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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Report: Navy seeks more unmanned vehicles

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

The Navy could swap out some traditional ships with crewless vessels as the service fast-tracks its goal of adding large unmanned vehicles to the fleet, according to a recent Congressional Research Service report.

The Navy aims to shift toward “a more distributed fleet architecture,” one with fewer guided-missile cruisers and destroyers, more frigates and littoral combat ships and “significant numbers” of large unmanned ships and submarines, according to the research service’s “Navy Large Unmanned Surface and Undersea Vehicles” report issued Sept. 8.

In its 2021 budget request to Congress, the Navy asked for nearly \$580 million for research and development of large unmanned vessels and use accelerated acquisition strategies “to get them into service more quickly,” according to the report.

The crewless ships will be able to “per-

form missions that might otherwise be assigned to manned ships and submarines,” including hunting enemy ships and submarines.

Large unmanned surface vessels, or USVs, would be about 200-300 feet long and capable of carrying various weaponry, “particularly anti-surface warfare and strike payloads, meaning principally anti-ship and land-attack missiles,” according to the report. The Navy aims to develop two prototypes next year, one in 2022 and procure a deployable large USV in 2023.

The medium USVs would be 45-190 feet long and used initially for “intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance payloads and electronic warfare systems,” according to the report. The Navy in July awarded a \$35 million contract to L3 Technologies Inc. to develop a prototype.

Staying ahead of China is one reason behind the Navy’s request for more unmanned vessels.

“The Navy’s desire to employ these accelerated acquisition strategies can be

viewed as an expression of the urgency that the Navy attaches to fielding large UVs for meeting future military challenges from countries such as China,” the report said.

Washington and Beijing are at odds over China’s militarization of islands in the South China Sea. The U.S. military regularly patrols the region, often sending warships and military aircraft on freedom-of-navigation operations near the islands to challenge territorial claims, drawing the ire of Beijing.

At 350 ships, China became the world’s largest navy this year, according to a Sept. 1 Pentagon report to Congress on Chinese military developments. The U.S. Navy had approximately 293 as of early 2020.

The U.S. aims to have a fleet of “not fewer than 355 battle force ships, comprised of the optimal mix of platforms,” according to the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act. Congress did not establish a timeline for reaching that goal, but the Trump administration has said it wants this accomplished by 2028.

Calif. guardsmen awarded Distinguished Flying Crosses

BY CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

The air crews were told to turn back, but they flew into the fire anyway.

They were told not to return, but went twice more to rescue about 240 people trapped by wildfire at a campground in California’s Sierra National Forest.

“They flew into blazing flames, raging wind — and it was raging — and blinding smoke to rescue families who were trapped by the massive Creek Fire,” President Donald Trump said during an awards ceremony Monday.

Despite the calls to abort the mission, they “decided to continue anyway, knowing they might not return,” Trump said. “They knew that people were in danger — great danger.”

For the Army air crews’ efforts on Sept. 5, Trump honored seven soldiers with Distinguished Flying Crosses during the event at a hangar in McClellan Park, Calif., near Sacramento. It is one of the military’s highest decorations, ranking above the Soldier’s Medal.

The award recognizing acts of heroism and extraordinary achievement in aerial flight was presented to Chief Warrant Officer 5 Joseph Rosamond, Chief Warrant Officer 5 Kipp Goding, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Brady Hlebain, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Irvin Hernandez, Warrant Officer 1 Ge Xiong, Sgt. George Esquivel Jr. and Sgt. Cameron Powell. All seven were with the California National Guard’s 40th Combat Aviation Brigade.

“These men are heroes,” California Gov. Gavin Newsom said on Twitter along with a photo of the soldiers and family members, saying the state issued proclamations honoring them.

Trump was in California to meet with Newsom and other officials about the fires that have burned more than 3.2 million acres there since the beginning of the year. On Monday, some 16,500 firefighters were battling 28 major wildfires across the state that have left 24 dead and 4,200 structures destroyed in the past month, said Cal Fire, the state’s forestry and fire protection agency.

At least 12 of the 242 people rescued from the Mammoth Pool Campground were hospitalized — two with severe injuries and 10 with moderate wounds — The Associated Press reported last week, citing the California Office of Emergency Services. A Chinook and a Black Hawk were involved in the rescue mission, one of several rescues that involved 40th CAB aircraft, the emergency services office told the AP.

Standing in front of a Chinook marked with pink paint for fire duty, Trump described the crews’ 10-hour effort to rescue the stranded adults and children.

As night fell, the two helicopters’ crews could see next to nothing through miles of heavy smoke, he said, but they managed to reach the camp and found them. They flew as many people as they could back to base, unloaded them and returned for more, Trump said.

“Their superior said, ‘You cannot do this. You cannot do it again,’” Trump said. “They did it. The smoke had become even more overpowering, yet they returned a third time. We are proud of them.”

Yokosuka schools set for students' return

By JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — The Navy's largest overseas base, which reduced its coronavirus risk level Monday, is sending its children back to base schools Sept. 28, according to a message Tuesday from the district school superintendent.

Yokosuka Naval Base on Tuesday also reported two new coronavirus patients, both recent arrivals to Japan who tested positive while in quarantine. The base has four active cases, down from a high of 44 on Aug. 21.

U.S. Forces Japan requires new arrivals and travelers returning to Japan to spend 14 days in restricted movement. They must test free of the virus before leaving isolation.

The population of the base,

about 40 miles southwest of central Tokyo, endured one of the longest periods of coronavirus restrictions of any U.S. installation in Japan. Its personnel were restricted to their homes under a "shelter-in-place" order, except for work and essential services such as medical appointments and grocery shopping, from March 27 until June 11.

The base commander, Capt. Rich Jarrett, ordered heightened restrictions again Aug. 10 after six people tested positive. Monday, he reduced the level of risk of the virus spreading from "substantial" to "moderate," or Health Protection Condition-Bravo, and loosened some restrictions again.

A steady decline in new cases on base and in surrounding Yokosuka city, along with a drop in active cases and effective

contact tracing, prompted Jarrett to lower the risk level, base spokesman Randall Baucom said in an email Monday.

Yokosuka is among the last bases in Japan to move out of condition Bravo, which is a requirement for classroom instruction at Defense Department schools. Most parents and students opted to return to classroom learning, while some continue in virtual classrooms.

The Department of Defense Education Activity has three schools on the main installation: Sullivans Elementary, Yokosuka Middle and Nile C. Kinnick High, and a fourth, Ikego Elementary, at the Ikego Housing Detachment.

Remote instruction will continue for Yokosuka students until Sept. 24, according to a letter to students and families from Judith Allen, superintendent of

DODEA Pacific East District.

However, students will have "asynchronous" assignments, meaning no interaction with teachers, Sept. 22-24 while teachers train on mitigating coronavirus risks and prepare their classrooms, Allen wrote.

Sept. 25 is a College and Career Ready training day and non-instructional day, she wrote.

Back at school, students must wear masks, maintain social distancing "to the greatest extent possible" and continue healthy hygiene practices, Allen wrote. She said DODEA has ordered two masks for each student and staff member as a backup supply, but parents must ensure their children have their own masks on the first day of school.

Stars and Stripes reporters Aya Ichihashi and Caitlin Doornbos contributed to this report.

3 more virus cases linked to American in Germany

Associated Press

BERLIN — Authorities in southern Germany said Tuesday they have recorded three more cases of COVID-19 in people who frequented bars visited by a 26-year-old American woman suspected of flouting quarantine rules in the Alpine resort town of Garmisch-Partenkirchen.

The latest cases take the total number of recent infections there to 59, including 25 staff at the Edelweiss Lodge and Resort, which caters to U.S. military personnel and at which the woman worked.

Anton Speer, who heads the county administration, told reporters that authorities are still waiting for the results of about 300 tests conducted Monday and it was too soon to give the "all-clear." The three new cases emerged from 740 tests conducted over the weekend.

Bavaria's governor, Markus Soeder, called the outbreak in Garmisch-Partenkirchen

"a model case of stupidity" because the 26-year-old had gone partying despite having COVID-19 symptoms and awaiting a test result.

Soeder said Monday that "such recklessness must have consequences" and suggested the woman, who hasn't been named, could receive a stiff fine.

The outbreak has led to a 10 p.m. curfew on bars and restaurants and a rule that no more than five people can gather in public. The Edelweiss Lodge and Resort, which is reserved for members of the American military, their families and veterans, has also shut down completely for two weeks.

The U.S. military is conducting its own investigation into the incident and is recommending any service members or others who had contact with the Edelweiss employee to be tested for the coronavirus, said John Tomassi, spokesman for the U.S. Army Europe.

Many officials worldwide face death threats amid pandemic

The Washington Post

A top Australian public health officer has become the latest in a string of health officials around the world to face death threats over their responses to the coronavirus pandemic.

Jeannette Young, the chief health officer in the Australian state of Queensland, said the threats have taken an "enormous toll" on her, the Australian newspaper reported Monday. A police detail has been stationed outside her house.

She faced a backlash after Queensland decided to close its borders with neighboring states to curb the spread of the virus, making it impossible for several Australian citizens to attend relatives' funerals.

Among critics of the move was Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who said the country risks "losing its humanity."

The threats against Young followed similar cases in other countries, as public frustration over life under the pandemic mounts.

In Germany, Karl Lauterbach, a health expert for the Social Democratic Party who is part of the country's governing coalition, said he received several death threats in spring, after Germany imposed a shutdown on many businesses and closed schools.

Lauterbach argued in favor of strict measures to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

The United States' top infectious-disease expert, Anthony Fauci, told CNN last month that he had received death threats and that his family was exposed to harassment.

Threats against health officials in the United States have pushed some to leave their posts.

"They're becoming villainized for their guidance," Lori Tremmel Freeman, the chief executive of the National Association of County and City Health Officials, told Kaiser Health News over the summer. "In normal times, they're very trusted members of their community,"

Slow Sally fuels fears of flooding

Associated Press

GULFPORT, Miss. — Hurricane Sally, a plodding storm with winds of 85 mph, crept toward the northern Gulf Coast on Tuesday as forecasters warned of potentially deadly storm surges and flash floods with the heaviest downpours dumping nearly 2 feet of rain.

Forecasters said the storm's sluggish pace made it difficult to predict precisely where the storm's eye would make landfall. But they kept nudging the predicted track eastward, easing fears in New Orleans, which was once in Sally's crosshairs.

By late morning Tuesday, hurricane warnings stretched from east of Bay St. Louis, Miss., to Navarre, Fla., and forecasters said Sally should reach land near the Alabama-Mississippi state line by late Tuesday or early Wednesday. Rainfall of up to 20 inches was forecast near the coast, with a chance the storm could also spawn tornadoes.

Stacy Stewart, a senior specialist with the National Hurricane Center, said Tuesday that people should continue to take the storm seriously since "devastating" rainfall is expected in large areas. People could drown in the flooding, he said.

"This is going to be historic flooding along with the his-

toric rainfall," Stewart said. "If people live near rivers, small streams and creeks, they need to evacuate and go somewhere else."

In Gulfport, Miss., white plastic bags hung over some gas station pumps to signal they were out of fuel. Along a bayou that extended inland from the Gulf, three shrimp boats were tied up as shrimpers and others tried to protect their boats from waves and storm surge. Most boat slips at Gulfport's marina were empty, and many businesses had metal storm shutters or plywood covering the windows.

In Alabama, officials closed the causeway to Dauphin Island and the commuter tunnel that runs beneath the Mobile River. An online video from Dauphin Island showed a few cars and SUVs stuck in a beachfront area, their tires sunk deep into wet sand.

Forecasters expected Sally to move slowly northward Tuesday, with the storm's center bypassing the coast of southeastern Louisiana. Forecasters said the storm should remain a Category 1 hurricane, with top winds of 85 mph, until it comes ashore.

Navy commander of Texas training center fired following probe

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The commander of a naval training center in Texas was relieved of command "due to loss of confidence" following an investigation, according to the Navy.

Cmdr. Robert Arias, the commanding officer of Naval Technical Training Center Lackland was relieved of command Friday by Capt. John Ferguson, the commander of the Center for Security Forces, according to a Navy statement.

His removal followed an administrative investigation, Cmdr. James Stockman, a spokesman for Naval Education and Training Command, wrote in an email Monday. Stockman could not provide more details about the investigation because "the matter is pending final decision."

"I would add that command leaders are held to a high standard. Their positions require the utmost in responsibility, reliability and leadership, and the Navy holds them accountable in cases where they fall short of those standards," Stockman wrote.

Arias has been temporarily reassigned to Naval Education and Training Command located in Pensacola, Fla., according to the Navy. Taking over at Naval Technical Training Center Lackland is Cmdr. Brian Car-

roll, the director of the Center for Security Forces Learning Site Gulfport, Miss.

Arias, a prior enlisted sailor who reached the rank of chief petty officer before receiving a commission, took command of NTTC Lackland April 4, 2018, according to the center's official Facebook page.

The Naval Technical Training Center Lackland is located on Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland and it has an initial school for master-at-arms sailors training in security and law enforcement. It also has an academy for corrections specialists and a school for military work dog handlers, according to the center's official website. The Center for Security Forces has 14 training locations around the world that provide training to more than 23,000 students each year, according to the Navy.

Arias has served on several ships, including the USS Cowpens and the USS John Paul Jones. He also served with Joint Task Force Guantanamo detainee operations and a deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom to Anbar province, "where he led the intercoastal waterway military and police transition teams," according to his Navy biography. He was also the lead security assessor for Navy Installations Command, overseeing 72 naval installations around the world.

Venezuela: Suspected US spy charged in alleged plot

Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela — Venezuela's chief prosecutor on Monday said a U.S. citizen recently arrested in the country as a suspected spy has been charged in an alleged terrorist plot to sabotage oil refineries and electrical service in order to stir unrest.

The man, alleged to have CIA ties, had help from three Venezuelan conspirators, who were arrested with him last week near a pair of oil refineries on the country's

north Caribbean coast, Venezuela's Chief Prosecutor Tarek William Saab said on state television.

The office gave the U.S. suspect's name as Matthew John Heath.

Authorities said cellphones taken from the men when they were arrested include images of suspected targets, including a large bridge in Zulia state, military installations and dilapidated oil refineries in Falcon state. The prosecutor showed pictures of equipment allegedly seized from the

group, including a grenade launcher, plastic explosives, a satellite phone and a bag of U.S. dollars.

President Nicolas Maduro announced on Friday that an unnamed suspected U.S. spy had been captured, saying he was a Marine and former CIA operative in Iraq.

Heath has been charged with terrorism, trafficking illegal weapons and conspiracy, authorities said.

U.S. authorities have not commented on the case.

Dems to see if officials meddled with data

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A House subcommittee is launching an investigation into whether political appointees have meddled with routine government scientific data to better align with President Donald Trump's public statements about the coronavirus pandemic, following a report that one such appointee claimed scientists were trying to undermine Trump.

The Democrat-led subcommittee said Monday that it is requesting transcribed interviews with seven officials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Department of Health and Human Services, including communications aide Michael Caputo. Caputo has often publicly pushed back on CDC statements about the coronavirus and said falsely in a Facebook video on Sunday that the CDC has a "resistance unit" against Trump, according to The New York Times. His page has since been made private.

According to a report in Politico, Caputo, along with scientific adviser Paul Alexander, pressured officials to alter the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Reports, a long-running weekly journal that features the latest science-based research and data on infectious diseases. Known as MMWR, the report has long been a sacred government information resource for doctors, scientists and researchers tracking outbreaks.

South Carolina

COLUMBIA — South Carolina Lt. Gov. Pamela Evette was diagnosed with COVID-19 on Friday and is recovering in isolation with her family at home, officials said.

Evette had a sore throat and headache Thursday and was tested for the virus. She has stayed at her family's home near Greenville since noting the symptoms, said Brian Symmes, the spokesman for Gov. Henry McMaster.

"She is feeling better now," said Symmes, adding that

Evette plans to stay out of the public for two weeks.

Evette's positive test prompted McMaster and his wife to get COVID-19 tests, which both came back negative Sunday. It was the fifth negative test since the pandemic began for the governor and the third for his wife, Symmes said.

Pennsylvania

Gov. Tom Wolf's pandemic restrictions that required people to stay at home, placed size limits on gatherings and ordered "non-life-sustaining" businesses to shut down are unconstitutional, a federal judge ruled Monday. The Wolf administration said it will appeal the decision.

U.S. District Judge William Stickman IV, who was appointed by President Donald Trump, sided with plaintiffs that included hair salons, drive-in movie theaters, a farmer's market vendor, a horse trainer and several Republican officeholders in their lawsuit against Wolf, a Democrat, and his health secretary.

The Wolf administration's pandemic policies have been overreaching, arbitrary and violated citizens' constitutional rights, Stickman wrote in his ruling.

The ruling means that current restrictions can't be enforced, according to attorney Thomas W. King III, who represented the plaintiffs. The state has been enforcing a gathering limit of more than 25 people for events held indoors and more than 250 people for those held outside.

North Carolina

CHARLOTTE — A county in North Carolina incorrectly told nearly 7,000 residents they had tested positive for the coronavirus due to what officials said was a technical glitch.

The messages were sent by text messages to more than 6,700 residents in Mecklenburg County on Friday, The Charlotte Observer reported. More than 500 people also received a county email with the notice.

The county told residents that morning the messages were a "scam," and that their health department does not notify people of their COVID-19 test results through text message.

A few hours later, the county said on Twitter the messages had actually gone out due to a glitch "in the software system that has been addressed by the software provider."

West Virginia

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice wants to amend the state's metric for reopening schools a week after classes reopened for face-to-face instruction in most counties.

Justice said at a press conference Monday that the state's color-coded map may need a new category to allow counties that have between 10 and 13 coronavirus cases per 100,000 residents in-person classes and sports competitions.

The state's map currently has four colors: green, yellow, orange and red. The latter two levels require schools to go virtual and end most extracurricular activities.

Justice suggested a new "gold" color could apply to counties that are "only so slightly into the orange category," which currently applies to counties with 10 to 24.9 cases per 100,000 people.

Michigan

LANSING — A county on Monday ordered a two-week quarantine for 23 fraternities and sororities and seven large rental houses near Michigan State University following a coronavirus outbreak that a local health official said was turning into a "crisis."

The quarantine, which is mandatory, means students or others living in the buildings cannot leave except for medical care or necessities that cannot be delivered. The houses have known cases or exposure to COVID-19.

Ingham County Health Officer Linda Vail acted two days after she urged all MSU stu-

dents living locally to voluntarily self-quarantine for two weeks, citing at least 342 cases among people affiliated with the university during the previous 16 days.

Wisconsin

MADISON — The University of Wisconsin-Madison decided Monday to eliminate spring break next semester in an effort to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

The university's Faculty Senate voted 140-7 to erase the nine-day break from the 2021 spring calendar. Officials said the move is designed to discourage students and staff from traveling long distances and bringing the virus that causes COVID-19 back to campus, officials said.

The proposal has classes starting Jan. 25, a week later than they are currently scheduled. Spring break would be eliminated, but classes would not be held Saturday, March 27, which is the beginning of Passover; Friday, April 2, which is Good Friday; or Saturday, April 3, the day before Easter. Classes would end April 30, which is the same day as the current calendar.

Oklahoma

OKLAHOMA CITY — Several Oklahoma House Democrats requested a legal opinion Monday on Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt's decision to spend federal coronavirus relief funds to send students to private schools.

Members of the House Democratic Education Policy Group requested a formal opinion from state Attorney General Mike Hunter.

Stitt faced criticism in July when he announced his plan to spend \$10 million from the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund to allow Oklahoma families to access \$6,500 in funds for private-school tuition.

State Rep. Andy Fugate said he believes there are questions about the legality of the governor's decision.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police gun fires in diner by accident, injures 2

NY CAMDEN — An upstate New York police deputy's gun accidentally discharged in a restaurant and injured two people Saturday, according to state police.

The gun discharged Saturday evening at the Grape and Grog restaurant in Camden, about 20 miles northeast of Syracuse.

State police said an off-duty Otsego County deputy's handgun went off while he was seated at a table. The bullet went through the bottom of his pants, ricocheted off the floor and struck a 38-year-old woman and a 10-year-old girl.

The woman suffered a minor injury to her right foot, and the girl was treated for a laceration to her right thigh and elbow. Both were treated at the scene.

Waterfront pier partly collapses, injuring 2

WA SEATTLE — A pier along Seattle's waterfront partially collapsed Sunday as crews were demolishing portions of it, injuring two workers.

The Seattle Times reported that Pier 58, the structure supporting a park between the Seattle Aquarium and a ferris wheel, gave way roughly a month after officials discovered it had moved several inches away from the land.

Five workers were on the pier when it began to give way, said Marshall Foster, director of the city of Seattle's Office of the Waterfront. A monitoring system triggered alarms and the workers evacuated, but not before two men fell into the water. Both were rescued by on-site safety staff.

The Seattle Fire Department transported the two injured workers to Harborview

Medical Center in stable condition. No other injuries were reported.

Transit app shows how many on bus or train

NJ NEWARK — NJ Transit on Monday announced a pilot program for its mobile app that allows passengers preparing to board to see how many other passengers are riding their bus or train.

Green, yellow and red color-coded icons will indicate light, medium or heavy ridership, respectively, the agency said.

The ridership information is collected on buses by automated onboard passenger counting technology.

Handheld devices used to scan tickets will provide passengers with ridership data on Raritan Valley, Atlantic City and Morris & Essex Lines trains.

Boy, 14, leads police on early high-speed chase

VA CHESAPEAKE — A 14-year-old boy led police on a pre-dawn, high-speed chase in a stolen vehicle, Virginia state police said.

Police said that a state trooper patrolling Interstate 64 East in Chesapeake saw a 2016 Dodge Caravan which passed his marked vehicle just before 3:15 a.m. Sunday. The driver was going 114 mph in a 55 mph zone, police said in a news release.

The trooper attempted to make a traffic stop, but the driver refused to stop, police said. The vehicle had been reported stolen in Norfolk.

The pursuit continued through streets in Chesapeake, Virginia Beach and Norfolk before the vehicle reentered I-64 West. Once on the interstate, the vehicle struck a police vehicle, causing the Caravan to

spin out of control.

A 14-year-old male driver was taken into custody, along with five other juveniles who were passengers in the vehicle.

Cornfield vandals wreak destruction on farm

ME LEEDS — The Maine Warden Service is looking for vandals who destroyed acres of cornfields by apparently driving through them.

The service said the vandalism occurred at Barker Farm in Leeds, about 50 miles north of Portland, on Friday night. The vandals cut a path about 800 feet long and 8 to 14 feet wide in the shape of a line and a circle.

The warden service has not identified any suspects, and it is looking for people who might have information about the destruction. The fields were full of harvest-ready corn, the Bangor Daily News reported. The act was discovered on Saturday.

Off-duty lifeguards save teen from drowning

MD POTOMAC — A 17-year-old boy tried to swim across the Potomac River from Virginia to Maryland on Sunday night and almost drowned until two off-duty lifeguards saved his life, authorities said.

Montgomery County authorities said the two lifeguards performed CPR on the teen and had him breathing again before emergency officials arrived, news outlets reported.

County Fire and Rescue spokesman Pete Piringier said the teen started on the Sandy Landing side in Virginia, but about halfway through, the current pulled him under.

Piringier said the teen's friends attempted to help him, but the lifeguards jumped into action when they saw the com-

motion from the Maryland side.

Deer shot by teen may set state size record

KS KIOWA COUNTY — A 14-year-old Kansas girl may have set a new deer hunting record in the state with a buck she killed this month.

Paslie Werth shot a 40-point whitetail buck while she was hunting on family property in Kiowa County with her father. The deer unofficially measured 282 6/8 inches, which would top the existing record of 280 4/8 inches set in 1987.

Before the record can become official, the rack of antlers on the deer Werth shot must dry for 60 days.

Werth said she had seen the deer before in trail camera photographs on the family-owned land, but it was impressive to see it in person.

Manatee struck by boat is treated in zoo facility

FL FORT MYERS — A female manatee is fighting to live in ZooTampa at Lowry Park after being rescued near Fort Myers Beach.

The sea cow was rescued Saturday. Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission biologist Denise Boyd told the News-Press that the manatee suffered blunt force injuries when she collided with a boat propeller.

Since 1991, the center's team has treated 454 of the protected sea cows with 267 of its patients reintroduced into the state's waters.

Whether the manatee from Fort Myers will ever join that number is an big question. When she arrived, staff didn't even give a her name.

From wire reports

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Big 12 licking its wounds against Sun Belt

Associated Press

LAWRENCE, Kan. — Maybe the Big 12 Conference should have followed the lead of the Big Ten and Pac-12 and opted out of playing college football this fall.

Or at least opted out of scheduling the Sun Belt.

The lower-tier conference went 3-0 against the Power Five league over the weekend, a stunning performance highlighted by Louisiana-Lafayette's romp over then-No. 23 Iowa State. Arkansas State also won at Kansas State and Coastal Carolina went to Kansas and outclassed the Jayhawks in what may have been the best day in the history of the league.

"You saw today what the Sun Belt is. We didn't want to let the Sun Belt down," Chanticleers coach Jamey Caldwell said after their 38-23 win over the Jayhawks, a game that ended just after midnight and capped the upset-filled Saturday.

"Just proud of the effort," Caldwell said, "and hopefully the people back on the East Coast and in Conway were up

to see it."

If not, they certainly took note of it Sunday.

That's when the latest AP Top 25 was released with schools from the Big Ten and Pac-12 and elsewhere that are not playing this fall ineligible for the ranking. That opened the door for voters to select 10 newcomers for the poll. Louisiana-Lafayette landed at No. 19 with Sun Belt member Appalachian State tied with Kentucky at No. 23 following its win over Charlotte.

Arkansas State received the sixth-most votes of schools that are just outside the Top 25.

"It's a great win but I hope not," Red Wolves coach Blake Anderson said, when asked whether the last-minute win over the Wildcats was a program-defining one. "I hope there's a way bigger and better win ahead of us. Not by any means satisfied. Excited and very proud, but by no means is this the best we can do. We still got a lot better football to be played."

Arkansas State was a bit fortunate in that it already had a game under its belt, losing to

Memphis the previous week. But just like it was the first time on the field for the Big 12 following an offseason thrown into chaos by the pandemic, it was the first time Louisiana-Lafayette and Coastal Carolina lined up for a kickoff.

Both looked better prepared than their big-boy brethren.

The Ragin' Cajuns, who were last ranked in 1943, trailed the Cyclones just 14-10 at halftime. Coach Billy Napier's team took the lead on a 78-yard touchdown pass late in the third quarter, added a punt return touchdown early in the fourth and managed to shut out Iowa State and quarterback Brock Purdy over the final 30 minutes for one of the biggest wins in school history.

It was the Ragin' Cajuns' first win over a Top 25 opponent on the road, snapping an 0-26 skid. Their only other win over a Top 25 team came at home in 1996, 29-22 over Texas A&M.

"We've got a lot of belief in our process. We've got a lot of belief that the University of Louisiana should always have a very competitive team," Napier said. "We're fortunate that

we've got the necessary things from our administration. They decided they wanted to have an exceptional Group of 5 football program and gave us the money to go hire the people. They gave us the resources and some of the things inside the building to help us really run basically a Power Five operation."

While it was a banner weekend for the Sun Belt, it was ugly all-around for the Big 12.

Oklahoma, Texas and West Virginia took care of business, though the Sooners did it with a depleted roster caused by so many positive COVID-19 tests that their game against Missouri State was nearly postponed. Baylor did have its opener against Louisiana Tech postponed because of positive tests within the Bulldogs' program, and will instead play a hastily scheduled game against Houston — which also had its opener against Memphis postponed — this weekend.

Speaking of Houston — or at least Houston Baptist — it took Texas Tech turning back a 2-point try in the final minutes for the Big 12 team to hold off the Huskies for a 35-33 victory.

Air Force football only playing Army, Navy this season

Associated Press

The Air Force Falcons will play two football games this season against fellow service academies Army and Navy.

The Falcons' abbreviated schedule includes hosting Navy on Oct. 3 and a trip to West Point, N.Y., to face Army on Nov. 7. The military academies compete annually for the Commander-in-Chief's Trophy, which goes to the academy with the best record in the round-robin competition.

The school announced Monday that only Air Force Academy cadets would be permitted to attend the game at Falcon Stadium due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They will social distance and wear masks. The base remains closed to the public.

"It's certainly going to be a different game. It's not going to look the same. It's not going to feel the same," Air Force director of athletics Nathan Pine said in a video posted on the school's website. "But we're going to have an opportunity to play

Navy and that's really important for the young men in our football program and really important for the physical mission at the academy. It's something that is every bit worth the effort."

Navy currently has possession of the trophy after beating both schools last season.

Air Force had been in a holding pattern after its conference, the Mountain West, decided in August to postpone fall sports due to COVID-19 concerns. The team has been practicing since Aug. 24 in compliance with protocols.

The conference announced Monday that it is planning an eight-game football season this spring. Schedules should be announced soon.

No. 22 Army is off to a 2-0 start after beating Middle Tennessee State and Louisiana-Monroe. The Black Knights have 12 games listed on their schedule, but the contest against BYU has been postponed. The school's athletic director took to Twitter in an effort to find a replacement.

Navy lost 55-3 to BYU on Sept. 7. The Midshipmen have 11 games listed, including Army on Dec. 12.

Last season, Air Force finished 11-2, which included a loss to Navy and a win over Army. The Falcons beat Washington State in the Cheez-It Bowl as they closed the season with an eight-game winning streak. It was their longest since 1998.

Coach Troy Calhoun returns a strong nucleus that includes inside linebacker Demonte Meeks, along with offensive linemen Parker Ferguson and Nolan Laufenberg. They were all named to the preseason all-Mountain West team.

The team plans to unveil a new uniform for the Navy game. The theme will be based around the Tuskegee Airmen, who were the first African American unit to fly combat airplanes in World War II.

"The Red Tails and the Tuskegee Airmen are a great piece of Air Force heritage," Pine said.

Stars reach 1st Cup final in 20 years

Associated Press

The Dallas Stars were mired in a six-game losing streak when the season was paused for 4½ months because of the coronavirus pandemic, and have been outscored and outshot since getting inside the NHL bubble.

Yet now they are one of only three teams still playing, already set for their first Stanley Cup Final since 2000.

“We’re finding ways to win right now, and that’s all that matters,” captain Jamie Benn said.

With their captain and two rookies scoring goals in another comeback, the Stars wrapped up the best-of-seven Western Conference Final in five games with a 3-2 overtime victory against the top-seeded Vegas Golden Knights.

“We’re not going home!” goaltender Anton Khudobin screamed after his 34-save performance in the clincher.

From a miserable 1-7-1 start to the season way back in October, to an unexpected coaching change for off-ice issues in December after the team was back on the winning track, and then that 0-4-2 span into mid-March, Dallas still have a chance to win its second Stanley Cup championship.

Tampa Bay took a 3-1 series lead over the New York Islanders into Game 5 of the Eastern Conference final on Tuesday night, also in Edmonton.

The Stars trailed 2-0 in the opening seconds of the third period Monday night, and finally got on the board with Benn’s goal midway through the period.

Joel Kiviranta, whose OT goal in Game 7 of the second-round clincher over Colorado capped his hat trick, then tied the game with 3:47 left. Denis Gurianov scored the game-winner on a one-timer during a power play 3:36 into overtime.

“We’ve done this all year. We’ve come

back from behind all year,” interim coach Rick Bowness said. “Down 2-0, there was no panic. We just were a very confident group that we could respond to the challenge.”

The finale against the Golden Knights marked the fifth time this postseason Dallas won when trailing after the first period — and the third time to win when trailing after two periods. The Stars have also won six games after giving up the first goal, two short of the franchise record of their 1999 Stanley Cup-winning team. They are 5-0 in overtime, and 10-1 in one-goal games.

Dallas finished the Western Conference Final with 118 shots on goal — 48 fewer than Vegas had in the five games. In their 21 postseason games, the Stars have been outscored 64-62, making them the first team to enter the Stanley Cup Final with a negative goal differential in the postseason since the 1968 St. Louis Blues.

Big Ben, Snell lead Steelers past Giants

Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — There was one overriding reason Ben Roethlisberger worked so hard to return from a major elbow injury.

His team.

Roethlisberger, who missed the final 14 games last season after elbow surgery, threw for three scores and the Pittsburgh Steelers beat the New York Giants 26-16 at an empty and eerie MetLife Stadium on Monday night. He also got all the help he could ask for from his defense and backup running back Bennie Snell.

“I am excited we won the game,” Roethlisberger said. “I told the guys before the game it is not about me individually. The reason I came back is for these guys, this team. It’s a special group of football players, of men, and I am just glad to be a part of it.”

A key part of it, along with several defensive plays and Snell’s 113 yards on 19 carries — his first 100-yard performance in his second NFL season.

“We have talked openly about the maturation process

and things you can expect from a second-year player,” coach Mike Tomlin said, “and he’s showed signs of that from the very beginning of this process. He is a quality player and one that is maturing and emerging, and one who answered the bell when called upon.”

The defense, while not quite on the level of the famed Steel Curtain, was stingy and physical. It held Saquon Barkley to 6 yards on 15 carries, swarming in the backfield nearly all night.

“I have to be better,” Barkley said. “I have to be better for the team. We have to get the running game going.”

Three Steelers stars got them their first touchdown. All-Pro linebacker T.J. Watt made a clever interception at the New York 36. Roethlisberger beat a blitz with a perfect throw to JuJu Smith-Schuster for a 10-yard second-quarter score. Chris Boswell’s extra point hit the upright, leaving them behind 10-9.

They got the lead with 7 seconds remaining in the half as Roethlisberger connected with James Washington, who dived

into the end zone for a 13-yard score. Boswell made the PAT this time, and added a 36-yard field goal early in the final quarter. That came following the night’s biggest play.

Even though the Pittsburgh defense broke down as the Giants marched 87 yards on 19 plays in the third quarter, it still came up with a huge stop. Bud Dupree pressured quarterback Daniel Jones as he rolled left from the 4 and deflected his pass. Edge rusher Cam Heyward practically made a fair catch in the end zone for the interception.

“I want to make a play for my team. I saw Bud laying him down,” Heyward said. “I tried to make a good play and float to the ball.”

“We got to be an opportunistic defense. We got sacks by guys who don’t usually get sacks and interceptions by guys who don’t usually get interceptions.”

Roethlisberger then took Pittsburgh 62 yards for the field goal and a 19-10 lead. He hit Smith-Schuster again for a 10-yard touchdown and a 26-10 lead before New York got a late TD.

Titans get narrow win at Broncos

Associated Press

DENVER — A day after Tom Brady’s dud of a debut for Tampa Bay, Stephen Gostkowski failed to put all that Patriots pedigree to work in his first game with the Tennessee Titans.

Until the very end.

Unlike Brady, who lost his first game in a uniform other than New England’s, Gostkowski prevailed Monday night when he nailed a 25-yard field goal with 17 seconds left, sending the Titans past the Denver Broncos 16-14 after he missed four kicks for the first time in his career.

“I really wanted to come out and make a strong first impression,” Gostkowski said. “I did the exact opposite.”

Gostkowski missed a kick in each quarter, including a blocked field goal and an errant extra point.

“We’re happy to get a win,” Titans quarterback Ryan Tannehill said.

MLB roundup

Padres rout Dodgers, tighten race in West

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Dinelson Lamet out-pitched Clayton Kershaw, and rookie Jorge Ona hit a go-ahead double in a five-run seventh inning to lead the San Diego Padres to their eighth straight win, 7-2 against the Los Angeles Dodgers on Monday night in the opener of a series between the NL's top teams.

The Padres cut the Dodgers' lead in the NL West to 1½ games. Trent Grisham added some spice to the rivalry when he hit a tying home run off Kershaw in the sixth and said something to the Los Angeles dug-out as he headed for home. San Diego has won 12 of 14.

Lamet (3-1) got the victory thanks to a seventh-inning outburst that chased Kershaw (5-2). Lamet matched his season high with 11 strikeouts while holding the Dodgers to one run and three hits.

White Sox 3, Twins 1: Adam Engel delivered a tiebreaking pinch-hit single in the eighth inning, and host Chicago increased its lead in the AL Central.

The White Sox opened their pivotal four-game set against Minnesota with their ninth win in 10 games. Chicago (31-16) moved two games ahead of the second-place Twins (30-19).

Minnesota reliever Taylor Rogers (1-3) walked Yoan Moncada and Luis Robert with no outs in the eighth. Engel then made it 2-1 with a single to center. After Nick Madrigal lined out, Tim Anderson added an RBI double off the fence in left.

Alex Colome (2-0) got four outs for the win.

Mariners 6-0, Athletics 5-9: Mike Minor tossed a two-hitter, Jake Lamb dou-

bled and homered in his first game after signing with his new team, and Oakland earned a doubleheader split in Seattle.

The Mariners erased a 5-0 deficit in their Game 1 win, scoring twice in the sixth inning with two outs to stay on the heels of Houston in the AL West. Seattle is 1½ games behind the Astros for second.

The games were played with a haze of smoke hovering above the field at T-Mobile Park, even with the retractable roof of the stadium closed. Wildfires on the West Coast have suffocated much of the Pacific Northwest with unhealthy air conditions that brought into question whether the games would even be played.

Minor (1-5) picked up his first victory of the season in his third start since being acquired by the A's from Texas. Jimmy Yacabonis (0-1) was charged with the loss.

Kyle Lewis had a big day for the Mariners. The rookie outfielder hit a two-run homer and reached on a bases-loaded walk that scored the winning run in the opener. He also robbed Ramon Laureano of a grand slam with a spectacular catch in the first inning of the second game.

Marlins 6, Phillies 2: Pablo Lopez pitched seven innings of one-run ball with some help from right fielder Matt Joyce, and host Miami won Game 7 of its long series against Philadelphia.

The series, the majors' longest in the regular season in 53 years, included three makeup games and two doubleheaders. The Marlins won five of the seven games, including the final three, to move into second place in the NL East, 1½ games ahead of the Phillies.

Lopez (4-4) allowed three hits and retired

his final 13 batters. He was helped by two over-the-shoulder basket catches on the warning track by a retreating Joyce, who robbed Scott Kingery and Jean Segura.

Brewers 2-2, Cardinals 1-3: Paul DeJong knocked in the go-ahead run with a two-out single in the ninth inning as St. Louis salvaged a doubleheader split at Milwaukee.

Both games went to extra innings after being scheduled for seven. In the opener, Keston Hiura hit a sacrifice fly to score Avisail Garcia with the winning run in the eighth as the Brewers rallied for the win.

In the second game, DeJong hit a liner off Justin Topa (0-1) that barely eluded the reach of shortstop Orlando Arcia and went into left field to score Tommy Edman from third.

In the first game, St. Louis took a 1-0 lead in the top of the eighth when Edman drove in Tyler O'Neill with a two-out single off Freddy Peralta (2-1).

Ryan Braun tied it with an RBI double off the center-field wall against Ryan Helsley (1-1). Hiura won it with his bases-loaded sacrifice fly off Austin Gomber.

Orioles 14, Braves 1: DJ Stewart hit the first of three of his team's homers in a nine-run third inning, and host Baltimore stopped a five-game skid.

After winning three of four in Washington to extend its NL East lead to a season-high 3½ games, Atlanta was handed its most lopsided defeat of the year, enabling second-place Miami to shave a game off the margin.

A solo home run by Freddie Freeman was the extent of the Braves' offense over seven innings against Jorge Lopez (2-0).

Reds sweep doubleheader from Pirates

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — Mike Moustakas hit a big three-run homer in the fifth inning, and the Cincinnati Reds beat the Pittsburgh Pirates 9-4 on Monday night for a doubleheader sweep.

Moustakas drove in Shogo Akiyama and Eugenio Suarez with a two-out shot to center off Nik Turley (0-2). Pittsburgh had just taken a 4-3 lead on rookie Ke'Bryan Hayes' two-

run shot with two out in the top half of the inning.

"I've hit quite a few big home runs in my career, for sure," Moustakas said. "It was two huge wins for us today to get momentum going into this last little stretch."

Brian Goodwin and Joey Votto also connected for Cincinnati, which won a third straight game for the first time since Aug. 28. Sal Romano (1-0) got the victory, retiring Gregory

Polanco with the bases loaded for the final out of the fifth. Romano was promoted on Sunday from the taxi squad.

"It was a good feeling for sure to contribute to the team," Romano said. "I knew in my heart I could get back here. I know I can pitch here. I had to grind it out and it paid off today."

In the opener, rookie Tyler Stephenson hit a tiebreaking two-run homer in the seventh inning, lifting the Reds to a 3-1

win.

With two out and the bases empty, rookie Jose Garcia singled to left against Sam Howard (2-2). Manager David Bell then sent Stephenson up to hit for Shogo Akiyama, and the catcher hit a drive to left for his second homer. The 24-year-old Stephenson lifted his batting helmet off his head with his left hand and pumped both arms in the air before being swarmed by teammates at the plate.