Overview: Leading coverage of the pandemic were concerns that the nationwide protests will lead to a new spike in coronavirus cases. With a crowded media environment, defense-related coverage was light and predominantly limited to defense and Hill outlets.

DoD-related news:
- AP reported on the service academies’ plans to reopen in the fall for in-person instruction. The outlet received statements from the Army and Navy that their academies will be reopening, but the Air Force had not yet commented. In explaining why the U.S. Naval Academy will reopen, Superintendent Vice Adm. Sean Buck said that “we cannot develop leaders for our nation’s military services online.”
- Army Times reported that more than 200 recruits at Fort Benning and Fort Leonard Wood tested positive after undergoing a 14-day “monitoring phase” which the recruits started after receiving negative tests.
- CNN and other outlets continued to report on the Army’s announcement that around 15 cadets who have returned to West Point ahead of the June 13 commencement have tested positive for coronavirus.
- Military Times highlighted the negative impact higher commissary prices are having on junior enlisted families, which was brought up at last week’s senior leader town hall.

Other relevant/global news:
- America’s adversaries are attempting to achieve geopolitical goals with limited pushback while the U.S. looks inward to deal with the pandemic and other domestic crises, the NYT reported. The article listed recent assertive moves by China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, and ISIS against the interests of a “preoccupied” United States. Commentary in Defense One argued that the coronavirus increases the likelihood of great power conflict, as the U.S. moves to prevent or counter aggressive actions may result in dangerous countermoves.
- WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that he hopes Pres. Trump does not follow through on terminating the U.S. relationship with the global health body (CNN). Furthermore, China criticized the U.S. decision, calling it selfish behavior and saying the U.S. is “addicted to quitting” international agreements (Reuters).
- NPR reported on concerns over the pandemic exacerbating emergency planning for what is expected to be an “active” hurricane season.

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1. Two Army training sites had 210 combined COVID-19 cases after recruits left controlled monitoring phases – 6/1
   Army Times | Kyle Rempfer

More than 140 individuals training at Fort Benning, Georgia, and about 70 at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, have tested positive for the COVID-19 virus, the two posts said in statements on Sunday.

Both posts conducted mass tests when recruits reported having symptoms after the end of their 14-day controlled monitoring phases, a new part of basic combat training added to prevent the virus from spreading freely among new recruits.

Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville previously said that many COVID-19 cases among Army recruits are asymptomatic, which is "why the testing becomes very, very important, especially with the younger population."

Health professionals at Fort Leonard Wood first screened and tested about 500 soldiers and trainees assigned to 1st Battalion, 48th Infantry Regiment, upon their arrival, according to officials there. All test results were negative, and they then began the 14-day monitoring phase.

"Four days after the end of the group's controlled monitoring phase, a trainee reported to Harper In-processing Health Screening Facility with symptoms, and immediately, all 500 were tested again, resulting in the increased positive test results," the post said in its statement this weekend.

Officials at Fort Benning ran into a similar issue.

About 640 soldiers and trainees assigned to the 30th AG Battalion and 2nd Battalion, 29th Infantry Regiment, were initially screened and tested by medical professionals at the beginning of their 14-day monitoring period. All but four test results came back negative.

Those four individuals were isolated, and have since recovered and received negative test results, according to Fort Benning. However, others there later caught the virus.

"Eight days after the end of the group’s controlled monitoring phase, a trainee reported to his unit leadership with symptoms, and immediately, all 640 across the two units were tested again," the Fort Benning statement reads. "Of those tested, 142 had positive results."
Both posts said they were conducting contact tracing to identify anyone who could have been infected. Officials have isolated and quarantined others as appropriate and said that all impacted buildings, dining facilities and training areas within the affected unit areas have been sanitized in accordance with CDC guidelines.

The Army paused taking in new recruits for basic combat training on April 6, citing the issues with moving personnel across the country during a pandemic, but officials resumed the effort two weeks later. They said the service would continue taking recruits from areas in the United States that have been less impacted by the virus or were already recovering based on health tracking models.

When the pause ended, Army Chief of Staff James McConville said the service had increased the number of testing devices at basic training sites in order to proactively test incoming recruits, regardless of whether they were showing the symptoms commonly associated with COVID-19.

“Even those who we tested after we had one or two positive cases, the ones we found out, were mostly asymptomatic,” McConville said in mid-April. “So they weren’t showing symptoms. That’s why the testing becomes very, very important, especially with the younger population.”

2. Military service academies plan for students’ return in fall – 6/1
Associated Press | Brian Witte

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — The U.S. Naval Academy is planning to have its 4,400 midshipmen return to campus in Annapolis, Maryland, for the fall, after students completed the last semester with online learning from their homes around the nation due to the coronavirus, academy officials said Monday.

Vice Adm. Sean Buck, the superintendent, told the academy’s Board of Visitors he has been communicating with the leaders of the nation’s other service academies, and they also plan to have their students on campus in the fall.

“I can tell you, as of this morning, every single military service academy in this country is opening in the fall,” Buck told the board in an online meeting. “We all are developing very detailed plans with regards to health, safety and the protocols that we need to put in place to manage risk.”

Lt. Col. Christopher Ophardt, a spokesman for the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y., said the academy will have a fall semester with cadets present, though the academy is still making plans. The U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado, did not immediately return an email and call seeking comment on its plans.

While academics can be done online, Buck said the other two pillars of the academy’s mission statement are developing midshipmen morally and physically, and those goals require hands-on experiences on campus.

“We cannot develop leaders for our nation’s military services online,” Buck said.

The superintendent told the board that even if an online distance learning must continue with faculty off of campus, the academy is planning to have its midshipmen in Annapolis.

“In the military, we are taught how to accept risk, manage the risk and lead through the risk, and that’s what I intend to do,” Buck said. “And I want to give you all the confidence that your Naval Academy team is very postured and thinking hard to minimize the risk of bringing those 4,400 midshipmen back in mid-August to start in-person development of leaders.”

While midshipmen were away starting March 6 for nine days of spring break, Buck decided for them not to return due to the coronavirus. The students were instructed to return to their home of record and transition to online learning.
“I couldn’t have been more impressed with the faculty and the staff and the midshipmen themselves who took the orders and executed it very smartly, and we transitioned on the 20th of March to online learning,” Buck said.

Last month, the academy held its first-ever virtual graduation and commissioning ceremony. Defense Secretary Mark Esper congratulated the graduating midshipmen in remarks recorded earlier.

The academy’s Class of 2020 returned in groups from mid- to late-May to gather their belongings. The academy held five mini-commissioning events with about 210 graduating seniors every other day for 10 days, Buck said, and those events were stitched together in video and photographs for the virtual graduation ceremony last month.

3. UN forced to cut aid to Yemen, even as virus increases need – 6/1
Associated Press | Maggie Michael and Maggie Hyde

CAIRO (AP) — Aid organizations are making an urgent plea for funding to shore up their operations in war-torn Yemen, saying they have already been forced to stop some of their work even as the coronavirus rips through the country.

Some 75% of U.N. programs in Yemen have had to shut their doors or reduce operations. The global body’s World Food Program had to cut rations in half and U.N.-funded health services were reduced in 189 out of 369 hospitals nationwide.

“It’s almost impossible to look a family in the face, to look them in the eyes and say, ‘I’m sorry but the food that you need in order to survive we have to cut in half,’” Lise Grande, resident U.N. coordinator for Yemen, told The Associated Press.

The dwindling funds are the result of several factors, but among the top reasons is obstruction by Yemen’s Houthi rebels, who control the capital, Sanaa, and other territories. The United States, one of the largest donors, decreased its aid to Yemen earlier this year, citing interference by the Houthis.

It’s yet to be seen whether the Houthis will allow monitoring and oversight or give U.N. agencies the space to operate. A U.N. pledging conference for Yemen on Tuesday seeks $2.41 billion to cover essential activities from June to December.

Grande said the Houthis are working to become more transparent, and that she hopes this will encourage donor countries to give aid.

Her optimism, however, comes as the Houthis face heavy criticism for suppressing information about the number of COVID-19 cases and fatalities in areas they control, while putting no mitigation measures in place.

Tuesday's conference will be co-hosted for the first time by Saudi Arabia — a major player in Yemen’s civil war since it first unleashed a bombing campaign in 2015 to try to push back the Iranian-backed Houthis who had seized the northern half of the country.

Critics question the Saudis' high-profile role in rallying humanitarian support even as they continue to wage a war — as do the Houthis — that has created the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.

Maysaa Shuja al-Deen, a Yemeni researcher and a non-resident fellow at the Sana’a Center for Strategic Studies, said the kingdom is trying to repair its international image by changing the conversation.

Saudi Arabia “has always tried to change the narrative of the war and present itself as a backer of the legitimate government, not part of the conflict,” she said.
In past years, the kingdom has been one of the top donors for U.N. humanitarian aid operations in Yemen. The Saudi ambassador to Yemen, Mohammed al-Jaber, said the kingdom will allocate half a billion dollars this year to support U.N. programs, including $25 million for a COVID-19 response plan.

The U.N. itself has also investigated allegations of corruption and diversion of aid in Yemen in its own ranks.

Reports indicate that the coronavirus is spreading at an alarming rate throughout the country.

Among the slashed programs is financial support to thousands of health workers who haven't received salaries from the government for nearly three years. Grande said that just a week before the first coronavirus case was announced in Yemen, aid agencies had to stop paying health workers.

Without salaries, medical staff won’t be able to provide health services to patients amid the pandemic.

The U.N. received around $3.6 billion in 2019 in international donations for its campaign, short of its $4.2 billion goal. For its 2020 plan, it has so far received only 15% out of the needed $3.5 billion.

Yemen has been caught in a grinding war since 2014 when Houthi rebels descended from their northern enclave and took over Sanaa, forcing the internationally recognized president to flee. In the spring of 2015, a U.S.-backed, Saudi-led coalition began a destructive air campaign to dislodge the Houthis while imposing a land, sea and air embargo on Yemen.

The air war and fighting on the ground has killed more than 100,000 people, shut down or destroyed half of Yemen’s health facilities, and driven 4 million Yemenis from their homes. Cholera epidemics and severe malnutrition among children have led to thousands of additional deaths.

As the war enters its sixth year, with no sign of a viable cease-fire, the suffering looks set to continue. Fighting has continued unabated along several front lines in Yemen, including in Marib, an oil-rich eastern province, threatening new waves of displacement.

The U.N.’s massive aid program, totaling $8.35 billion since 2015, is vital to keeping many Yemenis alive. Ten million people are on the brink of famine and 80% of the 30 million population are in need of aid, according to the U.N.

With the coronavirus spreading, more money is needed.

Since April, authorities in areas controlled by Yemen’s internationally recognized government reported 283 cases, including 85 deaths. The Houthis declared only four cases, including one death.

The World Health Organization believes that there is a significant underestimation of the outbreak, which could further hinder efforts to get supplies into Yemen that are needed to contain the virus.

Richard Brennan, the WHO’s regional emergency director, told the AP that he believes the deaths are in the hundreds and cases in the thousands, based on what he’s heard from numerous health care providers. But he said the lack of funding means the organization’s health programs are hanging by a thread.

The International Rescue Committee, an aid group, said Yemen is conducting just 31 tests per one million people, among the world's lowest scores.

With increasing needs and fewer funds, the U.N. refugee agency will have to stop cash assistance and shelter programs for more than 50,000 displaced families by August, said spokeswoman Heba Kanso. She said the agency will be forced to end its partnership with dozens of Yemeni NGOs that will have let go more than 1,500 national staff.
Relief agencies worry that donors will give less as many countries struggle their own virus outbreaks. But they warn that the world’s worst humanitarian crisis can indeed get much worse.

“The world’s attention is diverted elsewhere and these are the vulnerable among the most vulnerable on the planet, and we need a commitment,” said Brennan.

4. Pentagon Spending $688M in Covid Funds to Protect Key Industries – 6/1
Bloomberg Government | Tony Capaccio

Targeted expenditures under Title III of Defense Production Act will use these funds to offset financial distress and invest in “regions most severely impacted to sustain essential domestic industrial base capabilities and spur local job creation,” Pentagon says in 54-page CARES Act spending plan sent on Friday to a congressionally mandated oversight panel.

- Report outlines Defense Dept’s overall plan for spending $10.5b in CARES Act funds approved for the U.S. military; planned Industrial Base investments include:
  - $171m to sustain and preserve aircraft propulsion, including funding to preserve essential work for sustained operations at key repair facilities and stabilizing essential sub-vendors; funding directed to sustain operations for essential suppliers, maintenance and repair operations, and essential suppliers for Navy aircraft programs
  - $150m for shipbuilding industrial base in areas such as castings, forgings and submarine equipment, including “funding to support continuous production of essential components” such as missile launch tubes
  - $150m to support and maintain a competitive space launch industrial base
  - $80m to support and maintain a competitive microelectronics industrial base, including several domestic critical suppliers of radiation-hardened microelectronics testing and to insure key parts are available for DoD weapon systems
  - $62m to support body armor, force protection, survivability equipment, increasing soldier survivability, such as critical manufacturers producing modular survival vest equipment and blast pelvic protection
  - $35m to preserve “at-risk essential materials suppliers” of lithium ion batteries and “maintain capacity and development timelines on advanced fiber materials for next generation soldier textiles”
  - $40m to support and maintain the hypersonics industrial base “including the support of several key suppliers to protect high-temperature material industry partners”

NOTE: Sen.Dick Durbin, top Democrat for the Senate Appropriations defense subcommittee, pressed for plan’s release

5. The protests are raising fears of a spike in coronavirus cases – 6/1
CNN | Hollie Silverman

Government leaders and health officials have expressed their concern that coronavirus could rapidly spread during protests over the death of George Floyd.

Floyd died after since-fired Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin kneeled on his neck for over eight minutes. Chauvin was charged with third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter.

People across the country have taken to the streets to vent their frustrations over the seeming lack of value for the lives of black men. It was the same week the nation crossed the 100,000 death count from coronavirus.

Sunday alone saw an increase of almost 20,000 cases, according to the CNN count compiled with data from John's Hopkins.

As of Monday morning at least 1,790,191 Americans have contracted the virus and 104,383 have died. But some expect a jump in cases following days of demonstrations.
Spike in cases expected

With large groups of people out in hoards close together during the protests, Minnesota Governor Walz said he expects a sharp increase in cases of Covid-19 in his state.

"I am deeply concerned about a super-spreader type of incident," Walz said. "We're going to see a spike in Covid-19. It's inevitable."

Officials in New York shared the governor's worry about a potential for rise in coronavirus among protesters.

"I would still wish that everyone would realize that when people gather it's inherently dangerous in the context of this pandemic, and I'm going to keep urging people not to use that approach and if they do they focus on social distancing and wearing face coverings," New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio said Saturday.

The mayor said he recognized the need to demonstrate following the death of Floyd but "It's a very, very complicated reality."

"You cannot see overt racism, you cannot see overt racist murder and not feel something profoundly deep, so I understand that," de Blasio added. "But the last thing we would want to see is members of our community harmed because the virus spread in one of these settings."

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo said that while people have the right to protest, even during a pandemic, they also have a duty to protect the health of themselves and others.

"You have a right to demonstrate you have a right to protest, God Bless America," Cuomo said at a Saturday press conference. "You don't have a right to infect other people, you don't have a right to act in a way that's going to jeopardize public health."

"Demonstrate with a mask on," he said nodding to its effectiveness. "You're wrong not to wear a mask, I think you're disrespectful, I think you're putting other people's lives at risk needlessly."

Cuomo also noted how the coronavirus has brought long standing health disparities for the African American community to light once again.

"The coronavirus crisis has created a depth of pain that still has not been accounted for. So many New Yorkers have lost someone but that is particularly true in communities of color and particularly true in the African American community," Cuomo said. "That loss is being felt so deeply because every knows it's not based on equality ... communities of color lost so much more."

Protests taking focus off pandemic

Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms also said she's worried about the impact the virus is having on the community during the protests. She told CNN she's been so busy with ongoing unrest in her city that she neglected to look at infection data for days.

"Last night I realized I hadn't looked at our coronavirus numbers in two days," Lance Bottoms told CNN's Jake Tapper during State of the Union. "That's frightening because it's a pandemic and people of color are getting hit harder."

"I am extremely concerned when we're seeing mass gatherings. We know what's happening in our community with this virus," the mayor explained.
Maryland Governor Larry Hogan shared a similar sentiment saying the priority has been to keep people safe during the demonstrations but the focus has to also include the months long fight against the spread of coronavirus.

Speaking to Jake Tapper on State of the Union, Hogan said he, too, is concerned about the coronavirus amidst the fallout from the death of Floyd.

"There's no questions that when you put hundreds or thousands of people together in close proximity when we've got this virus all over the streets is not healthy," Hogan said. "Two weeks from now across America we're going to find out whether or not this gives us a spike and drives the numbers back up."

"Most states had rules about no crowds of ten or more and now we're seeing thousands of people jammed in together in close proximity," Hogan added.

Health experts worried about spread

Health experts have also spoken out about the need for masks and other protective measures in light of racial disparities in the data showing minorities have an increased risk for catching the virus.

Dr. Scott Gottlieb, the former commissioner of the US Food and Drug Administration under President Donald Trump, said during CBS' "Face the Nation" Sunday that these demonstrations will create further spread of Covid-19, especially in a state that was trending upward before this week's events.

"There's going to be a lot of issues coming out of what's happened in the last week, but one of them is going to be that chains of transmission will have become lit from these gatherings," Gottlieb said. "And Minnesota, one of the hard hit states by the protests where you've seen large mass gatherings, that state has been seeing an uptick in cases to begin with. Even before these protests started, we saw rising hospitalizations in that state."

Other doctors told CNN that the racial disparity in the way coronavirus spreads will only be compounded by the protests.

"I think this week, more than any week, it is so important to call attention to the racial disparities that many of us in the public health community, John, have been talking about for months," Dr. Megan Ranney, an emergency room physician and researcher at Brown University, told CNN's John King. "We know that blacks are two to four times more likely to die from Covid-19 compared to whites. And of course, other communities, like Native Americans and Hispanics, are disproportionately affected, as well.

"It's so tied up with our country's history of structural racism, historical injustices, as well as ongoing problems," Dr. Ranney noted.

Dr. Ashish Jha, the director of Harvard's Global Health Institute, said on the same show that he wished demonstrators would wear masks to protect themselves and others.

CNN's Kristina Sgueglia and Maggie Fox contributed to this report.

6. Several cadets brought back for graduation at West Point test positive for Covid-19 – 6/1
CNN | Barbara Starr and Chandelis Duster

Washington - About 15 cadets from the US Military Academy Class of 2020 who were brought back for graduation where President Donald Trump is scheduled to give the commencement address have tested positive for coronavirus, according to a US Army spokesperson.

"About 1 ½ percent" of the Class of 2020 who were brought back have tested positive, the spokesperson told CNN Sunday. None of the infected cadets were symptomatic, the spokesperson said, adding "no cadet has
contracted through person-to-person contact while under the Army's care" and that those infected were isolated. The graduating class size is approximately 1,000 cadets.

"The Army and West Point have done meticulous planning to ensure the health and safety of the returning cadets of the U.S. Military Academy's Class of 2020. There is mandatory screening for all and we've had a small number -- about 1 ½ percent -- test positive," the spokesperson said. "This was anticipated. None were symptomatic, and no cadet has contracted through person-to-person contact while under the Army's care. Those who test positive are isolated, and receive appropriate care and attention, while we continue an orderly reintegration of our cadets."

In April, the President announced he was going to address West Point's commencement ceremony taking place June 13. His decision to do so has been criticized for putting cadets' health at risk. West Point said in a statement in late April the graduation procession "will look different from recent graduation ceremonies due to current force health protection requirements" related to the coronavirus pandemic.

West Point's campus is in New York state, which has been the state hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic so far. Cadets had been away from campus since early March.

7. **WHO urges US to not end relationship – 6/1**
   **CNN | Jacqueline Howard**

The World Health Organization on Monday said it hopes President Trump will not follow through with his decision to terminate the relationship between the United States and WHO.

"The world has long benefitted from the strong collaborative engagement with the government and the people of the United States," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said during a briefing in Geneva on Monday.

"The US government's and its' people's contribution and generosity toward global health over many decades has been immense, and it has made a great difference in public health all around the world," Tedros said. "It is WHO's wish for this collaboration to continue."

On Friday, Trump announced that the US will end its relationship with WHO, a move he has threatened throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

8. **The Coronavirus Is Raising the Likelihood of Great-Power Conflict – 6/1**
   **Defense One | Barry Pavel**

U.S. efforts to increase deterrence must be carefully calibrated to avoid accidental escalation.

Over the last few weeks, Chinese and American military operations in the western Pacific have been increasing in intensity and show little signs of abating.

U.S. armed forces are finally moving – in a big way – to restore deterrence against China in the western Pacific Ocean. News of a substantial proportion of the Navy’s 11 aircraft carriers, along with submarines from the Pacific fleet, surging to the western Pacific Ocean, should go far toward countering any misperceptions by the Chinese military that U.S. force readiness is diminished due to the pandemic.

Indeed, Chinese actions over the last month and a half have been particularly aggressive, and the PLA Navy’s recent military operations follow years of other coercive measures that featured permanent Chinese military facilities being built on islands in disputed international waters and a wide range of other aggressive activities against regional navies.
Back in early April, reports of the coronavirus spreading among the U.S. Navy in the Pacific began to increase. Particularly upon hearing the news of the U.S. aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt pulling into Guam with exploding numbers of coronavirus cases—and with the U.S. government preoccupied with the extensive domestic responses to the coronavirus outbreaks nationwide—I immediately became worried that the Chinese would misperceive this moment as a chance to coerce Taiwan militarily into unification with the communist mainland.

As a former Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Defense Policy and Strategy on the National Security Council staff, I would have advised any President to seek to preclude such a dangerous scenario by taking measures to send the necessary message to friend and foe alike. That message should be clear, to include the following:

- The entire world is fighting this coronavirus outbreak on all fronts.
- The U.S. is currently on the front lines, using all elements of national power to limit the number of deaths and flatten the curve.
- The U.S. Navy is not immune to suffering from this outbreak.
- However, we are as ready as we have ever been, and if any nation were so foolish as to seek to coerce or attack an ally or partner of the United States at this time of crisis, then that nation would suffer military and other consequences that would be vastly disproportionate to any gains they would seek.
- Thus, we are hereby increasing our forces’ operational tempo and military readiness to ensure that no potential adversary mistakes the current moment for one of U.S. military weakness. We also are now surging a wide range of combat aircraft as well as ships from our global naval fleet to the western Pacific. This greatly heightened set of force enhancements in the region should not only serve to deter China from action against the United States, but also give the PLA Navy great pause regarding any further considerations of aggressive actions against regional U.S. allies and partners.

Such statements, underwritten by military force deployments, would assure Pacific allies and help deter Chinese military adventurism. Now that such U.S. military actions are underway, the probability of any Chinese military miscalculations should be reduced.

However, military moves beget countermoves, and the Chinese military is unlikely to sit still in the face of such a display of U.S. military might in its neighborhood. Rather, the PLA is likely to spin up its own forces and increase the intensity of its own military operations in response. These forces will heighten their own operations in the western Pacific as well.

The result very well could be that U.S. and Chinese forces begin operating at much higher intensity near each other, and the major worry in such a scenario would be greatly heightened chances of an accident or an incident. This is especially likely if Chinese naval forces continue their pattern of aggressive and unprofessional maritime maneuvers near U.S. naval forces.

Thus, while the move to buttress U.S. deterrence was long overdue and sorely needed in order to begin to push the aggressive Chinese military back, the chances of accidental conflict now will be increased. This is a better overall outcome than what the previous trends were leading to: a fully Chinese-dominated region. Nonetheless, particularly in the context of increasing talk of a new Cold War on both sides of the most important bilateral relationship in the world, it means that the possibility of a U.S.-China military conflict is greater. Thus, U.S. officials will have to carefully calibrate the surge to get the job done while not eliciting an overreaction that could slip into all-out conflict.

Stepping back, if the pandemic itself can be considered the greatest strategic shock to geopolitics since World War II, then the secondary shocks that it generates – including an economic downturn that could lead to a great depression –could be equally significant and unpredictable in their impacts. The increased probability of a U.S.-China military confrontation is one such potential secondary shock.
Finally, U.S. forces’ engagement in the INDOPACOM theater means fewer forces to sustain deterrence elsewhere. And here, Russia is a major wild card. Russian President Vladimir Putin’s power base is being increasingly rattled by not just historically low energy prices, but also the wildfire-like spreading of coronavirus in Russia right now. One could not rule out the possibility that Putin might use an external military adventure in Europe or elsewhere to distract from his domestic failures and from Russia’s failing economy in order to try to shore up his power base. And there would be no better time than when U.S. forces are highly engaged in the Pacific for Russian military forces to conduct aggressive operations in northeastern Europe. The potential for this sort of opportunistic aggression against NATO and U.S. interests in Europe will be heightened while this unfortunate confluence of circumstances continues.

The United States remains a global power with global responsibilities, and nowhere are such responsibilities more serious than in U.S. military efforts to sustain deterrence against revisionist powers such as China and Russia. While the recent U.S. force surge to the western Pacific should help stabilize that region, the chances of conflict in the coronavirus era are higher than before the pandemic.

Barry Pavel is vice president and director of the Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security at the Atlantic Council. From 2008-10 he was special assistant to the president and senior director for defense policy and strategy on the National Security Council staff.

9. Nearly 70 soldiers, trainees at Fort Leonard Wood test positive for COVID-19 – 6/1
KRCG-CBS (Jefferson City, MO) | Not Attributed

FORT LEONARD WOOD, MO -- The Public Affairs Office at Fort Leonard Wood announced Sunday nearly 70 cases of COVID-19 on its base.

A press release said the results came following a two-day testing of about 500 soldiers and trainees by military health professionals with the General Leonard Wood Army Community Hospital at Fort Leonard Wood.

Officials said the number of infected and exposed individuals had been minimized and contained to one training unit because of aggressive mitigation strategies in place. All soldiers and trainees who were tested are assigned to the 1st Battalion, 48th Infantry Regiment.

Affected individuals have been isolated or quarantined as appropriate and in accordance with CDC guidelines. In addition, all impacted buildings, dining facilities and training areas within the unit area have been sanitized in accordance with CDC guidelines.

Upon arrival to Fort Leonard Wood, all 500 Soldiers and trainees were medically screened and tested by GLWACH health professionals at the beginning of their 14-day controlled monitoring phase of basic combat training and all test results at that time were negative. Four days after the end of the group’s controlled monitoring phase, a trainee reported to Harper In-processing Health Screening Facility with symptoms, and immediately, all 500 were tested again, resulting in the increased positive test results.

The Military said all who tested positive are being cared for and monitored according to CDC guidelines and have been isolated to prevent the potential spread to others. They added that most who tested positive are asymptomatic and none have been hospitalized at GLWACH.

The first positive case of the virus on the military base came in March. At the time, the military said the soldier who tested positive had recently traveled to New York and Florida. The base had closed graduations of soldiers to the public about one week before due to concerns.

The release said that contact tracing continues to be performed, as does the strict enforcement of social distancing and the use of cloth face masks to mitigate the spread of the virus.
Our people — military, civilians and families — and their health, welfare and safety are our highest priority. We continue to assess, refine and coordinate prevention and response efforts on post and in the local area to ensure the well-being of our personnel and local population. Fort Leonard Wood leadership remain in close coordination with local and state public health authorities and have assessed that the local communities are not at an increased risk.

Fort Leonard Wood hosts and trains with the largest Marine Corps Detachment and Air Force Squadron on any Army installation.

Additional information can be found on the Fort Leonard Wood website.

10. Military families need relief from rising food costs, airman tells leaders – 6/1

Military Times | Karen Jowers

Rising commissary prices are hurting junior enlisted families, said an Air Force tech sergeant, who asked senior leaders if financial relief could be provided to military families because of these and other increased costs worldwide during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“My grocery costs have gone up, and some junior enlisted families on one income have mentioned things are getting pretty tight,” the tech sergeant stated, in a town hall question May 28 to Secretary of Defense Mark Esper, Joint Chiefs Chairman Army Gen. Mark Milley, and Senior Enlisted Adviser to the Chairman Ramon Colon-Lopez.

The tech sergeant stated commissary prices have gone up significantly.

“A cheap pound of ground beef has gone from $2.30 a pound to almost $6,” said the airman, stationed at Fort Meade, Md.

Commissary officials note grocery prices have gone up across the country, not just in commissaries, and say latest calculations through March show a continued overall global savings of 24.2 percent, compared to stores outside the gate. Some commissaries began limiting meat quantities on May 1 in anticipation of national shortages.

The tech sergeant asked if officials would consider steps such as increasing the Basic Allowance for Subsistence or a temporary increase in the cost of living allowance for higher cost areas in the continental U.S.

Colon-Lopez said the financial impact of COVID-19 "has not been overlooked at any stage of this pandemic response by the department.

“We have mechanisms to plus up the ability for families, especially those families that are out of work, to be able to sustain the feeding and care of their families,” Colon-Lopez said. But as far as BAS, pay raises and other monetary benefits, these are negotiated during every budget cycle, he said. “I’m sure the impacts of COVID and the pandemic on the increasing [cost of] goods will be reflected in future National Defense Authorization Act reviews.”

The CONUS Cost of Living Allowance in place before COVID-19 affects approximately 20,000 service members in 16 military housing areas and 31 other counties in the continental U.S. It’s designed to help offset higher prices in the highest cost locations in CONUS.

Commissary officials don’t release information about pricing, and how much prices have increased during the pandemic, said Kevin Robinson, spokesman for the Defense Commissary Agency.

Commissaries are stocked with products made by many of the same manufacturers that stock local civilian grocery stores. “The pandemic has currently caused supply issues of fresh beef, pork and poultry products, and
demand has driven the price up for all retailers. Commissaries are not insulated from these pricing fluctuations,” Robinson said.

“Throughout this pandemic the commissary team is working aggressively with its suppliers on a daily basis on pricing of products.”

According to the April Consumer Price Index, released May 12 by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, grocery prices in the U.S. rose 2.6 percent in April, compared to March, the highest increase since 1974. The CPI reported that the increase was broad-based, affecting all major grocery store food groups. But prices for meats, poultry, fish and eggs increased the most, rising 4.3 percent. Prices for cereals and bakery products increased by 2.9 percent – the largest increase ever, according to the CPI.

While prices have increased temporarily across the board, commissaries have still maintained their required level of savings in comparison to local grocery stores outside the gate, Robinson said.

Overall global savings at the end of March was 24.2 percent, compared to prices of stores outside the installation. That includes the overseas stores. For commissaries in the U.S., including Alaska and Hawaii, the savings calculation was 20.7 percent, compared to stores outside the gate.

Savings percentages for commissaries are calculated quarterly; savings calculations for April are not available. Commissaries are mandated by Congress to maintain an overall global savings of 23.7 percent.

11. As Virus Toll Preoccupies U.S., Rivals Test Limits of American Influence – 6/1

The coronavirus may have changed almost everything, but it didn’t change this: Global competition spins ahead — and in many ways has accelerated

New York Times | David E. Sanger, Eric Schmitt and Edward Wong

WASHINGTON -- With the United States preoccupied by the sobering reality of more than 100,000 Americans dead from the coronavirus, China has pushed in recent weeks to move troops into disputed territory with India, continue aggressive actions in the South China Sea and rewrite the rules of how it will control Hong Kong.

At roughly the same time, Russian fighter jets roared dangerously close to American Navy planes over the Mediterranean Sea, while the country’s space forces conducted an antisatellite missile test clearly aimed at sending the message that Moscow could blind U.S. spy satellites and take down GPS and other communications systems. Russia’s military cyberunits were busy, too, the National Security Agency reported, with an innovative attack that may portend accelerated planning for a strike on email systems this election year.

The North Koreans said they were accelerating their “nuclear deterrent,” moving beyond two years of vague promises of disarmament and Kim Jong-un’s warm exchanges of letters with President Trump. Iran, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said, is re-establishing the infrastructure needed to make a bomb — all a reaction, the Iranians insist, to Mr. Trump’s decision two years ago to reimpose sanctions, reaffirmed in recent weeks as the State Department dismantled the last elements of the Obama-era nuclear deal.

The coronavirus may have changed almost everything, but it did not change this: Global challenges to the United States spin ahead, with America’s adversaries testing the limits and seeing what gains they can make with minimal pushback.

It has not created a new reality as much as it has widened divisions that existed before the pandemic. And with the United States looking inward, preoccupied by the fear of more viral waves, unemployment soaring over 20 percent and nationwide protests ignited by deadly police brutality, its competitors are moving to fill the vacuum, and quickly.

In some cases, Mr. Trump has helped them along. His announcement on Friday that the United States was severing ties with the World Health Organization left the field clear for China to broaden its influence over the
organization. On Saturday, Mr. Trump delivered a gift to President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia: Aboard Air Force One, almost offhandedly, he said he would invite Mr. Putin to an expanded meeting of the Group of 7 nations. Russia was banned from meetings of the world’s major economic powers after its 2014 annexation of Crimea and attacks on eastern Ukraine.

Most of the European allies have rejected past proposals to bring Russia back into the fold, noting that Moscow has never loosened its hold on Crimea, and Mr. Trump did not explain his change of policy. Apart from Mr. Pompeo’s declaration in February that the United States “does not and will not ever recognize” Russia’s claim to the region, though, Mr. Trump’s proposal suggests the United States is moving on.

Mr. Trump has also withdrawn from various U.N. bodies and from important international accords, most recently the Open Skies Treaty — actions that also weaken ties with allies and cede ground to China, Russia and others.

The retreat is also happening in sub-Saharan Africa, where Defense Secretary Mark T. Esper is weighing cuts in U.S. troop levels and aid to French-led counterterrorism efforts in ways that analysts say could open the door to China and Russia. Already, they are dangling deals for new ports and railroads, arms and mercenaries, and medical supplies to help combat Covid-19.

“The scope of medical and economic disruption that will come from Covid-19 will leave opportunities for both nations, and others, to try to gain advantages,” Stanley A. McChrystal, a retired four-star commander of the Joint Special Operations Command and American forces in Afghanistan, said in an interview.

The United States has not stayed entirely on the sidelines, though, creating potential arenas for new competition and possible collision. The race for a coronavirus vaccine has come to involve both China’s People’s Liberation Army and the U.S. military, which has said it would mobilize to distribute any breakthrough discovery.

American warships have sailed into disputed waters in the South China Sea in recent weeks to assert freedom-of-navigation rights, continuing a standoff in a region that Beijing asserts is its territory, backed up by the establishment of new air bases.

And the United States is speeding ahead in a renewed conventional and nuclear arms race, though its strategic rationale — other than to overmatch Russia and China — has never been fully described by this administration. Not long after the Pentagon announced in March that it had successfully tested an unarmed prototype of a hypersonic missile, a weapon that could potentially overwhelm an adversary’s defense systems, Mr. Trump boasted that a “super duper” missile was on the way. Presumably it is intended as an answer to Russia’s introduction of the Avangard, which made it the first country to claim it had deployed an operable hypersonic weapon, and a range of similar weapons that China is developing.

Mr. Trump’s new arms control negotiator, Marshall Billingslea, warned recently that Mr. Trump meant it when he vowed that America would always have the most potent nuclear force in the world. “We know how to win these races, and we know how to spend the adversary into oblivion,” he said, even as the country ran up record deficits to avoid an economic implosion because of the virus. “If we have to, we will, but we sure would like to avoid it.”

Middle East Power Vacuum

It is not only China and Russia that are challenging the United States. Across the Middle East, there is a sense that Mr. Trump’s oft-expressed desire to withdraw from the region — along with his National Security Strategy’s focus on a renewed competition among superpowers — offers new leeway.

Iran has bet that Mr. Trump, for all his emphasis on doubling down on sanctions as he completes America’s exit from the 2015 nuclear deal, is not willing to risk outright confrontation. Tehran has gradually accelerated its production of nuclear fuel and ignored requests from international inspectors for access to suspected nuclear-related sites. But it has not raced ahead, perhaps calculating that a slow rebuilding of its stockpiles will not result in a strong international backlash.
And in the Persian Gulf, even after the U.S.-led killing in January of Qassim Suleimani, a senior commander in the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and Iran’s terrorism mastermind, Tehran is episodically testing America’s limits.

Nearly a dozen Iranian fast boats conducted what the Navy described as “dangerous and harassing approaches” to six American warships in the Persian Gulf in mid-April, prompting Mr. Trump’s order “to shoot down and destroy any and all Iranian gunboats if they harass our ships at sea.” Iran backed off in the gulf — but then stepped up oil shipments to Venezuela, in a challenge to the U.S.-led embargo meant to displace President Nicolás Maduro, who has stayed in office despite a vigorous American campaign to force him out.

In mid-May, Iran’s foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, said American attempts to disrupt the course of Iranian tankers carrying fuel for Venezuela were “dangerous” and “provocative” acts. Iran has threatened retaliation against U.S. forces in the gulf and throughout the Middle East if Washington interferes with Tehran’s oil deliveries.

And in Iraq and Syria, the Islamic State, a year after losing its last territorial foothold, is resurgent with a spate of roadside bombings, ambushes and other attacks as U.S. troops in Iraq pull back from four bases and suspend training in the country, along with other Western allies, because of coronavirus restrictions. Mr. Trump, after initially declaring in 2018 that the group had been defeated, has barely mentioned its recent gains.

Russia and China are active in the region. Russia continues to support the government of President Bashar al-Assad as he nears a brutal victory in Syria’s civil war. And China maintains a military base in Djibouti, near an American one there. Chinese diplomats and state-owned enterprises have increased their presence throughout the region.

“China has significantly expanded its engagement in the region, especially in the economic and diplomatic realms,” said Patricia M. Kim, a China analyst at the U.S. Institute of Peace who worked on a recent report on China and the Red Sea area. “And for the U.S. to remain relevant — to be able to shape norms in the region and help states manage China’s growing presence — it needs to significantly increase its own engagement.”

From Russia, Testing Boundaries

Mr. Trump’s willingness to invite Mr. Putin back into the company of the major Western allies — mostly as an effort to counter China — is all the more mystifying because friction between American and Russian forces is running high. From international territory and airspace off Alaska to the Black Sea, combat planes and warships are pressing new boundaries and renewing years-old brinkmanship.

On Friday, two U.S. Air Force B-1B bombers flying a long-range training mission over the Black Sea prompted Russian fighter jets to scramble and intercept the American warplanes. At least three times in the past two months, Russian fighter jets intercepted Navy P-8 surveillance planes over the Mediterranean, most recently on Wednesday.

In an intercept in April, a Russian jet conducted a high-speed, inverted maneuver, 25 feet in front of the P-8. “Another unsafe #Russian intercept of @USNavy P-8 in international airspace above #Mediterranean Sea!” the U.S. military wrote, tweeting a video of the encounter.

If these had been encounters with Iranian or Chinese forces, Mr. Trump would have almost certainly protested. But amid the throes of a pandemic, he has not been eager to ratchet up tensions with Russia. “I don’t see it,” Mr. Trump said when asked whether Russia was toying with U.S. military forces. “We had a very good relationship with Russia.”

That is not what top NATO officials and American commanders say.
The U.S. military on Tuesday accused the Kremlin of secretly sending at least 14 fighter jets to eastern Libya in May to support Russian mercenaries battling alongside a beleaguered commander, Khalid Hifter, in his campaign to oust the internationally recognized government in Tripoli, the capital.

The unusually blunt and public criticism by two top American generals underscored the Pentagon’s broader concern about Moscow’s growing influence in Libya and a looming security threat on NATO’s southern flank.

Closer to home, Air Force F-22 Raptor fighter jets intercepted two Russian maritime patrol planes in April about 50 miles from Alaska’s Aleutian Islands, in an echo of the Cold War. A month earlier, a pair of Russian reconnaissance aircraft were intercepted by U.S. and Canadian jets 50 miles from the state’s coast over the Beaufort Sea.

The North American Aerospace Defense Command, or NORAD, said the Russian aircraft were intercepted in the Bering Sea north of the Aleutian Islands and never entered U.S. or Canadian airspace.

In mid-March, two Russian strategic bombers flew over a U.S. submarine that surfaced in the Arctic Ocean and were subsequently escorted by American and Canadian fighter jets.

“What we do see is, I think, a continuous effort for them — as they do in the Covid-19 environment, outside the Covid-19 environment — to continually probe and check and see our responses,” said Gen. Terrence J. O’Shaughnessy, the head of the military’s Northern Command, which oversees homeland defense.

**China Seizes the Moment**

During the 2016 campaign, Mr. Trump spoke publicly, in a New York Times interview, about leaving it to South Korea and Japan to secure the Pacific, saying he was tired of paying so much to help defend allies who were running big trade surpluses with the United States. And as Mr. Trump has argued with Seoul and Tokyo, and not significantly bolstered ties with Southeast Asia, President Xi Jinping of China has seen his moment of opportunity.

From the waters of the Pacific and Indian Oceans to the heights of the Himalayas, China has pressed forward on expanding its military footprint.

“I think what Beijing is pursuing — and it’s a rational interest — is hegemonic authority over Asia,” said Elbridge Colby, the former Pentagon official who was the main writer of the Trump administration’s National Defense Strategy, which focuses on how the American military should reshape itself for great-power competition with Russia and particularly China.

It is most evident in the South China Sea. Beijing has continued with its yearlong strategy of pressing maximal territorial claims. Turning outcroppings of rock into full islands, it is forming a bulwark against the claims of competing nations and against the findings of a 2016 international tribunal, which sought to limit China’s aggressive maritime actions.

In April, a Chinese Coast Guard vessel collided with a Vietnamese fishing boat near a disputed archipelago, sinking the small vessel. The same month a Chinese seismic survey ship, escorted by Chinese Coast Guard vessels, entered waters designated as the exclusive economic zone of Malaysia, daring the Malaysians to push back. There have been parallel confrontations with Indonesia and the Philippines.

The Trump administration has continued President Barack Obama’s policy of not taking sides in the territorial disputes while asserting that the United States aims to maintain freedom of navigation in the region. Mr. Esper insists that the United States will continue naval operations “to send a clear message to Beijing that we will continue to protect freedom of navigation and commerce for all nations, large and small.”
But China’s leaders appear to suspect that they are empty words; Mr. Trump has no appetite for facing off with Beijing over scarcely populated territory half a world away.

And in an annual policy report last month, the Chinese government dropped the term “peaceful reunification” when discussing Taiwan, the democratic, self-governing island, breaking with a tradition of using that phrase in the reports since 1992. Li Keqiang, the Chinese prime minister, also omitted “peaceful” when he called for reunification at the opening session of the National People’s Congress on May 22.

The U.S. Navy has announced at least three instances of transits of its warships through the Taiwan Strait this year. And last month, the State Department notified Congress of a potential sale of advanced torpedoes to Taiwan worth $180 million, the latest of several large arms sale packages to the island.

“We need to change things on Taiwan to improve the deterrent and make clearer where we stand,” said Mr. Colby, who added that the United States had to “end any remaining ambiguity about how we’d react to the use of force.” Without that, China may well doubt that Mr. Trump sees Taiwan’s de facto independence as a vital American interest.

Tensions involving China extend to the roof of the world. Along a disputed border in the Himalayas, Indian and Chinese troops engaged in scuffles and shouting matches in recent weeks. Indian officials say the Chinese military made at least one major incursion into Indian territory. Both sides have amassed thousands of troops in the disputed areas, leading to the tensest such standoff since 2017.

On Wednesday, Mr. Trump weighed in via Twitter. “We have informed both India and China that the United States is ready, willing and able to mediate or arbitrate their now raging border dispute,” he wrote, in an echo of an offer he made last year on the India-Pakistan conflict over Kashmir.

Neither side seemed interested in his offer.

12. Hurricane Season Collides With Coronavirus, As Communities Plan For Dual Emergencies – 6/1
NPR (Morning Edition) | James Bruggers and Amy Green

Robin Rokobauer doesn't like to chance it. When there's a hurricane, she almost always evacuates.

Rokobauer lives in Cocoa Beach, Fla., on a barrier island between the Atlantic Ocean and 153-mile-long Indian River Lagoon. Her mother is 93.

"She's got to have flushing toilets," Rokobauer says of her mother. "She's got to have fresh water. She's just got some physical needs that require that."

But this year Rokobauer is thinking hard about her hurricane plan. She is 65, and like her mother, she’s considered at higher risk of serious complications from the coronavirus, which has claimed more than 100,000 American lives.

"If I have to go any farther or if I have to go somewhere, then you're going to be exposed to more people in more environments, and you don't know where those people have been," she says.

The 2020 Atlantic hurricane season starts Monday, and federal scientists expect storms to be more frequent and powerful. Two named storms already formed in the Atlantic this spring before the official start of the season. As Florida and other coastal states plan for hurricanes, they are confronting troubling new public safety calculations because of the novel coronavirus.

There's now a chance for one disaster to layer upon another. Many lives could be lost: first, from powerful winds, storm surges and flooding and then through the spread of the coronavirus in cramped public shelters following
mass evacuations. Evacuees might pass the virus to friends and relatives who take them in, or get infected themselves in those new surroundings.

"The risks are significant," says David Abramson, a professor at New York University's College of Global Public Health, whose research examines the health consequences of hurricanes. "A lot of hurricane events lead to evacuations and displacements" without much time to build in social distancing safeguards, he says.

The hardest problem in planning for a hurricane during a pandemic could be public confusion over whether to evacuate or stay at home, says Craig Fugate, former administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency under President Obama.

"What I don't want to have is people to say, 'Hey, wait a minute. I'm not going to evacuate. I don't want to get COVID-19, I've been told to stay home,' " says Fugate, who also led the Florida Division of Emergency Management. "That may result in more people staying behind and increasing the risk of loss of life."

Others may stay put just because they are among the tens of millions nationally who have lost their jobs and feel they cannot afford to flee to hotels or family inland. As a result, some emergency managers along the Gulf Coast are trying to line up more shelters for the greater number of evacuees they expect, a move certain to stretch local and state budgets already tattered by the economic downturn.

Forecasters predict an active hurricane season

Coastal states from Maine to Texas have been scrambling to revise hurricane emergency plans to take the pandemic into account.

They're rethinking everything — from evacuation routes and shelters to stockpiling personal protective equipment and communicating new procedures, says North Carolina meteorologist Katie Webster. She coordinates monthly calls with emergency managers through the National Emergency Management Association and is director of the natural hazards branch of the North Carolina Department of Public Safety.

Emergency managers in coastal states have been checking to see if companies they once relied on to supply everything from buses to food and water are still in business, or if alternative arrangements need to be made, she says.

"States will be as ready as they can be," Webster says.

Florida, with its 8,436 miles of Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coastline, has been hit hard in recent years. Since 2016, four major hurricanes have menaced the state, including Hurricane Michael, a Category 5 storm that tore through the Panhandle two years ago.

Climate change is intensifying the threats posed by hurricanes. A warmer atmosphere holds more moisture, making hurricanes likely to dump more rain. Sea-level rise elevates destructive storm surges into coastal communities. And hotter ocean waters are fueling stronger hurricanes, according to the newest research.

This season, every major forecasting organization is predicting above-average activity, because of a warm Atlantic Ocean and favorable atmospheric conditions. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration scientists, for example, have predicted 13 to 19 named storms, including six to 10 hurricanes and three to six major hurricanes, with wind speeds of 111 miles per hour or more. A normal season would have 12 named storms with six hurricanes, three of which would be major storms.

Meanwhile, as of last Friday, the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation was projecting more than 100 new coronavirus infections a day in Florida by Aug. 1, just as the hurricane season reaches its height.

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OSD Public Affairs
At a May briefing in Sarasota, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis noted that the coronavirus spreads most easily when people come into close contact in an enclosed space.

"As you're looking at sheltering for a hurricane you've got to keep that in mind," he says. "I mean if you pile people into a place, under normal circumstances that would be fine. But that would potentially allow the virus to spread if somebody is in fact infected."

For its part, FEMA has updated its hurricane guide to include material on staying safe in the pandemic — including advice about social distancing, wearing cloth face coverings and following recommended cleaning practices.

Armed with hand sanitizer and masks, Trudie Marzig says she and her husband in Rockledge, Fla., about 50 miles southeast of Orlando, will be ready to evacuate if necessary.

"You have to take care of the immediate danger first, which is the weather issue," she says. "You can deal with the virus pandemic afterward."

Nightmare scenario: evacuations in a pandemic

Even without a pandemic, mass evacuations can be logistical nightmares, clogging freeways, causing traffic accidents, and depleting gas stations of fuel. For each storm, officials weigh the pros and cons of evacuation, and this year, they are adding the pandemic to their concerns, says Bryan Koon, a vice president at IEM, an emergency management and security consulting firm, and Florida's emergency management director under Gov. Rick Scott.

Authorities in hurricane-prone states are rethinking not only when and where to call for evacuations, but how to execute them. In doing so, Koon says, officials have to contend with the vagaries of weather forecasting.

Meteorologists are getting better at forecasting the path hurricanes take toward land and the deadly storm surges they produce, he says. But there's enough uncertainty to sometimes prompt officials to "over evacuate" as a precaution, says Koon, whose tenure in state government coincided with Hurricane Irma.

To curb the risk of spreading the coronavirus, officials could be more judicious with evacuations, he says, looking closely at factors like flood and storm surge zones and the age and condition of homes.

"We will have to determine whether it is better to have somebody stay in place because they will be dry enough, or their homes are strong enough, or maybe they are in mobile homes or a storm surge zone and the risks are worse for staying in place so you send them somewhere else," Koon says.

The DeSantis administration is considering stay-at-home orders where homes are newer and sturdier, especially for weaker hurricanes.

And rather than using buses, community leaders are considering ride-sharing services such as Uber to transport low-income evacuees, one car at a time.

The stakes are especially high this year for low-income people, who would continue facing disproportionate risks from the coronavirus during a hurricane, says Abramson, the NYU professor. People get injured and sick during hurricanes but might lack adequate health insurance, he says.

"The people who are most vulnerable in hurricanes, socially and economically, are also vulnerable medically," he says. "What we are about to see is also a large increase in the number of people who are uninsured, who are about to lose work-related insurance, and can't pay for their own," he adds.
Nursing home residents also face unusually high risks this season. Many low-lying facilities have evacuation agreements with facilities on higher ground, but Kristen Knapp of the Florida Health Care Association says this year, nursing homes will have to re-examine these arrangements.

"If you're a facility that is an evacuation zone and you have positive cases in your building, you may not be able to go to your typical facility that you would go to if they don't have positive cases in their building," Knapp says.

Sheltering collides with social distancing

Sheltering large numbers of hurricane evacuees, which is always complicated by size, location and special circumstances, will be even more difficult amid the pandemic.

After Hurricane Irma, for example, some 350,000 evacuees were in shelters, often packed into school gymnasiums or other large venues. That wouldn't make sense this year during a threatening hurricane, officials say.

Leaders are contemplating sheltering evacuees in hotels and motels left vacant by the economic collapse.

The American Red Cross is already lining up hotels or dormitories, and a higher number of large spaces so evacuees can be spread out. There will be health screening and temperature checks to get into shelters, says Trevor Riggen, a Red Cross senior vice president.

People with temperatures or other virus risk factors will be accommodated in a separate location, with access to medical help, he said.

Food will be served in boxes instead of cafeteria-style, and the Red Cross has already stockpiled face coverings and disinfectants for shelter cleaning, he says.

"We want people to know it will be as safe as possible," he says.

While the emergency managers are getting ready for the six-month hurricane season, individuals and families need to do their part, this year more than ever, says Jennifer Collins, a geosciences professor at the University of South Florida whose research includes human behavior during hurricane evacuations.

"We definitely can lean on the government to some extent but we have to take personal responsibility as well," she says. People should make sure they have what they need to shelter in place, for a hurricane and a pandemic, she adds.

Robin Rokobauer of Cocoa Beach considered staying put this year. But she believes she will have to evacuate in order to best protect her mother. She feels fortunate that Brevard County has had a relatively small number of coronavirus cases at some 400, including 12 deaths. Already, she is checking with hotels, looking for those with a kitchenette so that she can prepare meals in the room.

"I hope that we don't have any" hurricanes, Rokobauer says. "I mean, we've been through a lot this year."

13. China says U.S. 'addicted to quitting' over plan to withdraw from WHO – 6/1

Reuters | Gabriel Crossley

BEIJING - China said on Monday the United States was “addicted to quitting” following a U.S. decision to leave the World Health Organization (WHO) and said the withdrawal reveals a pursuit of power politics and unilateralism.

Foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told reporters during a daily briefing that the international community disagreed with what he described as the selfish behaviour of the United States.
“The U.S. has become addicted to quitting groups and scrapping treaties,” said Zhao.

President Donald Trump announced on Friday the United States would cut ties with the WHO, accusing the U.N. agency of becoming a puppet of China.

The WHO has denied Trump’s assertions that it promoted Chinese “disinformation” about the virus.

Trump’s decision came after a pledge by Chinese President Xi Jinping to give $2 billion to the WHO over the next two years to help combat the novel coronavirus, which emerged in China late last year.

The EU on Saturday urged the United States to reconsider its decision.

China calls on the international community to provide more political support and funding for the WHO, said Zhao.

The U.S. decision to quit the Geneva-based agency comes amid growing tension between the United States and China over the coronavirus outbreak.

Since taking office, Trump has questioned the value of the United Nations and scorned the importance of multilateralism as he focuses on an “America First” agenda.

He has quit the U.N. Human Rights Council, the U.N. cultural agency UNESCO, a global accord to tackle climate change, the Iran nuclear deal and opposed a U.N. migration pact.

Writing by Se Young Lee; Editing by Gareth Jones, Robert Birsel

14. COVID-19 Infections Rise 684% in Afghanistan – 6/1
VOA News | Not Attributed

COVID-19 infections in Afghanistan rose by 684% in May, the International Rescue Committee said in a statement Monday.

“The country's extremely low testing capacity means many more are going untested and undetected,” according to the Committee.

Millions of Afghans were already facing food insecurity after decades of conflict and now the economic strain of the COVID pandemic “leaves Afghanistan on the brink of a humanitarian disaster,” IRC said.

Russia reported 9,035 new COVID-19 infections Monday. Only the U.S. and Brazil have more cases than Russia.

South African schools were scheduled to open Monday, but those plans were canceled at the last minute. The health ministry had received pushback from teacher unions, school staff and governing boards about the opening date.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said on Twitter that there is a need for “transparency about the level of preparedness of each of the schools.”

The White House announced Sunday that it has delivered two million doses of hydroxychloroquine, or HCQ, to Brazil to help the South American country in its fight against the coronavirus.

“HCQ will be used as a prophylactic to help defend Brazil’s nurses, doctors, and healthcare professionals against the virus,” the White House said in a statement Sunday. “It will also be used as a therapeutic to treat Brazilians who become infected.”
HCQ is a widely used malaria drug. U.S. President Donald Trump, in a controversial move, has ignored his public health advisers and has pushed for the use of the drug in the fight against the coronavirus even though there is no hard evidence that the drug is effective against the virus.

Trump recently announced that he has taken a round of HCQ, even though he says he does not have the virus.

The White House statement also said the two countries have entered a joint “research effort that will include randomized controlled clinical trials. These trials will help further evaluate the safety and efficacy of HCQ for both prophylaxis and the early treatment of the coronavirus.”

There are more infections in the U.S. and Brazil than anywhere else. The U.S. has 1.7 million cases while Brazil, which is emerging as the world’s hotspot for the virus, has more than 514,000, according to Johns Hopkins University.

U.S. health officials say they are bracing for a surge in coronavirus infections, following protests around the country over the death of George Floyd, an African American man who died in police custody in Minneapolis.

Some protesters wore masks, and some did not. Social distancing was non-existant.

The prime minister of Armenia has tested positive for the coronavirus. Nikol Pashinian told Public Radio of Armenia that he and his family have tested positive, but all of them are asymptomatic.

Australia is continuing to ease coronavirus restrictions, allowing more people to gather in restaurants, public parks and other attractions.

Gatherings in the country’s largest state, New South Wales, had been limited to 10 people. That limit has been increased to 50.

Museums, libraries and zoos are reopening.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he hopes the easing of restrictions will help the economy rebound which, like so many other global economies, has been hit hard by the pandemic.

But Morrison said another government stimulus package may be necessary.

About 90,000 mosques across Saudi Arabia opened for the first time in more than two months Sunday, but some restrictions remain in place.

Worshippers 15 years old and younger are not allowed inside, and the elderly are being encouraged to stay home to pray. Mecca, Islam’s holiest city, remains closed, but Jerusalem’s al-Aqsa mosque — Islam’s holiest site outside Saudi Arabia — was open again Sunday for the first time since mid-March. All who enter must have their temperatures checked.

With the U.S. Atlantic hurricane season officially starting Monday, the Associated Press reports many counties across the southern U.S. still do not have complete plans on how to open up public shelters if a storm strikes during the coronavirus outbreak.

“Our biggest change to our hurricane plan is sheltering. How are we going to shelter those that have to evacuate? How are going to shelter those that are positive COVID patients? There are multiple ideas that we are considering right now,” Mississippi Emergency Management Agency Director Greg Michel said.

Vice President Mike Pence said last week that the federal government is ready should there be the twin disaster of a hurricane and COVID-19.
The federal emergency plan includes urging people to stay in hotels. But some state officials say that may not be an option because of the current unemployment crisis caused by the pandemic.

U.S. forecasters expect this will be an unusually busy hurricane season with as many as six major storms hitting the U.S.