

Defense One

DoD lifts some COVID travel limits; New Afghanistan peace talks?; Army rethinks Confederate base names; IBM ends face-recognition work; And a bit more.

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The U.S. military has begun lifting COVID-related travel restrictions. On Monday, defense officials announced that 39 states and Bahrain, Belgium, Germany, Japan, and the UK had met conditions that allow Defense Secretary Mark Esper to lift some coronavirus-related travel restrictions. The conditions were laid out in a [May 22 memo](#). *Military Times* has a bit more, [here](#).

Five-hundred more Americans died from virus-related complications on Monday, bringing the total confirmed deaths to just under 111,000. Overall, the rolling seven-day average is declining again after a small spike a few days ago, according to the *New York Times*' [tracker](#).

But that may not last. States are reopening without a sufficiently comprehensive testing-and-track effort, and the civil-rights protests are a “perfect set-up” for transmission of the virus, Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said in a [radio interview](#) on Friday.

And the overall trend line conceals regional rises. “While the outbreak has eased in the Northeast, driving down the overall national numbers, cases have only plateaued in the rest of the country, and they appear to be on the rise in recent days in COVID Tracking Project data,” wrote Project leaders Alexis Madrigal and Robinson Meyer of *The Atlantic*. “Twenty-two states reported 400 or more new cases Friday, and 14 other states and Puerto Rico reported cases in the triple digits. Several states—including Arizona, North Carolina, and California—are now seeing their highest numbers of known cases. These numbers all reflect infections that likely began before this week of protest. An even larger spike now seems likely.” Read, [here](#).

In global coronavirus news, “Brazil has removed months of data on Covid-19 from a government website amid criticism of President Jair Bolsonaro’s handling of the outbreak,” the BBC [reported](#) Sunday. Recall that “Brazil has the world’s second-highest number of cases, and has recently had more new deaths than any other nation.”

- ***More context***, from AP today: “[Concealing virus is latest Bolsonaro effort shore up base](#).”

Back stateside, “Shutdowns prevented 60 million coronavirus infections in the U.S.,” the *Washington Post* reported from new findings published Monday in the journal [Nature](#). “Another

study [also published in *Nature* on Monday] estimated that the shutdowns saved about 3.1 million lives in 11 European countries and dropped infection rates by an average of 82 percent.”

Some associated findings from the studies:

- “Banning large gatherings had more of an effect in France and South Korea than in the other countries,” the *Post* writes of the study from UC Berkeley’s Goldman School of Public Policy;
- “seemingly small delays in [shutdown] policy deployment likely produced dramatically different health outcomes,” the authors of that same study write.

By the way, “the pandemic, even if in retreat in some of the places hardest hit, is far from over,” the *Post* reports from both of those studies. Indeed, the authors warn, “The overwhelming majority of people remain susceptible to the virus. Only about 3 percent to 4 percent of people in the countries being studied have been infected to date,” one study’s author told the *Post*.

Biden’s Foreign Policy Would Be Better Than Trump’s, But Just Barely // Kori Schake, The Atlantic: The former vice president lacks a consistent philosophy of when and how to use military force.

America Is Giving Up on the Pandemic // Alexis C. Madrigal and Robinson Meyer, The Atlantic: Businesses are reopening. Protests are erupting nationwide. But the virus isn’t done with us.

Trump Appointee to Foreign Aid Agency Has Denounced Liberal Democracy and ‘Our Homo-Empire’ // Yeganeh Torbati, ProPublica: USAID’s new deputy White House liaison has condemned the “tyrannical LGBT agenda” and celebrated Hungary’s right-wing prime minister as “the shining champion of Western civilization.”

Welcome to this Tuesday edition of *The D Brief* from Ben Watson and Bradley Peniston. Send us tips from your community right here. And if you’re not already subscribed to *The D Brief*, you can do that here.

Happening today: The Senate is expected to confirm U.S. Air Force Gen. Charles Q. Brown as the service’s new chief of staff — replacing outgoing Gen. David Goldfein. “If confirmed, he would be [the] 1st African American to lead the Air Force and 2nd ever black mbr of Joint Chiefs of Staff,” after Colin Powell, C-SPAN’s Craig Caplan tweets this a.m. However, as *Defense One*’s Marcus Weisgerber noted on Twitter, even after today’s vote, Brown “is expected to remain @PACAF commander until next month. At some point *after* that, he’ll be sworn in as the Air Force’s top general.”

Milley, Barr watched National Guard and federal police assemble in Lafayette Square to clear protestors for that presidential photo op. That’s one of the revelations from a *Washington Post* video timeline of events from 5 to 7 p.m. on June 1.

The reconstruction — from news footage, amateur video, police radio recordings, and more — shows Gen. Mark Milley, the Joint Chiefs chairman, and Attorney General William Barr among the federal forces assembling around 6:15 p.m. behind a temporary fenceline along the park’s northern boundary. Someone on a police radio warns officers that CS — tear gas — might soon

be deployed. About 15 minutes later, the video shows, Guardsmen and police advanced past the barricade, using chemical grenades, nonlethal pellets, batons, and riot shields to force protesters out of nearby streets, and away from a nearby church. Just before 7 p.m., Milley, Barr, Esper, and others accompanied Trump through the cleared streets.

Why it matters: This episode is the single event that led many former defense officials — including James Mattis — to speak out against the White House’s apparently quite open political use of the military to enable that Bible-holding photo for the president. *Defense One*’s Katie Bo Williams rolled up and assessed many of the generals’ reactions, [here](#).

The U.S. Army has 10 bases and facilities named for Confederate leaders. That could soon change, Army spokesperson Col. Sunset Belinsky said in a statement Monday. That openness to change is a sudden reversal for the Army as recent protests across the U.S. over systemic racism have caused the service to reassess this particular tradition. However, *Politico* [reminded us](#) Monday, “For years, previous calls for change have gone unheeded, as officials sought to dismiss concerns by arguing the bases were named to celebrate American soldiers and that renaming them would upend tradition.”

The 10 locations include Fort Bragg, N.C.; Georgia’s Forts Benning and Gordon; Virginia’s Forts Pickett, A.P. Hill and Lee; Louisiana’s Fort Polk and Camp Beauregard; Fort Hood, Texas; and Alabama’s Fort Rucker.

Says former Army Ranger Andrew Exum: “The funny thing about Fort Bragg is that you could just go there, pick up a rock, spin around a few times, throw it, and would probably hit some living soldier more worthy of having the base named after them than Braxton bleeping Bragg, who was generally very bad at Army-ing.”

Retired Gen. David Petraeus agrees, [writing](#) in *The Atlantic* today, “For an organization designed to win wars to train for them at installations named for those who led a losing force is sufficiently peculiar, but when we consider the cause for which these officers fought, we begin to penetrate the confusion of Civil War memory. These bases are, after all, federal installations, home to soldiers who swear an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. The irony of training at bases named for those who took up arms against the United States, and for the right to enslave others, is inescapable to anyone paying attention. Now, belatedly, is the moment for us to pay such attention.” Read his full argument, [here](#).

Related: Three House Democrats now want SecDef Esper to ban public depictions of the Confederate Flag across all military installations. That follows the Marine Corps’ [decision](#) late last week to ban public depictions of the stars and bars across its installations. The Reps. are Anthony Brown of Maryland, Ruben Gallego of Arizona, and Ted Lieu of California. You can read their letter to the SecDef, [here](#).

Get to better understand “The Disturbing Appeal of Boogaloo Violence to Military Men” in [this](#) feature report from *The Daily Beast* published Monday.

Additional reading: “[The Boogaloo Movement Is Not What You Think](#),” from Bellingcat, published late May.

An Air Force E-5 is expected to be charged with first-degree murder “on suspicion of fatally shooting Sgt. Damon Gutzwiller, 38, of the Santa Cruz County Sheriff’s Department and wounding two other officers” on Saturday, *Air Force Times* [reported](#) Monday.

Especially notable: The airman “is part of the 60th Security Forces Squadron at Travis Air Force Base in California,” and “is a Phoenix Raven Team Leader.” That Phoenix Raven program “was created in 1997, [and] is made up of teams of specially trained security forces personnel, charged

with providing security to airlift and tanker aircraft traveling through highly dangerous areas.” *A nameless resident ultimately subdued the airman* after handing over his keys. “As they struggled, [the airman now in custody] pulled a pipe bomb from his pants and tried unsuccessfully to light it. He then pulled out a pistol and the man was able to knock it out of his hands and then subdue him as neighbors came to help.” Read on, [here](#).

In tech news, IBM’s CEO said the company will no longer research facial recognition technology, according to a [letter](#) sent to Congress Monday. According to the letter, CEO Arvind Krishna writes, “IBM firmly opposes and will not condone uses of any [facial recognition] technology, including facial recognition technology offered by other vendors, for mass surveillance, racial profiling, violations of basic human rights and freedoms, or any purpose which is not consistent with our values and Principles of Trust and Transparency... We believe now is the time to begin a national dialogue on whether and how facial recognition technology should be employed by domestic law enforcement agencies.” *The Verge* unpacks the related issues, [here](#).

Intra-Afghanistan peace talks “may begin this month,” Reuters reports after U.S. special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad recently visited Pakistan before swinging over to Qatar for another meeting with Taliban leaders. “Disagreement over the Taliban’s demand for the release of 5,000 prisoners” has been an obstacle so far. But “One Afghan presidential palace source and one diplomatic source told Reuters those issues were gradually being resolved and momentum had grown in recent weeks for formal talks, which were expected to begin this month, likely in Doha.” Bit more, [here](#).

North Korea is cutting “all cross-border communication lines” with South Korea at noon today, AP [reports](#) from Seoul. Pyongyang’s state-run Korean Central News Agency announced the move — which has happened before when North Korean officials got upset — describing it on Tuesday as “the first step of the determination to completely shut down all contact means with South Korea and get rid of unnecessary things.”

Why cut the lines this time? Purportedly as “a response to South Korea’s failure to stop activists from floating anti-Pyongyang leaflets across their border,” according to AP’s read of KCNA. According to KCNA, “The South Korean authorities connived at the hostile acts against (North Korea) by the riff-raff, while trying to dodge heavy responsibility with nasty excuses.” More [here](#).

There is an “ICBM lobby” in the U.S., and the Center for International Policy’s William Hartung has a new two-page explainer on it all that just went live today.

Why remind us? “The ICBM lobby is a major reason the United States continues to invest in ICBMs despite the obvious dangers of continuing to deploy them,” Hartung writes. And now America’s newest “ICBM — known formally as the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD) — is slated to cost between \$85 billion and \$150 billion, money that could be better spent on other priorities,” Hartung writes. Find his full report (PDF), [here](#).

ICYMI: The U.S. Army’s Flickr page seems to have revealed a new hypersonic weapon, *Aviation Week*’s Steve Trimble [reported](#) Sunday. The page “describes a Mach 5-plus projectile with the ability to penetrate into defended airspace and dispense a multi-role loitering air system over a target area,” he writes.

It’s somewhat frightening stuff, including the possibility to “launch a hypersonic projectile into a general area without knowing the specific location of the target. As it reaches the target area,

the projectile may be able to dispense a loitering air system, which is then uses its own sensors to find and identify the target. If the loitering system also carries a warhead, it may be able to strike the target by itself or transmit the target coordinates to another weapon.” Read on, [here](#).

And finally today: The Atlantic Council is opening a new program on “American Engagement” and snagged the Cato Institute’s vice president for defense and foreign policy studies to help lead it. Cato’s Christopher Preble will co-direct the New American Engagement Initiative at the Atlantic Council. He’s a former commissioned officer in the U.S. Navy and holds a PhD in history from Temple University. He’ll co-direct the new Atlantic Council program along with Mathew Burrows.

The goal of the new program: “challenge prevailing assumptions governing U.S. foreign policy and provide real world solutions to re-calibrating US foreign policy.” Read more at the Atlantic Council, [here](#).