

Army boosts Indo-Pacific presence

By ROSE L. THAYER

Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — The Army's 5th Security Force Assistance Brigade is halfway through a training rotation set to prepare its troops to advise partner countries in the Indo-Pacific — a region where American forces look to gain a foothold against Chinese influence.

"Our goal is to be a partner of choice in a dangerous world. What we want is our partners to see the way we operate," Brig. Gen. Scott Jackson, commander of the Security Force Assistance Command, said Wednesday during a call with reporters.

His command serves as the higher headquarters for all five of the Army's active-duty advisory brigades, known as SFABs. A sixth SFAB was established in the National Guard.

Based out of Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., more than 600 soldiers from the 5th SFAB are running through a first-of-its-kind, large-scale training rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La., to prepare for deployment next year to several countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

The 14-day exercise simulates guiding a partner nation's military through an inva-

sion and insurgency from a hostile neighbor, said Brig. Gen. Curtis Taylor, brigade commander.

"How do we enable [our partners] to do that? How do we give them the right capacity? How do we give them the right training?" are the questions he said his brigade must answer.

About 2,300 soldiers from Lewis-McChord's 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team of the 2nd Infantry Division are serving as the opposing force for the rotation. They've been told to fight and operate as they would in combat.

Previous training rotations for security force assistance brigades have focused on counterinsurgency missions in Afghanistan, but earlier this year the Security Force Assistance Command regionally aligned each of its five brigades with combatant commands of the world: Southern Command, Africa Command, Central Command, European Command and Pacific Command. Now the brigades are beginning to train specifically for the region they support, Jackson said. The National Guard's SFAB is designed to augment the active units.

This alignment is consistent with the National Defense Strategy, Jackson said.

In the Pacific, the defense strategy calls for strengthened alliances and partnerships.

"You're not helping them by taking the American processes and insisting that they do it our way," Jackson said. Instead countries want to learn how the American Army invests in junior leaders and its noncommissioned officer corps and adapt that to their military, he said.

Before this month's training rotation, the brigade sent seven teams to Thailand and one to Indonesia.

Soldiers worked with those countries' militaries to lay groundwork for a future Stryker brigade and develop schools and training programs. American troops have worked closely with one group of soldiers from the Royal Thai Army for three training events in Hawaii, Thailand and Fort Polk to build a relationship.

Moving forward, the SFABs plan to have a greater enduring presence in the countries with which they are aligned. Taylor expects that about a third of his brigade will deploy every six months to keep a steady rotation and presence.

That would give troops an operational tempo of six months deployed and 12 months at home.

US health officials OK drug used to treat virus

Associated Press

U.S. health officials Saturday agreed to allow emergency use of a second antibody drug to help the immune system fight COVID-19, an experimental medicine that President Donald Trump was given when he was sickened last month.

The Food and Drug Administration authorized use of the Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc. drug to try to prevent hospitalization and worsening disease from developing in patients with mild-to-moderate symptoms.

The drug is given as a one-time treatment through an IV. The FDA allowed its use in adults and children 12 and over who weigh at least 88 pounds and who

are at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 because of age or certain other medical conditions.

Emergency authorization allows use of the drug to start while studies are continuing to establish safety and effectiveness. Early results suggest the drug may reduce COVID-19-related hospitalization or emergency room visits in patients at high risk for disease progression, the FDA said.

Regeneron said that initial doses will be made available to roughly 300,000 patients through a federal government allocation program. Those patients will not be charged for the drug, but may have to pay part of the cost of giving the IV.

The Regeneron drug is a combination of two antibodies to enhance the chances it will prove effective. Earlier this month, the FDA gave emergency authorization to a single-antibody drug from Eli Lilly that also is still being studied.

FDA regulators authorized the Regeneron drug using their emergency powers to quickly speed the availability of experimental drugs and other medical products during public health crises.

The emergency authorization functions like a temporary approval for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. To win full approval, Regeneron will have to submit additional research to fully define the drug's safety and benefit for patients.

Army merges Europe, Africa commands

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Army has merged its component commands responsible for operations in Europe and Africa under one four-star general in a new organization that will be headquartered in Germany, the service announced Friday.

The Army's new U.S. Army Europe and Africa, or USAREUR-AF, will combine the former U.S. Army Europe and former U.S. Army Africa into one organization, the service said.

But soldiers will not move from their current locations under the reorganization, an Army spokeswoman said Friday.

USAREUR-AF will be headquartered in Wiesbaden, Germany, where U.S. Army Europe had been posted. Meanwhile, soldiers assigned to the former U.S. Army Africa will remain at Vicenza, Italy, where that command had been posted.

The former U.S. Army has been redesignated the Southern European Task Force-Africa, or SETAF-AF, under the command of USAREUR-AF.

Army officials, in a statement announcing the consolidation, said combining the two commands was meant to streamline operations between the interconnected operational theaters in Europe and Africa.

"This consolidation enhances global and regional readiness in support of the National Defense Strategy," said Army Secretary Ryan D. McCarthy. "The new structure will increase command and control effectiveness, flexibility and the capability to conduct large-scale, joint and multi-domain operations."

USAREUR-AF will be led by Gen. Christopher G. Cavoli, who had commanded U.S. Army Europe as a three-star general since 2018.

The former U.S. Army Africa commander, Maj. Gen. Andy Rohling, will now serve as USAREUR-AF's deputy commander for

Africa, and he will also command the SETAF-AF, the Army said.

The official announcement Friday came after Army officials acknowledged the planned changes in October, but did not provide specific details.

It also comes as the Army's new V Corps arrived in Poland on Friday to open its forward headquarters in Poznan.

In Europe, the new U.S. Army Europe and Africa command will focus on high-level planning and operations, while V Corps takes responsibility of rotational units' training operations and work with allies, largely to deter Russian aggression in the region.

For most of its existence, the Army component in Europe was led by a four-star general, but in 2011, the Pentagon reduced the billet to a three-star position. The move was part of an effort to find savings by cutting back the number of four-star generals, and USAREUR quickly complied.

Okinawa Marine saves woman from rip current

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION FUTENMA, Okinawa — Most swimmers and divers avoid rip currents as inherently dangerous, but Marine Staff Sgt. Billy Dixon likes to pole-spear octopuses there.

On Oct. 4, Dixon's ease in hazardous water and his dedication to physical fitness, he said, enabled him to rescue a local woman from a rip current at an infamous Okinawa diving spot, Mermaid Grotto in Onna.

The water rushing quickly out to sea had sucked the woman under, where she swallowed seawater and continued sinking, Dixon told Stars and Stripes on Thursday on the flight line at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma.

"Adrenaline kicked in; I had no time to waste," said the aircraft recovery crew leader for 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. "When I went under, I saw her about [10 feet] down. She was pretty much unresponsive."

Dixon brought the woman to the surface, performed "three good pumps" to her chest and she coughed up the water. He

then carried her to the shallows and escorted her back to shore.

The woman, referred to as Ms. Miyagi in a recent Marine Corps statement, thanked the 28-year-old married father of two.

Dixon was awarded a Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal from the MCAS Futenma commander, Col. Henry Dolberry Jr., on Nov. 13.

"Good swimmers go out there and never come back," Dolberry said, according to the statement. Dixon "went out there and performed above expectations by saving a life ... I'm very proud."

Airman at Kadena Base arrested for drunk driving

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — An airman from Kadena Air Base was arrested on a drunken driving charge Thursday night after his car allegedly collided with a scooter carrying a pair of local high school students.

Staff Sgt. Carlos Humberto Diaz, 26, was taken into custody in the Mihama neighborhood of Chatan shortly after the incident around 11:40 p.m., an Okinawa police spokesman told Stars and Stripes.

Diaz apparently attempted a right-hand turn when he collided with the scooter, the spokesman said.

The students were thrown from the scooter upon impact, the spokesman said. The driver was treated at a local hospital for a head injury; the passenger suffered an injury to his right leg, according to police.

Both injuries are believed to be minor, the spokesman said.

Police at the scene reported smelling al-

cohol on Diaz's breath, the spokesman said. A Breathalyzer test measured Diaz's blood-alcohol content at 0.09%, three times Japan's legal limit for driving, 0.03%.

Kadena's 18th Wing said it cannot comment on active investigations but that it is cooperating with police.

Diaz may also be charged with causing injury by negligence if police believe he violated traffic laws by making the turn, the spokesman said.

Study shows trans ban hurt military services

The Washington Post

President Donald Trump's order banning many transgender people from serving has eroded the military's ability to fight and win wars by narrowing its recruiting pool and lowering morale among transgender troops exempt from the policy, former top military physicians said in a new study.

Defense Department regulations implemented April 12, 2019, prohibit anyone with gender dysphoria from enlisting but allow transgender service members who were serving before then to remain in uniform.

Trump and military officials have argued that barring transgender people from serving would improve readiness and strengthen unit cohesion. But a study published by the Palm Center, a research institute that studies LGBTQ personnel issues in the military, said the opposite has occurred.

"The transgender ban has harmed military readiness across the board. That's what happens when the military needlessly dis-

criminate against people who are qualified to serve," said Alan Steinman, a former U.S. Coast Guard director of health and safety and retired rear admiral.

Steinman was one of the study's six co-authors, who also include a former Army and Navy surgeon general. Their conclusions are based on public statements from senior officials, interviews with transgender troops, survey data and conversations with faculty members at service academies.

Nearly 15,000 transgender troops serve in the military, according to estimates of Pentagon figures by the Palm Center, some of whom joined after President Barack Obama allowed transgender people to openly serve in 2016.

Pentagon officials did not provide a comment Friday after receiving a copy of the study, which was obtained by The Washington Post ahead of its release this week.

The researchers found that the Trump administration ban bruised morale among

transgender service members, who, in interviews, said they have been "targeted for unfair treatment, stigmatized and devalued."

"Before the ban, the Navy's stance was that transgender people are real people and they have a status and we're going to help them transition to what they need to be so they can continue to serve," an unnamed Navy aviation electronics technician who flew in combat told the authors. "But now that the ban has been reinstated, there's no longer anyone trying to accept us anymore."

The study found that Trump's policy blunts recruitment efforts by eliminating consideration of many transgender people of prime recruiting age.

Potential recruits can enlist or commission only if they conform to their biological gender and don't have a history of gender dysphoria, according to Pentagon regulations, a change from the Obama policy.

South Korea tightens limits and shuts down nightclubs

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea is imposing stricter social distancing rules in the greater Seoul area to fight a coronavirus resurgence, as the country registered more than 300 new cases for the fifth straight day.

Health Minister Park Neung-hoo said Sunday that authorities have found 62 virus clusters in the past two weeks. He said the toughened distancing guidelines in the Seoul area will be enforced for two weeks starting Tuesday.

Under the rules, nightclubs and other high-risk entertainment facilities must shut down, and late-night dining at restaurants will be banned. Customers won't be allowed to drink or eat inside coffee shops, internet cafes or fitness centers, while audiences at sports events will be limited to 10% of the stadium's capacity.

South Korea reported 330 new coronavirus cases on Sunday, raising its total to 30,733, including 505 deaths.

In other developments in the Asia-Pacific region:

■ Japan's Health Ministry said the daily tally of confirmed cases hit a record for the fourth straight day on Sunday, at

2,508. Japan has had fewer than 2,000 coronavirus-related deaths so far, avoiding the toll of harder-hit nations, but fears are growing about another surge. A flurry of criticism from opposition legislators and the public has slammed the government for being too slow in halting its "GoTo" tourism campaign, which encouraged travel and dining out with discounts. Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga on Saturday scrapped the campaign, but only after many people had already made travel reservations for a three-day Thanksgiving weekend in Japan. Airports and restaurants have been packed. Some have said the government should have offered to pay for cancellations, or stepped up PCR testing instead, if the goal is to keep the economy going amid a pandemic.

■ India registered 45,209 new virus cases amid a festival season surge in the capital and many other parts of the country. At least three states — Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat — have imposed night curfews in many cities. The Health Ministry on Sunday also registered 501 deaths in the past 24 hours, taking total fatalities up to 133,227.

Video of dispute at German virus protest goes viral

Associated Press

BERLIN — A video went viral Sunday in Germany of a confrontation at a coronavirus protest, where a young woman compared herself to a famous Nazi resistance fighter only to be confronted by a security guard who accused her of "trivializing" the Holocaust.

Several people protesting coronavirus restrictions in Germany that seek to tamp down new infections have tried to depict themselves as victims of government persecution. Some have even put on Stars of David, symbols that the Nazis forced Jews to wear during the Third Reich before they killed them.

The woman spoke on stage Saturday evening in the northern city of Hannover, telling fellow protesters "I feel like Sophie Scholl, since I've been active in the resistance, giving speeches, going to protests, distributing flyers."

Scholl fought the Nazis with her brother and other members of the resistance group White Rose. After distributing flyers at a Munich university, she was convicted of high treason and was executed at age 22 by the Nazis in 1943.

Judge dismisses Trump campaign lawsuit

The Washington Post

A lawsuit brought by President Donald Trump's campaign that sought to block the certification of Pennsylvania's election results was dismissed by a federal judge on Saturday evening.

U.S. District Judge Matthew Brann granted a request from Pennsylvania Secretary of State Kathy Boockvar to dismiss the suit, which alleged that Republicans had been illegally disadvantaged because some counties allowed voters to fix errors on their mail ballots.

The judge's decision, which he explained in a scathing 37-page opinion, was a thorough rebuke of the president's sole attempt to challenge the statewide result in Pennsylvania.

Brann wrote that Trump's campaign had used "strained legal arguments without merit and speculative accusations" in its ef-

fort to throw out millions of votes.

"In the United States of America, this cannot justify the disenfranchisement of a single voter, let alone all the voters of its sixth-most populated state," Brann wrote.

Sen. Patrick Toomey, R-Pa., said in a statement after Brann's decision that Trump had "exhausted all plausible legal options" in the state and acknowledged that Joe Biden won the election.

"I congratulate President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris on their victory," said Toomey.

The lawsuit's dismissal concluded a tumultuous nine-day legal bid by the president to overturn the popular vote in one of the election's hardest-fought battlegrounds. Rudy Giuliani personally took charge of the case and appeared at a hearing in Williamsport, Pa., on Tuesday in an attempt to justify it. Five other attorneys who represented

the president withdrew from the case.

The president's defeat was the latest in a series of setbacks that he has suffered in a scramble to overturn losses in key states including Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada and Wisconsin.

In Pennsylvania, Trump's campaign sued Boockvar and a group of counties won by Biden, alleging that they had violated the campaign's constitutional rights by allowing voters to "cure" administrative errors on their mail ballots.

Brann wrote on Saturday that Trump's attorneys had haphazardly stitched this allegation together "like Frankenstein's Monster" in an attempt to avoid unfavorable legal precedent.

The suit's dismissal left Trump without even a long shot strategy for overturning his defeat to Biden in Pennsylvania, which the president has baselessly attributed to fraud.

Trump campaign seeks recount in Georgia election results

Associated Press

President Donald Trump's campaign requested a recount of votes in the Georgia presidential race on Saturday, a day after state officials certified results showing Democrat Joe Biden won the state, as his legal team presses forward with attacks alleging widespread fraud without proof.

Georgia's results showed Biden beating Trump by 12,670 votes out of about 5 million cast, or 0.25%. State law allows a candidate to request a recount if the margin is less than 0.5%. Republican Gov. Brian Kemp formalized the state's slate of 16 presidential electors.

The Trump campaign sent a hand-delivered letter to the secretary of state's office requesting the recount in an election that has been fraught with unfounded accusations of fraud by Trump and his supporters.

The recount will be done using scanners that read and tabulate the votes. County election workers have already done a complete hand recount of all the votes cast in the presidential race.

But that stemmed from a mandatory audit requirement and isn't considered an official recount under the law.

State law requires that one race be audited by hand to ensure machines counted the

ballots accurately, and Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger selected the presidential race. Because of the tight margin in that race, a full hand count of ballots was necessary to complete the audit, he said.

Trump has criticized the audit, calling it a "joke" in a tweet that claimed without evidence that "thousands of fraudulent votes have been found." Twitter has flagged the post as containing disputed information.

Votes that hadn't previously been counted were found in several counties during the audit, which required recertification of the election results in those counties before state certification of the results.

President-elect Biden expected to end use of death penalty

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President-elect Joe Biden is against the death penalty and will work to end its use, his spokesman said Saturday, as the Justice Department scheduled three more federal executions before the Jan. 20 inauguration, including two shortly before he is set to take office.

The Bureau of Prisons on Thursday carried out the eighth federal execution this year, af-

ter a 17-year hiatus, and it is likely to increase pressure on Biden to decide whether his administration would continue to schedule executions once he is sworn in.

Biden "opposes the death penalty now and in the future," press secretary T.J. Ducklo said.

This year, the Justice Department has put to death more people than during the previous half-century, despite waning public support from both Dem-

ocrats and Republicans for its use.

In a court filing Friday night, the department said it was scheduling the executions of Alfred Bourgeois for Dec. 11 and Cory Johnson and Dustin Higgs for Jan. 14 and 15.

Two other executions had been scheduled for this year, including the first woman set to be executed by the federal government in about six decades. But on Thursday, a federal judge

ruled that the execution could not proceed before the end of the year.

Prosecutors say Bourgeois tortured, sexually molested, and then beat his 2½-year-old daughter to death.

Johnson was one of three crack cocaine dealers convicted in a string of murders, while Higgs was convicted of ordering the 1996 murders of three women at a federal wildlife center near Beltsville, Md.

Postal worker convicted of stealing mail

FL JACKSONVILLE — A Florida postal carrier was convicted of stealing gift cards and other mail.

Terrell Andre Mosely, 40, pleaded guilty in Jacksonville federal court to theft of mail by a postal employee, according to court records. He faces up to five years in prison at his sentencing.

According to court documents, the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General began investigating customer complaints regarding stolen mail on a Jacksonville postal route that Mosely worked in August 2019.

When questioned, Mosely confessed to stealing a Target card and others. During a search of Mosely's personal belongings and car, agents reported finding more than 230 pieces of stolen mail.

Beloved gorilla named Zura, 39, dies at zoo

CA SAN FRANCISCO — A beloved gorilla has died at the San Francisco Zoo & Gardens, the zoo announced.

Zura, a 39-year-old Western lowland gorilla, was being treated for "long-term digestive issues" but her condition recently had worsened, a zoo statement said.

"Zura had a beautiful, distinctive face and a one-of-a-kind personality, and so many of our guests recognized her when they visited," said Tanya M. Peterson, CEO and executive director of the San Francisco Zoological Society.

Rose Garden adds new sculpture

DC WASHINGTON — The White House Rose Garden has a new addition, but it isn't a floral variety.

Melania Trump announced that artwork by Japanese American sculptor Isamu No-

guchi has been installed on the east terrace of the famous garden, which she renovated earlier this year.

Noguchi is the first Asian American artist to be featured in the White House collection, according to the first lady and the White House Historical Association.

Noguchi's piece, titled "Floor Frame," was a gift from the privately funded, nonprofit historical association.

Hundreds of jobs tied to insect protein venture

IL DECATUR — Archer Daniels Midland and a French company announced plans to produce protein from insects in Decatur, a venture that is expected to create hundreds of jobs.

InnovaFeed creates oils and insect-based feed for fish and other animals. Every part of the black soldier fly is used so there is no waste. ADM's byproducts can be used in production.

Chris Cuddy, an ADM senior vice president, said insect farming "stands out as a true solution" to meet the demand for animal protein.

Contestant dies after 'Wipeout' course

CA LOS ANGELES — A contestant on "Wipeout" has died after completing the game show's obstacle course, authorities and sources close to the production said.

The man in his 30s was declared dead at a hospital, Los Angeles County coroner's spokeswoman Sarah Ardalani said. The cause of death has not been released, and the man's name was being withheld until relatives could be notified.

Two people close to the production said the man had completed the course on the show's set in Santa Clarita, Calif., when he needed medical attention. He was helped by on-site medical staff until paramedics arrived and took him to the hospital.

3 former officials charged in fraud scheme

MO NEW MADRID — Three former city officials in a small southeast Missouri town are facing felony charges after a state audit found more than \$115,000 in fraudulent payments and purchases in a case that drew attention after records sought for the audit were destroyed in two suspicious fires.

Charges were filed against former Parma Mayor Tyus Byrd, former City Clerk Helen Jean Frye, and David Thatch, a former water superintendent.

The audit found payroll overpayments and improper payments to Byrd and Frye, city officials and others related to the two women. They also allegedly made improper purchases using prepaid debit cards and the city's Walmart credit card for personal expenses, auditors said.

Doctor sued for alleged affair with patient's wife

OR BEND — A Bend man who was experiencing depression as a result of his failing marriage went to his family physician, receiving counseling and a prescription for marijuana and CBD.

The patient, Pierson Tone, now claims in a lawsuit that all along, the doctor, Ronald Rosen, was having an affair with his wife, The Bulletin reported.

In a complaint filed in Deschutes County Circuit Court, Tone is seeking \$2.9 million from Rosen for professional negligence.

"As a result of (Rosen's) conduct, plaintiff sustained emotional distress including ... the loss of his marriage and emotional and social destruction of his family," the lawsuit states.

From 2015 to 2018, Tone, his wife and two children received medical care at Rosen's clinic, Open Paths Integrative Medicine, according to the suit. At

some point, Rosen and Tone's wife began a relationship, the suit says.

Trooper thrown onto highway as suspect flees

CT WEST HARTFORD — A Connecticut state trooper was injured when he was thrown onto a highway while trying to open the door of a pickup truck that suddenly sped away during an impaired driving stop, state police said.

Trooper Kenneth Dillon suffered minor injuries on Interstate 84 in West Hartford. Dillon got back in his cruiser and chased down Daniel Rapuano, 36, of Naugatuck, by colliding with the truck with permission from superiors and forcing it off the road, state police said.

Rapuano, who is on parole for a drug sale conviction, was charged with assaulting a police officer, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs and other crimes.

Feral dogs on the loose after killing 11 goats

NC FAYETTEVILLE — Authorities in North Carolina say a pack of dogs is still on the loose after killing 11 goats in Cumberland County near Fayetteville.

Elaine Smith, Cumberland County's animal services director, said in a statement that the dogs "have not been aggressive toward people, and we have not been able to get within 50 feet of them."

Cumberland County Animal Services said it has received reports that an unidentified owner abandoned several dogs.

"The areas the dogs have been sighted in are heavily populated, with pockets of thickly overgrown woods, which has made capturing them very difficult," Smith said. "The dogs have also traveled more than 2½ miles from their original sighting."

From The Associated Press

Figueiredo, Shevchenko retain belts at UFC 255

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Not so long ago, the UFC men's flyweight division was so thin and so boring that Dana White considered dropping the whole weight class.

A brilliant Brazilian champion nicknamed the "God of War" has changed everything for the smallest men on the UFC roster.

Deiveson Figueiredo stopped Alex Perez with a guillotine choke in the first round at UFC 255 on Saturday night, defending his men's 125-pound belt for the first time with another impressive stoppage.

Valentina Shevchenko defended the women's flyweight title with a surprisingly challenging unanimous decision over Jennifer Maia at the UFC Apex gym on the promotion's corporate campus in its hometown.

Figueiredo (20-1) earned his record-tying seventh stoppage victory in the 125-pound division by clamping onto Perez's neck out of a scramble at 1:57 in the opening round.

Perez (24-6) had nearly taken Figueiredo's back an instant before the champ finished the entertaining fight with the flair and skill that have made him a rising mixed martial arts star in the UFC's least popular weight class.

"I came in here with no pressure," Figueiredo said. "I know this is my belt. I know I'm going to be the champion for a long time. I came here to do what I told everybody I'm going to do. I said to everybody, 'I'm going to finish this fight in the first round.' And I finished the fight in the first round."

Figueiredo claimed his title earlier this year with his second consecutive victory over Joseph Benavidez, finally ascending to the peak of a UFC division with only two previous champions. Demetrious "Mighty Mouse" Johnson dominated the flyweight ranks for six years before Henry Cejudo dethroned him in 2018.

"I came here to knock out, to submit everybody," Figueiredo said.

Predictable pandemic problems strike again

Associated Press

The college football Saturday started with another game being postponed, the 18th of the week, and a dispute between Clemson and Florida State.

Clemson wanted to play, even though it brought a player to Tallahassee who ended up testing positive on Friday night. Florida State medical officials said no, and the Tigers went home mad.

Who is right is hardly worth arguing. Both schools can reasonably claim they appropriately followed protocols and their decisions were approved by experts.

"We listened to our medical folks and their assessment of the risk and we decided it wasn't safe to play today," Florida State athletic director David Coburn told the AP.

This is the season college football signed up for when conferences decided to play through a pandemic that is raging worse than it has all year.

Complain about contact tracing putting healthy athletes in quarantine. Complain about false positives causing players to miss games, causing teams to call games. Complain about conferences not allowing teams to schedule makeup games on short notice. Complain about one team deciding it won't play while another team believes there is no reason not to play.

It is all very frustrating, and especially disappointing for players, who are being asked to follow a litany of rules that make life anything but normal so they can have a chance to compete.

It is also all very predictable, and everybody making decisions about whether to play gave fair warning this was coming.

"We will have disruptions during the season," Big 12 Commissioner Bob Bowlsby said in May. "I fully expect that we'll have an outbreak on Wednesday afternoon and games may need to be canceled on Saturday. We'll need to understand shutdown procedures and how we go about quarantining when the need arises."

No. 4 Clemson at Florida State was the 18th game called out of 62 scheduled for this week. That's 29%. Last week 25% (15 of 59) of the games needed to be canceled or postponed.

Louisiana-Lafayette coach Billy Napier became the 17th to publicly acknowledge testing positive for COVID-19. The 24th-ranked Ragin' Cajuns had their game called off this weekend and returned to the prac-

tice field Saturday, without their coach.

College football can't control the pandemic. Nothing seems to be controlling the pandemic right now. So college football will continue to push through it.

Last word

The College Football Playoff rankings debut Tuesday. Generally, the first rankings create a fair amount of noise. Plenty of teams have started at or near the top four and were nowhere to be found by the time the final and only rankings that matter come out in December.

There is a little more intrigue in these rankings because this season is so weird. No. 2 Notre Dame and No. 4 Clemson have each played eight games. No. 1 Alabama seven. No. 5 Texas A&M six. No. 3 Ohio State four. No. 11 Oregon three.

How will the committee sort through that?

Even more interesting will be how the committee judges No. 7 Cincinnati, No. 8 BYU and some of the other unbeaten outside the Power Five.

If those teams have any shot of cracking the top four, and realistically only the Bearcats have a case, where they start matters.

Cincinnati played maybe its toughest opponent of the season and came away with a victory against UCF on Saturday.

The Bearcats still have some games left in the American Athletic Conference to further impress the committee. If all goes well, Cincinnati and No. 25 Tulsa could play two straight weeks to end the season.

BYU had a glorified scrimmage against North Alabama and has just one game left against San Diego State on Dec. 12. The Cougars are trying to add games, and college football fans could not help but notice that Cincinnati and BYU are both off Dec. 5 after some schedule shuffling by the American.

As great as it would be for fans, the chances Cincinnati would schedule a game against BYU ahead of its regular-season finale at Tulsa — which will likely lead to an AAC championship game against Tulsa — seem unlikely.

What could make Cincinnati and BYU decide to get together? If the rankings come out Tuesday and Cincinnati and BYU are ranked in about the same spots they are by the AP, maybe they'll see a game against each other as a way of cracking the top four.

No. 3 Buckeyes hold off No. 9 Hoosiers

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — After climbing to its highest AP Top 25 poll ranking in more than a half century, No. 9 Indiana got a chance to find out how it measured up with Big Ten behemoth Ohio State, a team the Hoosiers hadn't beaten in 32 years.

They came up short but sure made it interesting — and a lot closer than the No. 3 Buckeyes would have liked.

Behind quarterback Michael Penix Jr., Indiana (4-1) rallied from a four-touchdown deficit in the second half only to be outlasted by the Buckeyes 42-35 on a rainy Saturday in an all-but-empty Ohio Stadium.

"You know, people didn't think we belonged on the field with Ohio State, but I think we showed that today," Indiana coach Tom Allen said. "I think we're a good football team, a really good football team."

The Buckeyes (4-0) were happy to get out of there with a win after leading 35-7 early in the second half and allowing Indiana to climb back to within one score. Two weeks ago, Ohio State led 35-3 at halftime and were outscored 24-14 in the second half in a win over Rutgers.

"We've got to figure out a way to close out games," Ohio State coach Ryan Day said. "This is kind of the second week now we let a team hang around a little bit, and we've got to get that fixed. But (there were) so many great things in this game. Indiana is a good team, they're a top-10 team so this was not easy."

The Buckeyes defense in the second half struggled to slow down Penix, who had the best statistical day of his career — 27 for 51 for a career-high 491 yards and five touchdowns.

Penix passed for four touchdowns in the second half but also made a critical error,

tossing an interception that Ohio State's Shaun Wade returned for a touchdown at the end of the third quarter. The game might have been different if it wasn't for that.

The running game helped Ohio State maintain control when things were dicey. The Buckeyes had two late drives after the Hoosiers got within in a touchdown that didn't result in points, but burned clock and Indiana's timeouts.

The Hoosiers last possession started deep in their own territory with 38 seconds left and ended with a desperation lateral play that never crossed midfield.

Master Teague ran for a career-high 169 yards and two touchdowns, and Justin Fields accounted for three scores as the Buckeyes amassed 607 yards of offense.

Fields was 18 for 30 for 300 yards and two touchdown passes, but he also threw his first three interceptions of the season and was sacked five times. He ran for 78 yards and a touchdown.

"Of course I made bad decisions," Fields said. "I ended up with three picks but we got the W today. That's all that matters. We got the W, and we're 4-0."

Garrett Wilson had seven catches for 169 yards — his fourth straight game of 100-plus yards — and two scores for the Buckeyes.

The Takeaway

Indiana: Penix had a great day but came up just short of being able to dig the Hoosiers out of the hole and Indiana has now lost 26 straight to the Buckeyes.

"I loved what I saw today, but obviously we didn't get the result wanted, so it hurts," Penix said.

Ohio State: The Buckeyes took awhile to get going, and Fields had a few rough patch-

es. Getting outscored in the second half for the second straight game has to be concerning.

Poll implications

Indiana: After reaching its highest poll ranking in over a half century, the Hoosiers will tumble slightly.

Ohio State: Beating another Top 10 team should get the Buckeyes some attention and possibly some more votes.

Fabulous Fryfogle

Indiana's Ty Fryfogle became the first receiver in Big Ten history with back-to-back games with 200 receiving yards. He caught seven passes for 218 yards and three touchdowns on Saturday after grabbing 11 for 200 yards last week in the win over Michigan State.

Empty Shoe

A football game at Ohio Stadium has never lacked atmosphere as much as this one. Because of runaway COVID cases in Columbus, public health officials decided to empty out the cavernous venue of everyone except players, staff and media. A few hundred family and friends at least generated some cheers and jeers at the first two home games at the 105,000-capacity Horseshoe. The thousands of cutouts posted around the lower bowl sat silent and soggy in the dreary afternoon. All told, there were just 635 souls in the place.

Up next

Indiana is scheduled to go on the road against Maryland, which has had its last two games canceled because of positive COVID tests there.

Michigan needs 3 overtimes to defeat Rutgers

Associated Press

PISCATAWAY, N.J. — Michigan had to switch quarterbacks, go three overtimes and play roughly 4 ½ hours to avoid the football program's worst start in 53 years. It was worth it.

Hassan Haskins dove in from less than a yard out on fourth down in the third overtime and the Wolverines snapped a three-game losing streak by outlasting Rutgers 48-42 on Saturday night.

"This win means a lot," defensive line-

man Chris Hinton said. "It's the first step to get back on track. We didn't quit. We just kept swinging."

The guy who delivered the biggest blows was sophomore quarterback Cade McNamara, who replaced starter Joe Milton late in the second quarter. He threw four touchdown passes and ran for another as Michigan (2-3, 2-3 Big Ten) handed Rutgers (1-4, 1-4) its fourth straight loss.

In other Big 10 games:

Spencer Petras completed 18 of 28 passes

for 186 yards and ran for a late touchdown to lead Iowa to a 41-23 win at Penn State, giving the Nittany Lions their first 0-5 start.

It was the Hawkeyes' third straight win. Iowa (3-2, 3-2 Big Ten) got a combined 179 rushing yards and three touchdowns from Mekhi Sargent and Tyler Goodson.

Brandon Peters threw for one touchdown and ran for another in his first game in nearly a month and Illinois had two rushers go over 100 yards, as it beat turnover-plagued Nebraska 41-23.

Sources: VanVleet staying with Raptors

Associated Press

Fred VanVleet bet on himself. It paid off.

Gordon Hayward, meanwhile, is heading to a new home.

VanVleet agreed Saturday to a four-year, \$85 million contract to remain with the Toronto Raptors, a person with direct knowledge of the discussions told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the contract remains unsigned. The fourth year of the contract is at VanVleet's option.

The Charlotte Hornets have wanted Hayward for years. On Saturday, they finally landed him, according to Priority Sports, the agency that represents the veteran forward. A person with knowledge of the terms, speaking on condition of anonymity because the deal hadn't been signed, told the AP that Hayward will sign a four-year contract worth \$120 million. ESPN first reported the agreement between Hayward and the Hornets.

VanVleet, the undrafted guard from Wichita State, has played a huge role in the Raptors' recent successes, most importantly their run to the 2019 NBA championship. He has set career bests in scoring by wide margins in each of the last three seasons, that number rising to 17.6 points per game this past season.

Keeping VanVleet was of major importance to the Raptors, who have won at least 50 games in each of the last five seasons — by far the longest current streak in the NBA. Milwaukee has a two-year such streak, and the reigning NBA champion Los Angeles Lakers reached the 50-win mark last season.

It also fulfilled a VanVleet prophecy: He famously went undrafted four years ago, then passed on some low-money deals that he figured wouldn't pan into much.

"I turned those down. I bet on myself," VanVleet told friends

and family on what would have been his draft night, a festive occasion that turned disappointing when the call from the NBA never came.

On Saturday, he tweeted his reaction: a retweet of himself saying "Bet on yourself" in 2016, with three moneybag emojis now attached.

The Raptors brought him in on a summer-league deal, then a minimum deal, then gave him a two-year contract for \$18 million two years later — and now gave him the full reward.

Kyle Lowry, the veteran point guard and longtime leader of the Raptors, has predicted that VanVleet will take over that role one day. The deal agreed to on Saturday only cements that sort of thinking.

"He's going to be rewarded," Lowry said after the Raptors were eliminated with a Game 7 loss to Boston in this past season's Eastern Conference semifinals. "To me, that means the world that he can take care of his family and take care of his family at a high level."

That's no longer in doubt.

Free agency opened in the NBA on Friday evening and VanVleet was one of the top available names. The Lakers' Anthony Davis remains unsigned though is expected to remain with the defending champions, and Hayward's future was another of the top questions remaining in the league as Day 2 of free agency began Saturday.

It was not a question for long.

Hayward turned down a \$34 million option for this season with Boston, and the Celtics were in talks with other teams — including Indiana, which was believed to be a preference of Hayward's — on potential sign-and-trade deals.

Instead, it appears the Celtics are seeing Hayward walk away as a free agent.

Hayward agreed to a four-year offer sheet worth about \$63

million with the Hornets in 2014, a deal that was matched by the Utah Jazz — Hayward's original team. Hayward left the Jazz for Boston in 2017, saw his first season with the Celtics end on opening night of the 2017-18 season when he suffered a horrible lower leg injury, then averaged 14.0 points per game over the following two seasons.

VanVleet's deal was the second major development for the Raptors in two days. On Friday, the team announced that it would begin this season by calling Tampa, Florida, home because of travel issues related to the coronavirus pandemic — specifically the challenge of getting NBA teams over a U.S.-Canada border that is closed to nonessential travel.

In other matters Saturday:

Atlanta

Guard Rajon Rondo took to Instagram to post what appeared to be a farewell message to the Lakers, after he helped them win this past season's NBA title. He thanked the team's front office and coach Frank Vogel, among others.

He ended the post with "Now, what's next..."

The answer came quickly.

Rondo agreed later Saturday to a two-year deal with the Hawks, a person with knowledge of the negotiations told AP.

Rondo became the latest addition in a busy two days of movement for Atlanta. The Hawks agreed with guard Kris Dunn earlier Saturday on a two-year contract worth \$10 million, a second person told AP. And Atlanta also agreed Friday with Danilo Gallinari on a three-year contract.

Boston

Tristan Thompson agreed on a two-year, \$19 million contract to join the Celtics — ending his nine-year stint with the Cleveland Cavaliers, a person with knowledge of the deal told the

AP.

Thompson averaged 9.4 points and 8.7 rebounds in his nine seasons, a stint that obviously included playing a key part of helping Cleveland win its lone NBA championship in 2016. He leaves as the Cavaliers' No. 3 career rebounder and played in 447 consecutive games from 2012 through 2017.

Dallas

Wesley Iwundu agreed on a two-year deal with the Mavericks, another low-key addition as the club tries to improve its athleticism and get a little tougher around young stars Luka Doncic and Kristaps Porzingis.

The 25-year-old Houston native spent his first three seasons in Orlando after the Magic drafted Iwundu early in the second round in 2017. He has career averages of 5.8 points and 2.5 rebounds.

Denver

Paul Millsap is staying with the Nuggets on a one-year deal that will be worth around \$10 million, a person with knowledge told AP. The news of the forward's decision was first reported by The Athletic and The Denver Post.

Miami

The Heat agreed to a two-year deal starting at \$5.9 million for this season with top defensive guard Avery Bradley, agent Charles Briscoe said.

Bradley has averaged 11.8 points in his career. He spent last season with the Lakers but did not accompany them to the NBA restart bubble at Walt Disney World.

He averaged 8.6 points in 49 games, mostly starts, for the Lakers last season. The second year of that deal is at the Heat option, just like the deals they struck Friday with returnees Goran Dragic and Meyers Leonard.