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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Military responses

Here's where the presidential candidates stand on issues important to troops and veterans

BY STEVE BEYNON

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump and former Vice President Joe Biden agreed in a questionnaire released Wednesday by a military advocacy group that the Defense Department needs to compete with near-peer military powers such as Russia and China.

But the presidential candidates differed on the details and where billions of federal dollars should be spent.

Trump boasted about “rebuilding the military.” Biden conceded the military might need a boost but he doesn’t back a runaway budget.

In the questionnaire released by Military Officers Association of America on how Trump and Biden would lead the Pentagon and Department of Veterans Affairs, Trump touted the Pentagon’s “largest-ever” budget, writing “our country has rejected a future of American decline and embraced our destiny of American dominance.”

The MOAA asked Trump,

Biden and Jo Jorgensen, the Libertarian candidate for president, a series of questions on how they will lead the military and improve care for veterans.

In his responses, Trump highlighted his establishing Space Force and authorizing a boost to the military’s arsenal including 100 new F-35s, 165 new Abrams tanks, and two new Virginia-class submarines.

Biden slammed Trump for abandoning “all fiscal discipline” and called for a more surgical approach to Defense Department investments that includes reallocating some existing resources to modernize the military.

“His budget is dominated by investments in aging legacy capabilities. At a time when we’re winding down our main combat efforts from the last two decades, we need to make smarter investments in our military,” Biden wrote to the MOAA, stopping short of committing to any big promises on how he would finance the military.

In an interview with Stars

and Stripes last week, Biden said there is a possibility of a need to boost defense spending — mainly to modernize the force to compete with near-peer threats China and Russia.

Trump and Biden in their answers to MOAA’s questionnaire agreed near-peer threats pose the greatest long-term security threat to the United States.

“Specifically, we see China as an ever-increasing economic and military threat as they continue to expand their influence throughout the world,” Trump wrote, also repeating his past critiques of NATO countries not contributing enough to the defense of Europe.

Biden said Russia and China pose “the most distinct and immediate threats from state actors,” adding that Russia seeks to undermine the United States and democracies in Europe while China is a looming global threat, calling it “the greatest strategic challenge.”

In the questionnaire, Trump did not make any military commitments in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria or Africa. He has previ-

ously made promises to end “forever wars” and has taken steps recently to bring a large number of troops home.

Biden told Stars and Stripes last week that he intends to keep a small number of troops in the conflict regions to facilitate special operations missions. He told MOAA that he wants a detailed review of a defense strategy in the Global War on Terror to figure out a plan for the military in Afghanistan and the Middle East.

On veterans issues, both candidates said the VA needs to continue investing in private-sector health care.

Trump told the MOAA that the VA’s biggest accomplishment during his presidency is implementing the Mission Act, which greatly expands eligibility for veterans to seek care outside the federal network.

Biden said his goal will be to “strike the right balance between VA and community care,” suggesting there is room for private care using federal funds, but the VA itself should stay relevant.

Gulf Coast braces for 2nd round of flooding in Sally’s wake

Associated Press

PENSACOLA, Fla. — Homeowners and businesses along the soggy Gulf Coast began cleaning up Thursday in the wake of Hurricane Sally as the region braced for a delayed, second round of flooding in the coming days from rivers and creeks swollen by the storm’s heavy rains.

In Pensacola and surrounding Escambia County, where Sally’s floodwaters surged through downtown streets and lapped at car door handles Wednesday before receding, authorities went door-to-door

to check on residents and warn them the danger wasn’t over.

“We are not out of the woods yet,” Escambia County emergency manager Eric Gilmore said.

With the Florida Panhandle and Alabama on alert, Sally’s rainy remnants pushed farther inland across the Southeast, causing flooding in Georgia and threatening more of the same on Friday in North Carolina and Virginia.

Forecasters said Georgia could get up to a foot, and South Carolina 10 inches.

Along the Gulf Coast, officials inspected shut-down high-

ways and bridges for damage. A section of the main bridge between Pensacola and Pensacola Beach collapsed after it was hit by a barge that broke loose during the storm.

At least 400 people in Escambia County were rescued by such means as high-water vehicles, boats and jet skis, county Public Safety Director Jason Rogers said. At least one death, in Alabama, was blamed on the hurricane, and more than a half-million homes and businesses were without electricity on the morning after the storm in Florida, Alabama and Georgia.

At least eight waterways in southern Alabama and the Florida Panhandle were expected to hit major flood stage by Thursday. Forecasters warned that some of the crests could break records, submerge bridges and flood homes.

Sally blew ashore near Gulf Shores, Ala., with 105 mph winds, unloading more than 2 feet of rain near Naval Air Station Pensacola before weakening into a tropical storm and then a depression. Pensacola streets looked like river rapids, and parked cars were swamped.

Deadline set to renew expired CAC IDs

By IMMANUEL JOHNSON

Stars and Stripes

Service members and others with common access cards that expired during the coronavirus pandemic must renew them by Sept. 30, while retirees and dependents with expired ID cards will have more time to renew them.

The Defense Department in April began allowing CAC holders to extend the life of their IDs virtually by updating certificates at the MilConnect

ID Card Office Online, which allowed them to continue using cards with an expiration date of April 16 or later to gain base access and obtain benefits.

That policy will expire at the end of the month, "due to the high rate of Common Access Card reissuance and low rate of certificate extensions," a Sept. 8 memo from the office of the under secretary of defense for personnel and readiness said.

Uniformed Service Identification card holders, which include dependents and retir-

ees, may continue using cards that expired on or after Jan. 1 this year, the memo stated. The expired USIDs will be good for access to DOD installations through March 30 of next year and for benefits such as commissaries and exchanges through June 30, Navy guidance issued Monday said.

The USID extensions were authorized because of "limited ability" to return ID offices to normal capacity while complying with safety precautions, the DOD memo said.

Defense Department ID card offices will prioritize those with expiring CACs and renewal requests through Sept. 30, the Navy statement said.

Employees will contact those who have appointments to confirm that they're for CACs; USID card holders will be rescheduled for after Oct. 1, the Navy said.

To make an appointment for an ID card renewal or to locate an office, go to the ID Card Office Online at idco.dmdc.osd.mil/idco.

Montagnet leads Atsugi as 'Chili' Mack departs

By CHRISTIAN LOPEZ

Stars and Stripes

Naval Air Facility Atsugi welcomed its new leader, and said goodbye to the old one, Thursday during a change-of-command ceremony customized with measures to prevent the coronavirus' spread.

Capt. John M. Montagnet assumed command of the installation 22 miles southwest of Tokyo from Capt. Lloyd B. "Chili" Mack at the sparsely attended morning gathering inside a hangar normally used by the "Warlords" of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 51.

Instead of the expected 300-400 guests, only about 50 observed in person while wearing face masks and maintaining social distance. Others watched the ceremony live on NAF Atsugi's official Facebook page.

"COVID-19 has tested our community at so many levels," Mack told the audience.

"Collectively, we have weathered the tough times and ensured that NAF Atsugi would be able to meet any challenges that it would face."

Mack put the base on a temporary lockdown over the summer because of an unspecified

number of coronavirus infections there. As of Thursday, there were no active cases.

Montagnet, a Mississippi native who comes to Japan from the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., where he served as a professor, told the audience it was hard to put into words how much he was looking forward to his new assignment.

"It is an honor and privilege to get to play a part in continuing the wonderful relationship between the United States and Japan," he said.

As of Thursday afternoon, the Navy had not responded to questions about where Mack is heading. He spent three years commanding NAF Atsugi and its community of about 6,000 personnel, including U.S. troops, Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force members and their families.

"This is a sentimental moment for me," he wrote Wednesday in his final "Leadership Daily" message to the community on Facebook.

"There are brighter days ahead for this installation; the base is in transition, and I know you will support Captain Montagnet as he navigates what's next for NAF Atsugi."

Air Force delays fitness tests three more months

By WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

The Air Force said Tuesday it was yet again postponing physical fitness assessments for airmen due to the coronavirus pandemic, this time until the beginning of 2021.

In May, the service notified airmen that the tests were being suspended until Oct. 1. The start date has now been pushed back to Jan. 1, the Air Force said in a statement.

Airmen typically take the test once or twice a year. Those who earn a top rating are only required to test annually.

"To continue minimizing close contact among personnel during the ongoing [coronavirus] pandemic and ensure units and personnel are fully ready to resume, testing has been delayed from October to January, and testing in January will move forward without obtaining waist, height and weight measurements," the statement said.

Come the new year, uniformed personnel will be expected to test on the 1½-mile run, 1 minute of push-ups and 1 minute of sit-ups.

Waist, height and weight measurements remain post-

poned until further notice, the statement said.

All airmen will receive maximum points for the so-called "abdominal circumference" component as part of their official score, including those with exemptions to that waist measurement, the statement said.

"We know people are staying fit regardless, but we want to give our Airmen enough time to prepare," Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr. said in the statement.

Commanders may delay fitness assessments beyond Jan. 1 based on factors such as recommendations of local public health officials, continuation of closed fitness centers and extended statewide restriction of movement and gatherings, the statement said.

He said airmen have been juggling work, child care access, homeschooling and family separations that have impacted maintaining fitness.

Fitness assessment due dates in 2021 will depend largely on the date and score of the last official test, and can be determined by visiting the Official Physical Assessment Due Date Matrix on myPers, the statement said.

Marines, sailors join Calif. wildfire fight

By ROSE L. THAYER

Stars and Stripes

Roughly 250 Marines and sailors from Camp Pendleton, Calif., will deploy to help battle the 25 wildfires still burning across state that have stretched firefighting resources to the limit, military officials announced late Wednesday.

The active-duty troops will travel about 350 miles north this week to assist efforts with the Creek Fire in the Sierra National Forest, according to the news release from U.S. Army North, the element of U.S. Northern Command's Joint Force Land Component Command that will oversee the military support in fighting the wildfires.

They join about 200 soldiers from Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., who deployed in late August to help combat fires in the northern part of the state. In total, more than 17,000 firefighters, including about 1,200 California National Guard members, are working throughout the state, which has already seen more than 3.3 million acres burned during wildfire season.

"Given the unprecedented fire season and the magnitude of the loss the people of California are experiencing, we stand ready to support the National Interagency Fire Center in their effort to help protect people, property and land in California," Lt. Gen. Laura J. Richardson, commander of Army North, said in a statement. "Just like the soldiers supporting fire suppression efforts in Northern California, the Marines and sailors who will assist in this mission in central California are trained and equipped with all of the necessary gear

to keep them safe, to include in a [coronavirus] environment."

The Marine personnel are assigned to Camp Pendleton's 7th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group, I Marine Expeditionary Force. They will be fitted for personal protective equipment, including fire retardant clothing, boots, gloves and hard hats, and begin training on fire behavior and fire line safety at the base as early as Thursday, according to the release.

They are scheduled to deploy to central California on Saturday to receive hands-on training in fire suppression methods and procedures prior to employment in the national forest.

The Creek Fire has burned more than 228,000 acres and is 18% contained, according to California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, known as Cal Fire. The fire began Sept. 4 and has led to evacuations in Fresno and Madera counties.

"The 1st Marine Logistics Group is ready to assist our community during the California wildfire crisis," Brig. Gen. Bobbi Shea, 1st Marine Logistics Group commander, said in a statement. "Alongside federal agencies, and state and local partners, 1st MLG will provide highly capable Marines and sailors to assist in wildland fire suppression efforts."

Up north in the Mendocino National Forest, the soldiers from Joint Base Lewis-McChord expect to spend nearly all of September helping fight the August Complex Fire. That fire began in late August and later merged with two other fires to

encompass more 817,800 acres that stretch into the Shasta-Trinity and Six Rivers National Forests. It is about 30% contained, according to the National Forest Service.

The soldiers from Lewis-McChord's 14th Brigade Engineer Battalion, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, arrived Aug. 31 and have dug 6.5 miles of fire lines and removed lower limbs from trees along nearly 15 miles of the fire's outer perimeter, said Pfc. Laura Peña, a technical engineer deployed to California.

The soldiers' work is not to directly fight the fire, but rather keeping the blaze from spreading or reigniting. Troops have cleared about nearly 730 acres through mop up operations, in which crews clear debris to prevent it from reigniting the fire.

Spc. Michael Ybarra, an Army photojournalist, said he's been documenting the work of those soldiers on the fire lines.

"A lot of them are dressed head to toe in personal protective equipment and traveling uphill digging lines and delimbing trees," Ybarra said. "They spend about three or four days on the line sleeping in tents and rotate out."

Ybarra, who is a native of Fresno, where the fires have left the sky orange and filled with hazy, smoky conditions, said it feels good to be helping his home state.

"I'm very happy to be out here doing my part and documenting everything going on out here," he said.

Richardson visited the soldiers earlier this week alongside her senior enlisted adviser Command Sgt. Maj. Phil K. Barretto.

COVID-19 danger continues to drive joblessness in US

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits fell last week to 860,000, a historically high figure that reflects economic damage from the coronavirus outbreak.

Before the pandemic hit the economy, the number signing up for jobless aid had never exceeded 700,000 in a week, even during the depths of the 2007-09 Great Recession.

The Labor Department said Thursday that U.S. jobless claims fell by 33,000 from the previous week and that 12.6 million are collecting traditional unemployment benefits, compared with just 1.7 million a year ago.

The outbreak slammed the U.S. economy in the spring, causing the economy

to collapse at a 31.7% annual rate from April through June, by far the worst three months on record. Companies and government agencies slashed 22 million jobs.

Since then, the economy and job market have been rebounding. Employers added 10.6 million jobs from May through August — but the United States still has recovered less than half the jobs lost in March and April.

The recovery remains fragile, imperiled by continuing COVID-19 cases and a failure to deliver another economic rescue package in Washington.

An extra \$600 in weekly unemployment benefits ran out July 31, squeezing households that had depended on the beefed-up payments. President Donald Trump issued an executive order Aug. 8 providing

a scaled-back version of the expanded jobless aid. Most states signed up for federal grants that let them increase weekly benefits by \$300 or \$400.

That program is expiring.

Charissa Ward, 37, was furloughed in April from her job as a server at a restaurant in Disney's Hollywood Studios resort near Orlando, Fla. Since then, she's been helping at her partner's online retail business, applying for jobs and waiting to see what Disney will do. "We have no idea when we're going to get called back," she said.

The extra \$600 in weekly jobless benefits didn't replace all her lost income but helped. The reduced \$300 she received briefly from Trump's program made life "a little less stressful."

House to vote on military assault bill

BY NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has committed to scheduling a vote before the end of the congressional session on the “I Am Vanessa Guillen Act” — a bill that would revamp the military’s system for reporting and investigating military sexual harassment and assault.

The sweeping measure would create new procedures for service members to report sexual harassment and assault in confidence and outside of their chain of command. Two years after being enacted, the bill would establish independent investigators and an independent prosecutor within the military who would be responsible for handling sex offenses.

The bill would also allow service members who experience sexual harassment or assault to file claims for compensation with the Defense Department. It orders the

Government Accountability Office to study the military’s handling of missing persons cases and its sexual assault and harassment prevention programs.

Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif., introduced the legislation Wednesday, along with Rep. Markwayne Mullin, R-Okla., and 71 other cosponsors. Speier is trying to recruit more Republicans to cosponsor the measure in order for it to be passed under a suspension of the rules — a procedure used to quickly pass noncontroversial bills. That type of motion would require a two-thirds’ majority.

“This is very remarkable, to be able to introduce this bill today and have it taken up before the end of the session,” Speier said. “That means a vote would either be in the next few weeks or in November.”

The bill was born out of the outrage that followed the death of Spc. Vanessa Guillen earlier this year at Fort Hood. Guillen,

a 20-year-old small arms repairer, was killed by another soldier on April 22. She was reported missing in late April, and her remains were found more than two months later in a shallow grave about 20 miles from the base. Guillen’s family has said that she faced sexual harassment on base, but was too afraid to report it.

The news of Guillen’s death and sexual harassment inspired hundreds of veterans to post on social media their own experiences with harassment and assault and expose a larger issue about a victim’s willingness to report these problems.

Guillen’s family joined lawmakers Wednesday outside the Capitol to introduce the act. Lupe Guillen, Vanessa’s 16-year-old sister, spoke at the end of the event, tears streaming down her face as she read prepared remarks from her phone. In part, she criticized the Army for tolerating sexual harassment.

Seoul: N. Korea may test missile fired underwater

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea may soon conduct its first underwater-launched ballistic missile test in about a year, a top South Korean military official said Wednesday, amid long-stalled nuclear talks between the North and the United States.

In written remarks to lawmakers ahead of a confirmation hearing, Won In-choul, the nominee for chairman of South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff, said North Korea has been repairing recent typhoon damage at its northeastern Sinpo shipyard, a place where it builds submarines.

Shortly after the repairs are complete, there is a chance it will carry out a submarine-launched ballistic missile test, Won said. He said South Korea’s military is keeping a close watch on developments there, according to a copy of his remarks provided by a lawmaker, Kang Dae-sik.

In recent years, North Korea has been pushing hard to acquire the ability to launch missiles from submarines in what

experts have said is a worrying development because such weapons are difficult to detect before launch.

Jung Changwook, head of the private Korea Defense Study Forum in Seoul, said North Korea could perform a submarine-launched ballistic missile, or SLBM, test to upgrade its nuclear attack capability and put pressure on Washington after the U.S. presidential election in early November.

There has been speculation that North Korea may test such a missile before the anniversary of the founding of its ruling Workers’ Party on Oct. 10. Jung said that is possible, but stressed that North Korea is aiming more at pressuring the U.S. rather than celebrating its state anniversary.

Some experts say it’s unlikely that North Korea will conduct any major weapons test soon because it is grappling with multiple crises, including typhoon damage, the coronavirus pandemic that led to the closure of its border with China — its biggest trading partner — and harsh U.S.-led sanctions.

Feds explored if they could charge Portland officials

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department explored whether it could pursue either criminal or civil rights charges against city officials in Portland, Ore., after clashes erupted there night after night between law enforcement and demonstrators, a department spokesperson said Thursday.

The revelation that federal officials researched whether they could levy criminal or civil charges against the officials — exploring whether their rhetoric and actions may have helped spur the violence in Portland — underscores the larger Trump administration’s effort to spotlight and crack down on protest-related violence. The majority of the mass police reform demonstrations nationwide have been peaceful.

For many nights, federal officials were told that Portland police officers were explicitly told not to respond to the federal courthouse as hundreds of demonstrators gathered outside, some throwing bricks,

rocks and other projectiles at officers, and not to assist federal officers who were sent to try to quell the unrest.

The department had done research on whether it could pursue the charges, spokesperson Kerri Kupec said. She declined to comment on the status or whether charges would be brought. But bringing criminal civil rights charges against city officials for protest-related violence would likely present an uphill court battle for federal prosecutors.

Justice Department officials disputed news reports that Attorney General William Barr told prosecutors in the department’s civil rights division to explore whether they could possibly bring charges against Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan for allowing some residents to establish a protest zone this summer.

The FBI has said it was shifting the agency’s resources to focus more heavily on violence and federal crimes committed during nearly three months of unrest.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

2 solid rocket boosters to join shuttle display

CA LOS ANGELES — Two flight-worthy solid rocket boosters have been given to the California Science Center for display of the retired space shuttle Endeavour.

The boosters donated by Northrop Grumman Corp. and NASA will allow the shuttle to be displayed in Los Angeles as if it was about to blast off into space.

Shuttle boosters, filled with solid fuel, provided most of the thrust for the first two minutes of flight and then parachuted into the ocean where they were recovered for reuse. The donated boosters, which are inert, flew on actual space shuttle missions and were used in many ground tests.

Endeavour, which will be the centerpiece of a planned expansion of the California Science Center, last flew in space in 2011.

Motorcyclists accused of harassing park bison

WY YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK — Two brothers accused of riding motorcycles off-road and harassing bison in Yellowstone National Park have pleaded not guilty.

Dallin McAllister, 25, of Provo, Utah, and Tyler McAllister, 36, of Gilbert, Ariz., entered the pleas Monday. Each was charged with operating a motor vehicle in prohibited areas and feeding, touching, teasing, frightening or intentionally disturbing wildlife.

The two drove off-road near Fountain Flats Drive in western Yellowstone last Friday evening, park spokeswoman Ashton Hooker said. Video posted online showed motorcyclists riding off-road within several feet of a group of running

bison, including some calves, the Bozeman Daily Chronicle reported.

Visitors in Yellowstone are required to stay 25 yards from bison and at least 100 yards from bears and wolves. Visitors may not go off road on vehicles or bicycles.

Southerly winds kick up century-old volcanic ash

AK ANCHORAGE — While western U.S. states were suffering from hazy red skies from wildfires, Alaska was dealing with an air quality problem born a century ago.

Strong southerly winds picked up loose ash from a 1912 volcanic eruption, sending an ash cloud about 4,000 feet into the sky on Monday.

There were no reports of ashfall in nearby communities near Katmai National Park, but pilots were warned about the cloud because the ash can stall engines.

“Basically these sorts of events happen every spring and fall when strong winds pick up ash from the 1912 Novarupta eruption,” said Kristi Wallace, a U.S. Geological Survey geologist at the Alaska Volcano Observatory.

The three-day eruption, one of the world’s largest, began June 6, 1912, and sent ash as high as 100,000 feet above the Katmai region, located about 250 miles southwest of Anchorage.

Man accused of striking state trooper with car

CT HARTFORD — A man accused of striking a Connecticut state trooper with a car while fleeing a traffic stop was arrested Tuesday on nine charges including assaulting a public safety officer.

Jayquan Richardson, 22, of

Windsor, was taken into custody at his job in Willington, state police said.

State police Sgt. Timothy Begley pulled over Richardson on Interstate 84 in Hartford on July 19 for suspicion of driving under the influence, according to authorities. In a police report, Begley said he smelled marijuana coming from the car and ordered Richardson to hand over the keys. A front-seat passenger began handing Begley the keys when Richardson sped off and struck the trooper, according to the report. Begley was treated for minor injuries.

Windstorm removes acres from corn harvest

IA DES MOINES — The U.S. Department of Agriculture has estimated that 550,000 acres of Iowa corn will not be harvested this fall due to damage caused by the Aug. 10 windstorm that swept across the state.

That estimate in a report released last week places the value of the lost corn crop based on the yield and price anticipated before the storm at around \$344 million.

The storm, which cut through Iowa with winds reaching 140 mph, also damaged full storage bins at farm cooperatives and on farms, taking out grain stored from last year’s harvest.

‘Keeper’ replica statue recovered near park

KS WICHITA — A Keeper of the Plains replica statue that was taken from a Wichita park over the weekend has been found not far from where it was stolen.

A resident spotted the statue in the grass beside a creek that runs by Colvin Elementary School, said Tessa Brungardt, who manages the Keeper project for Together Wichita, a non-

profit made up of businesses that organize and finance projects intended to better the city. City maintenance workers retrieved the statute Monday evening, the Wichita Eagle reported.

It’s too soon to say what they’ll do about the damaged statue, but they might see if it can be repaired, Brungardt said. It is one of 13 Keeper of the Plains replica statues, each painted by different Wichita artists.

The 10-foot-tall, 75-pound fiberglass statue, which was pried off its base, had just been put in place two weeks earlier.

Man gets prison for Masters ticket scheme

GA AUGUSTA — A Georgian was sentenced Monday to more than two years in federal prison after pleading guilty to a scheme that used stolen identities to obtain tickets to the Masters golf tournament.

Federal prosecutors say Stephen Michael Freeman, 42, of Athens, and three family members in Texas sold those tickets for a profit. U.S. District Court Judge Randall Hall in the tournament’s hometown of Augusta sentenced Freeman to 28 months in prison. More than a year had passed since Freeman pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit mail fraud. His parents and a sister entered guilty pleas last year and were sentenced to three years on probation. As part of their plea deals, the family members agreed to pay a total of nearly \$275,500 in restitution.

Federal prosecutors said the family used stolen IDs from 2013 through 2017 to cheat the lottery system that distributes tournament tickets and to circumvent Augusta National Golf Club’s rules allowing people to apply only once to enter its ticket lottery.

From wire reports

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Steelers' Villanueva surprises teammates with helmet decal

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — The Pittsburgh Steelers stressed the need for unity as the team weighed how to properly promote social justice.

It didn't quite work out that way during their season-opening win over the New York Giants, and left tackle Alejandro Villanueva finds himself again in the middle of a difficult conversation about self-expression on a volatile subject.

Three years ago Villanueva — a graduate of West Point and a decorated U.S. Army veteran — found himself standing alone with his hand over his heart as the national anthem played while his teammates remained out of sight in a nearby tunnel. On Monday night, while the rest of his teammates honored Antwon Rose Jr., a Black Pittsburgh teenager shot in the back and killed by a white police officer in 2018 by emblazoning his name on a white strip on

the back of their helmets, Villanueva instead chose to honor Alwyn Cashe, a Black soldier who died from injuries sustained in Iraq in 2005.

While Steelers head coach Mike Tomlin said Villanueva approached him about the decision before the game, quarterback Ben Roethlisberger and defensive tackle Cam Heyward — both captains — admitted they were caught off guard.

"I did not know about Al's choice for the back of his helmet," Roethlisberger said. "Obviously, it's his choice. That's the amazing thing about the country we live in. Unfortunately, it is what it is."

Tomlin has encouraged his players to speak out and take action if they do so respectfully, guidelines Tomlin believes Villanueva did not violate.

"We are going to support our players in however they choose to participate and express themselves or to not participate or not express themselves,

as long as they do so thoughtfully and with class," Tomlin said Tuesday. "And so that is a blanket approach that we have had. I think it needs no further explanation in terms of our support for Al Villanueva or anyone else in terms of what they do or do not do in terms of social justice."

Rose died in June 2018 after being shot in the back, arm and side of the face by East Pittsburgh Police Officer Michael Rosfeld. Rose had been riding in an unlicensed taxi that had been involved in a drive-by shooting minutes earlier when Rosfeld pulled the car over and shot the 17-year-old as he ran away. Rosfeld was charged with homicide but acquitted in March 2019.

Villanueva has not spoken to the media since the end of the 2019 regular season. Heyward admitted he was "surprised" by Villanueva's choice but said he would not attempt to explain Villanueva's actions for him.

Orgeron: Most players have had, recovered from COVID-19

Associated Press

Most of LSU's football players have contracted and recovered from COVID-19, coach Ed Orgeron said Tuesday, leaving the coaching staff hopeful those players will remain eligible to play the bulk of the season before they have to be tested again.

Orgeron made those comments while discussing how he would plan for the possibility of seemingly healthy starters or regulars suddenly being deemed ineligible to suit up for the defending national champions because of a positive COVID-19 test.

The coach explained that because players who have recovered from COVID-19 do not have to be tested again for 90 days under Southeastern Conference protocols, he figures he won't likely have to worry about those who've come back from the virus suddenly being ruled out again because of it.

"I think, not all of our players, but most of our players have caught it," Orgeron said during a video conference.

"I think, hopefully, that once you catch it, you don't get it again," Orgeron added. "I'm not a doctor. I think they have that 90-day window, so most of the players that have caught it, we do feel like they'll be eligible for games."

Orgeron did not go into detail about whether any LSU players who tested positive have experienced symptoms. While COVID-19, which has killed more than 190,000 Americans, is more deadly among older people and people with preexisting conditions, it has caused lingering health problems in some younger, healthy people — including athletes.

The SEC's policy of not requiring testing of recovered players for 90 days is based on medical findings that antibodies developed in fighting off COVID-19 provide at least short-term immunity from contracting it again.

Big Ten teams have five weeks to prepare for season

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Now that the Big Ten has a rescheduled kickoff weekend, coaches and players can start the sprint to opening day.

After canceling spring football, limiting and sometimes pausing offseason workouts, shutting down full-contact practices and eventually postponing the season, the league's 14 university presidents and chancellors have given teams five weeks to accomplish what typically takes months — getting into football shape by late October for the start of a most unusual season.

"We're going to be ready to play on (October) the 24th," Ohio State coach Ryan Day said, referring to the new opening weekend. "You know, the ramp up to that, and the 20

hours (of weekly practice), and putting on pads has been well thought out. So we'll be ready. We'll play with depth."

Big Ten commissioner Kevin Warren said he was comfortable with the decision to bring football back.

"I'm just proud to be here with a group of individuals within the Big Ten and I seriously understand what makes the Big Ten the Big Ten," Warren said.

Vocal critics of the school leaders who voted 11-3 to postpone all fall sports amid an August uptick in COVID-19 cases have been largely silenced by the unanimous vote that put Big Ten football back on the calendar alongside the ACC, Big 12 and SEC.

Those who play the sport, teach the sport and watch the

sport almost universally expressed joy and relief Wednesday, knowing football will return. Like those other conferences, though, Big Ten football will look different in many ways. Stadiums will be mostly empty and tickets will not be sold to the public. The season has been reduced from 12 games to eight with the opportunity for a ninth around the Dec. 19 conference championship game.

Players will undergo daily antigen testing before practice and if two tests confirm a positive result, the player must sit out 21 days before being cleared for game action. Those who contract COVID-19 must be cleared by a school-designated cardiologist before returning. Teams will have backup plans if the head coach or an assistant falls ill.

Dodgers beat Padres, clinch 1st playoff spot

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — While the Los Angeles Dodgers are regular participants in postseason baseball, there was something unusual about becoming the first team in the pandemic-shortened season to clinch a berth in the expanded playoffs.

"It's different, I guess. I just found that out five minutes ago," manager Dave Roberts said in his video news conference after the Dodgers beat the San Diego Padres 7-5 to take two of three in a matchup of the NL's two top teams.

The Dodgers opened a 3½-game lead in their quest for an eighth straight NL West title by beating the Padres for the second straight day. Dustin May threw 5⅓ gutty innings out of the bullpen, AJ Pollock and

Chris Taylor homered and Will Smith drove in three runs.

"I'm celebrating by saying I'm proud of our guys and it was a great series," said Roberts, who grew up in northern San Diego County and both played for and was a coach with the Padres before getting the job with Los Angeles. "I think it caught us all by surprise because we were so focused on trying to win this series. I think word will travel once we get on the plane."

San Diego, quieted by Dodgers pitching a second straight game even as it heads for its first playoff berth since winning the division in 2006, has lost two straight for the first time since mid-August.

May confirmed that as part of COVID-19 protocols, MLB doesn't want teams having wild clubhouse celebrations after

clinching.

Asked if the team had a celebration, he said:

"No. We're not allowed to."

But clinching a postseason spot "is something you grind for for the whole season," he said. "This season is different but we had to grind in the quarantine zone, so you're still going to feel super excited."

At 35-15, Los Angeles breezed into the expanded 16-team postseason field. The Dodgers are seeking their first World Series title since 1988, having lost in the Fall Classic under Roberts in 2017 and 2018.

Mookie Betts tied his career high with three stolen bases, had two hits and scored a run.

San Diego used nine pitchers.

MLB roundup

Garcia's two-run shot in 10th lifts Nats over Rays

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Rookie Luis Garcia hit a two-run homer in the 10th inning and the Washington Nationals beat the AL East-leading Tampa Bay Rays 4-2 on Wednesday.

With Carter Kieboom on second base to start extra innings, the 20-year-old Garcia hit a leadoff drive on the first pitch from Nick Anderson (1-1).

Brandon Lowe got the Rays even at 2 when he hit a solo homer off Daniel Hudson (2-2) on a 2-2 pitch with two outs in the ninth.

Kyle McGowin struck out three in the 10th to get his first save.

Athletics 3, Rockies 1: Mike Fiers threw six sharp innings before turning it over to a lights-out bullpen and visiting Oakland snapped a six-game skid against Colorado.

Fiers (6-2) picked up the win. Liam Hendriks got the final five outs to pick up his 13th save in 14 chances.

Cardinals 4-0, Brewers 2-6: Brent Suter and three relievers combined on a two-hitter, Ryan Braun hit his 350th career homer and Milwaukee earned a doubleheader split against visiting St. Louis.

The Cardinals took the opener behind Adam Wainwright's four-hitter.

Reds 1, Pirates 0: Luis Castillo pitched a masterful seven innings, Shogo Akiyama drove in the game's only run, and host Cincinnati extended its winning streak to a season-high five games.

Castillo (3-5) retired nine of the last 10

batters he faced and gave up only three hits and a walk with 10 strikeouts. Archie Bradley pitched a perfect eighth before Raisel Iglesias pitched a 1-2-3 ninth for his eighth save.

Royals 4, Tigers 0: Brady Singer was stellar for a second straight start, allowing two hits in six innings, and Kansas City won at Detroit.

Singer (3-4) struck out the first five Detroit hitters and retired the first 10. He struck out eight with one walk.

Orioles 5, Braves 1: Cole Hamels finally got on the mound in his new team's uniform, allowing three runs before reaching his predetermined pitch count in the fourth inning, and visiting Atlanta struggled offensively in a loss to Baltimore.

Rookie Keegan Akin struck out nine over five scoreless innings to earn his first big league victory.

Yankees 13, Blue Jays 2: Kyle Higashio hit a career-high three home runs, DJ LeMahieu connected twice and host New York hit a season-best seven homers in beating Toronto.

Luke Voit lofted a three-run drive for his major league-leading 19th homer and Clint Frazier added a solo shot as the Yankees won their seventh straight game.

Marlins 8, Red Sox 4: Jorge Alfaro homered twice before he took a foul ball to his helmet and host Miami beat Boston.

Garrett Cooper also homered and scored twice for Miami, which moved within 2½ games of first-place Atlanta in the NL East.

Mets 5, Phillies 4: Jacob deGrom exited early from a rare rough outing because of a right hamstring spasm, but New York overcame a four-run deficit and rallied to win at Philadelphia.

Rangers 1, Astros 0: Kyle Gibson threw a four-hitter and Joey Gallo hit a ground-rule RBI double with two outs in the ninth inning to lift Texas to a win at Houston.

It was the first career shutout for the 32-year-old Gibson and third complete game. Gibson (2-5) walked three and struck out a season-high nine to earn his first win since Aug. 15.

Twins 5, White Sox 1: Byron Buxton and Miguel Sano each hit a two-run homer, and Minnesota denied host Chicago a chance to clinch its first playoff berth in 12 years.

Eddie Rosario also went deep and Twins pitchers retired their final 18 batters against the AL Central leaders.

Cubs 3, Indians 2 (10): Javier Baez's RBI single in the 10th inning lifted host Chicago to its fourth straight win.

Diamondbacks 9, Angels 6: Kole Calhoun hit his third homer in two games against his former Los Angeles teammates, and David Peralta homered and drove in two runs in Arizona's road win.

Giants 9, Mariners 3: Brandon Belt, Brandon Crawford and Evan Longoria homered and visiting San Francisco, playing at home, beat Seattle in a game moved to the Bay Area because of smoky, dangerous air in Western Washington.

LeBron sets All-NBA record

Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — LeBron James now stands alone in All-NBA recognition history, getting there unanimously.

James was revealed Wednesday as an All-NBA player for a record 16th time, breaking the mark he shared with Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Kobe Bryant and Tim Duncan. He was a first-team pick on all 100 ballots, joining Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo as the only unanimous first-team selections this season.

Joining them on the first team: Houston guard James Harden, Lakers forward Anthony Davis and Dallas guard Luka Doncic, who got the nod in just his second season in the NBA — becoming the first player to get there in either his first or second season since Duncan did for San Antonio. Duncan was first team in each of his first eight NBA seasons, starting in 1997-98 and going through 2004-05.

The 21-year-old Doncic is the sixth player to make All-NBA at that age or younger,

joining Kevin Durant, James, Duncan, Rick Barry and Max Zaslofsky.

James is a first-team pick for the 13th time in his career, extending his record there. Bryant and Karl Malone were 11-time first-teamers. Antetokounmpo, the reigning MVP and the front-runner to win the award again this season, was picked unanimously for the second consecutive year.

Los Angeles Clippers forward Kawhi Leonard, Denver center Nikola Jokic, Portland guard Damian Lillard, Oklahoma City guard Chris Paul and Toronto forward Pascal Siakam were on the second team.

The third-team picks were Boston forward Jayson Tatum, Miami forward Jimmy Butler, Utah center Rudy Gobert, Philadelphia guard Ben Simmons and Houston guard Russell Westbrook.

The voting was conducted based on regular-season games played through March 11, and voters had to choose two guards, two forwards and one center for each team.

NCAA hoops season set to begin Nov. 25

Associated Press

The NCAA men's and women's basketball season will begin Nov. 25, the day before Thanksgiving.

The Division I Council voted Wednesday to push the start date back from the originally scheduled Nov. 10 as one of several precautions against the spread of coronavirus.

The later start date coincides with the decision most schools made to send students home from Thanksgiving until January out of concern about a potential late-fall and early-winter flareup of COVID-19. Closed campuses could serve as a quasi bubble for players and provide a window for nonconference games.

"The fact our campuses will be clearing out, it will be possible to just further control the exposures, and the 25th gives us that opportunity," said Division I Council chair Grace Calhoun, the athletic director at Penn.

The men's and women's basketball oversight committees had jointly recommended a start date of Nov. 21, a Saturday. Calhoun said the council wanted to avoid a weekend start date because of potential overlaps of basketball and football games on campuses.

The maximum number of regular-season games has been reduced from 31 to 27.

"The rationale was that during the season teams tend to play an average of two games a week, so the fact we're shortening the season by two weeks necessitated the reduction in games so we're not being counterproductive and trying to jam more in a shortened season," Calhoun said.

The minimum number of games for consideration for the NCAA Tournament was cut from 25 to 13. Calhoun said the low minimum is an acknowledgement that schools probably will experience different levels of COVID-19 cases and have to alter schedules.

"We fully anticipate there are going to be some issues as we go through the season, much like we've seen in football, so we want there to be flexible for institutions to put together seasons," she said.

Teams can start preseason practices Oct. 14. Beginning Monday, teams will be allowed to participate in strength and conditioning and sport-related meetings and skill instruction for up to 12 hours a week, with an eight-hour limit on skill instruction.

No scrimmages against other teams or exhibitions are allowed.

Dallas waits inside bubble for foe

Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — Blake Comeau and the Dallas Stars knew there would be the huge sacrifice of being away from their families once inside the NHL bubble, and those absences have only been amplified by monotonous gaps with little to do between playing games pretty much every other day.

"We said from the start of it, the way to make it worthwhile was coming home with the Stanley Cup," Comeau said Wednesday.

After 8½ weeks in Edmonton, Alberta, while staying in a hotel connected to the arena where they play, the Stars are now waiting to find out if they will play Tampa Bay or the New York Islanders in the Stanley Cup Final.

"There's no other place we'd rather be, especially now that we're in the finals, than right here," interim head coach Rick Bowness said. "Is this easy living? Absolutely not. ... We're all making the best of it."

Still, the Western Conference champions wish their families could be with them to share in the playoff run — an experience taken away because of the lingering pandemic.

Whether it's a player like Comeau, in his 14th NHL season with his sixth team and in his first Stanley Cup Final. Or the 65-year-old Bowness, an NHL coach in parts of five different decades and now in his

first Stanley Cup Final as a head coach.

"That's probably one of the toughest parts," Comeau said. "You'd love to have your family here to celebrate with you, but we don't. So hopefully we can win the Stanley Cup and we can celebrate after."

There have been lots of phone calls and FaceTime chats with family, but the Stars as a group have also gotten encouragement from home. Bowness said the wives, kids and other family members of players and staff were asked to send in personal video messages that have been shared with the entire team.

"When we're all sitting together, you miss your family, but it's a reminder, 'OK, we're making unreal sacrifices here.' Every night we're looking at those, and they are personal," Bowness said. "It also keeps their families involved and makes them feel part of it. ... It's important that we make them feel part of what we're doing, because we know the sacrifices they're making for us."

The players themselves have had plenty of time to bond together, playing cards, eating meals and hanging out in a team lounge together between games. A golf outing Tuesday, the day after wrapping up the Western Conference finals in five games over top-seeded Vegas, was a rare venture outside since getting to Canada.

They are in their largest gap between games since the season resumed, either four or six days.