' torso as the two went to the ground, and Brees was diagnosed Monday with rib fractures and a collapsed lung.

Brees, 41, has played efficiently this season for New Orleans, completing 73.5% of his passes for 2,196 yards and 18 touchdowns with three interceptions in eight-and-a-half games.

An injured reserve designation previously would end a player's season with fewer than eight games remaining, but this year

the NFL has adopted more flexible roster rules because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Brees already was not expected to play this week. New Orleans' other two quarterbacks are Jameis Winston and Taysom Hill, who have been splitting time working with first-team receivers during periods of practice open to reporters.

Sean Payton declined after practice Friday to publicly name a starter for Sunday's home game against Atlanta, but also said he had made a decision. After Brees left last Sunday's victory over the 49ers, Winston took most of the snaps, going 6-for-10 for 63 yards. He did not throw for a touchdown.

Hill signed a two-year extension for about \$21 million, a signal that New Orleans considered him a legitimate candidate to step in when Brees retires.

### Browns lose Garrett to COVID-19

CLEVELAND — Myles Garrett has been

slowed down just when the Browns need him most.

Cleveland's dynamic star defensive end and the NFL's leader in sacks will miss Sunday's game against Philadelphia — and maybe more — after testing positive for COVID-19, dealing the Browns a major blow as they try to end an 18-year playoff drought.

"He is a good player," Browns coach Kevin Stefanski said Friday. "We know that. We do not want to be without him, but we are."

The Browns (6-3) won't have Garrett against the Eagles and there's no predicting when he'll be back. According to league rules, a player who tests positive for coronavirus can't return to the team until at least 10 days after the onset of symptoms, plus at least 24 hours after symptoms have passed.

Garrett stayed home from practice on Wednesday and Thursday because he was showing symptoms.

# Jags face ex-teammates down stretch

Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — The Jacksonville Jaguars are seeing former teammates nearly every week, so many down the stretch that it could be considered a Revenge Tour.

It started last Sunday, when veteran tight end Mercedes Lewis, receiver Allen Lazard, running back Tyler Ervin and offensive coordinator Nathaniel Hackett faced their former team for the first time since leaving Jacksonville. The Packers won 24-20.

Next up: Pittsburgh defensive end Tyson Alualu, a first-round draft pick in 2010 who returns to Jacksonville on Sunday.

Alualu spent seven years with the Jaguars (1-8) after then-general manager Gene Smith surprisingly chose him with the 10th overall pick.

Alualu's productivity never matched his draft position, although his durability was another story.

The 6-foot-3, 300-pound Hawaiian didn't miss a game because of injury during his time in Jacksonville; he was a healthy scratch for the first two weeks in 2016.

He's been equally stout for the unbeaten Steelers (9-0).

"Man, I can't say enough about Tyson. His play is really consistent and very productive," Pittsburgh coach Mike Tomlin said. "Just his leadership, his quiet leadership, how he goes about his business, how he lives his life, is a shining ex-

ample for young players.

"He's been an awesome addition to us and really has been a significant component to why we've been able to play good defense. It was evident in recent weeks, particularly in run defense, when we did not have him."

But don't expect Alualu to make much of facing the team that let him go in 2017, after paying him more than \$28 million.

"That's not his agenda. He's not petty in any way," Tomlin said.

Others might be: The Jaguars will face seven more former regulars over its next five games:

## Ronnie Harrison

Harrison returns to Jacksonville on Nov. 29. The Jaguars traded the 2018 third-round pick to Cleveland a little more than a week before the opener, parting ways because veteran Josh Jones beat Harrison out in training camp. The Browns gave up a fifth-rounder in 2021 to land Harrison, who has started four straight games and totaled 27 tackles and five pass breakups.

## Yannick Ngakoue

Ngakoue was initially scheduled to face Jacksonville in Minnesota on Dec. 6, but he will have to wait two weeks after getting traded to Baltimore. The Jaguars got a second-rounder and a conditional fifth for Ngakoue, who is second in franchise

history with 37½ sacks. He has ripped Jacksonville repeatedly, including getting in a Twitter spat with minority owner Tony Khan in April.

## Calais Campbell

The "Mayor of Jacksonville" was dumped as part of a salary cap purge in March. Baltimore gave up a fifth-round selection to get a veteran leader — the NFL's reigning Walter Payton Man of the Year — and a defensive stalwart who started every game in three seasons with the Jags. Campbell has 24 tackles, including four sacks, and six pass breakups for one of the league's best defenses.

## Nick Foles

Foles also was part of the salary dump and will return to Jacksonville in Week 16. Chicago gave up a compensatory fourth to get Foles, who started the past seven games for the Bears. The trade allowed Jacksonville to recoup some of the \$50.125 million it guaranteed the 2018 Super Bowl MVP as part of a four-year contract in 2019.

## John DeFilippo

DeFilippo and Foles were a package deal. Jaguars coach Doug Marrone brought "Flip" on as offensive coordinator two months before free agency, likely to help lure Foles in free agency. When Foles failed, Marrone fired DeFilippo after just one season. He landed in Chicago as quarterbacks coach, reuniting

with Foles.

## Tashaun Gipson

Gipson was an integral part of Jacksonville's defense that led it to the AFC championship game in 2018. He was sent packing a year later, a cost-cutting move that helped create enough salary cap space to sign Foles. He has started every game for the Bears this season.

## Allen Robinson

Robinson is, without question, the best receiver Jacksonville has drafted. The Jaguars let the 2014 second-round pick leave in free agency after he missed most of 2017 with a knee injury. They've spent nearly \$32 million trying to replace him with Marqise Lee, Donte Moncrief and Chris Conley.

## Browns activate two

CLEVELAND— The Browns will have starting right tackle Jack Conklin and kicker Cody Parkey on Sunday against Philadelphia after both were activated from the COVID-19 list.

The team made the moves on Saturday, capping a rough few days as the Browns (6-3) navigated around positive tests and protocols.

While it will be good to have Conklin and Parkey to play the NFC East-leading Eagles (3-5-1), the Browns won't have star defensive end Myles Garrett. He tested positive for the coronavirus on Friday and will miss Sunday's game.

# Roberts' 3 TDs help Air Force hammer New Mexico

Associated Press

AIR FORCE ACADEMY, Colo. — Brad Roberts rushed for 177 yards and three touchdowns, Haaziq Daniels added 56 yards rushing and a score, and Air Force overcame three second-half turnovers to beat New Mexico 28-0 on Friday night.

Air Force scored a touchdown on its first three possessions of the game while New

Mexico punted on three of its first four — along with a fumble. The Falcons fumbled it on three straight drives in the second half, but New Mexico followed each with a missed field goal.

Roberts, in his second game with Air Force, had scoring runs of 5, 12 and 44 yards.

Daniels scored from the 4, and also com-

pleted 4 of 5 passes for 66 yards.

Air Force (2-2, 1-2 Mountain West) secured its first shutout in a conference game since the 2011 season — also against New Mexico.

Trae Hall was 23-for-42 for 221 yards and an interception for New Mexico (0-4, 0-4). The Lobos missed field goals of 37, 40, 50 and 51 yards.

# Fox, Kings agree on 5-year max deal

Associated Press

On the first night of free agency, De'Aaron Fox was the first huge winner.

Huge, as in \$163 million — or even more.

Fox and the Sacramento Kings agreed on a max deal Friday night, agent Chris Gaston said. It's a five-year pact that will pay Fox \$163 million, and that figure could rise to nearly \$200 million if Fox makes an All-NBA team or receives other league honors.

Fox's numbers have improved in each of his three NBA seasons. He averaged 11.6 points as a rookie, then 17.3 points two seasons ago and finally 21.1 points last season for the Kings. His field goal percentage has also risen in each of the last two seasons.

Fox's extension will kick in for the 2021-22 season and start at \$28.1 million.

Free agency opened in the NBA on Friday at 6 p.m. EST. No deals can be signed until 12:01 p.m. Sunday, and many of the biggest available names did not make immediate decisions.

A breakdown of moves Friday:

**Atlanta:** Danilo Gallinari — one of the top wings on the free-agent market — agreed to a three-year contract worth \$61.5 million, a person with knowledge told AP. ESPN and the Atlanta Journal-Constitution first reported the agreement.

**Brooklyn:** Joe Harris has agreed to resign with the Nets, keeping one of the NBA's best shooters in Brooklyn.

Priority Sports, which represents Harris, announced the deal on Twitter. ESPN reported that Harris would get \$75 million over four years.

**Dallas:** The Mavericks and Trey Burke have agreed on a \$10 million, three-year contract to bring the guard back after he

played well in the NBA bubble.

**Denver:** Facundo Campazzo agreed to a two-year deal with the Denver Nuggets on Friday's opening day of free agency, according to a person with direct knowledge of the deal.

**Detroit:** Jerami Grant is headed to Detroit on a three-year, \$60 million deal, player representative Mike Kneisley of The Neustadt Group said.

The Pistons received commitments Friday night from centers Mason Plumlee and Jahlil Okafor, people familiar with those deals told AP.

**L.A. Clippers:** Marcus Morris is staying with the Clippers on a four-year deal, a person with knowledge told AP. ESPN, which first reported the agreement, said it was a \$64 million contract.

Also Friday, Patrick Patterson will return on a one-year contract, AP was told.

**L.A. Lakers:** The defending NBA champions are adding Sixth Man of the Year Montrezl Harrell as a free agent from the Clippers, a person with knowledge of the deal told AP.

**Miami:** The Heat got quick agreements from point guard Goran Dragic and center Meyers Leonard on two-year deals, the second year in both cases being team options. Dragic will make about \$18 million next season, Leonard about \$9 million.

**Minnesota:** The Timberwolves reached a \$60 million agreement with restricted free agent shooting guard Malik Beasley that's for three years plus a team option for a fourth year, a person with knowledge of the deal confirmed to AP.

The Timberwolves also finalized and confirmed three draft-night trades, including

the deal with Oklahoma City reuniting them with point guard Ricky Rubio.

**New York:** Alec Burks is the first free agent addition under Knicks President Leon Rose.

The swingman agreed to a \$6 million, one-year deal, first reported by ESPN and confirmed by his agent.

**Orlando:** A person with knowledge of the negotiations said the Magic and guard Dwayne Bacon agreed on a one-year deal for about \$2.5 million this coming season. The Magic hold a team option for 2021-22, the person who spoke to AP said.

**Philadelphia:** Veteran center Dwight Howard is going to join the 76ers on a one-year deal worth the veteran's minimum of \$2.6 million, agent Charles Briscoe told AP.

**Portland:** Derrick Jones Jr., the league's reigning Slam Dunk champion, agreed to a two-year deal with the Trail Blazers. The Athletic first reported the agreement, which a person with knowledge later confirmed to AP.

**Utah:** Jordan Clarkson is staying and Derrick Favors is coming back, according to people with direct knowledge of the transactions.

Clarkson agreed to a four-year, \$52 million deal; Favors — a post player who spent most of his NBA career in Utah before playing with New Orleans last season — returns on a deal that will pay him nearly \$30 million for three seasons.

**Washington:** Davis Bertans is staying with the Wizards on a five-year deal worth \$80 million, a person with knowledge of the details told AP. Bertans picked a good time for his best season, averaging 15.4 points in 54 games.

## MLS PLAYOFFS ROUNDUP

### Nashville tops Inter Miami in all-expansion play-in game

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Randall Leal and Hany Mukhtar scored 10 minutes apart in the first half and Nashville beat Inter Miami 3-0 on Friday night in an all-expansion play-in round game.

Nashville advanced to face Toronto FC, last year's runner-up, on Tuesday night in East Hartford, Conn.

Leal scored the club's first playoff goal in

the 14th minute with a shot from distance. Mukhtar sent Miami goalkeeper John McCarthy diving the wrong way on a penalty kick in the 24th.

Dax McCarty, who played in his 24 MLS playoff games, made it 3-0 in the 57th.

**Revolution 2, Impact 1:** Gustavo Bou scored on a long shot in the 95th minute to lift New England past Montreal in Foxborough, Mass.

New England advanced in the playoffs for the first time in six seasons.

It will face the top-seeded Philadelphia Union on the road Tuesday night in the first round.

Carles Gil volleyed home his first goal of the season in the 38th minute to open the scoring for New England. Romell Quioto tied it in the 61st minute, heading in a free kick.