

STARS AND STRIPES®

Wednesday, April 15, 2015

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Marines' first variant of F-35 falls short

DOD: Aircraft will not best A-10

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Marine Corps pilots of the first F-35 joint strike fighters scheduled to begin flying this summer will not be able to use night vision technology or carry more than four bombs and missiles, Defense Department officials testified in the House on Tuesday.

Overall, the first variant aircraft will have a range of lingering shortcomings when it goes into operation and will not be able to best the capabilities of the 1970s-era A-10 Thunderbolts it was designed to replace, according to Michael Gilmore, director of operational test and evaluation at the Defense Department.

The F-35 program began in 2001 and has since racked up nearly \$400 billion in costs — one of the most expensive and troubled Defense Department acquisition programs. It has also led to a controversial plan to retire the A-10, a close air support stalwart that many believe provides crucial cover for troops on the ground.

"If F-35 aircraft are employed at night for combat, pilots will have no night vision capability available due to the restriction on using the current night vision camera," Gilmore said in written testimony given to the House Armed Services Committee.

The so-called Block 2B version that will go to the Marines in July can only loiter over the battlefield for up to 30 minutes and will only carry two short-

General has concerns about A-10 retirement

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The commander of U.S. forces in South Korea said Wednesday that the retirement of the A-10 aircraft will leave a gap in the ability to take out enemy tanks from the air.

Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti made the comment under questioning by House lawmakers and said he would compensate for the change by using air and ground forces differently if war breaks out on the peninsula.

The Air Force is pushing a controversial plan to retire the 1970s-era close air support stalwart, which can shoot tank-busting depleted uranium rounds, and replace it with the F-35 Lightning II joint strike fighter, which remains in development and will have limited combat capability when it first goes into

operation this summer.

"It would open a gap in terms of that aircraft with that specific capability," said Scaparrotti, who along with other defense officials warned Wednesday of an increasingly belligerent North Korea.

The testimony comes a day after the Pentagon told lawmakers that the first version of the F-35 will not be able to outdo the A-10 Warthog and its powerful nose cannon on the battlefield.

The Block 2B set to go to the Marine Corps this summer will only be able to carry four bombs and not have any guns. Future variants are expected to have improved weapons but still face high development hurdles.

Rep. Martha McSally, R-Ariz., a former A-10 pilot, raised concerns Tuesday and again Wednesday over the planned switch in air power

capabilities.

The troops on the ground need Warthog-style air support that can defend them from North Korean armored units, but they might not get it from the F-35 jet, which will not initially be able to fire depleted uranium projectiles capable of piercing the thick armor of tanks, McSally said.

"We certainly don't want to roll that back," she said.

The U.S. has about 28,000 troops stationed in South Korea as part of a force that has remained since 1953 when the Korean War ended in a tense armistice.

The North Korean regime under Kim Jong Un has taunted the U.S. with its missile program and recently hacked Sony Pictures in an attempt to stop the release of a movie mocking the dictator.

range air-to-surface bombs of the same type and two medium-range air-to-air missiles, according to Gilmore.

Future versions for the other service branches are planned to include a wider variety of weapons but still face extensive testing. The F-35's loiter time is not likely to improve due to its engine and design.

The A-10 Thunderbolt, also known as the Warthog, can remain over the battlefield for 90 minutes, carry at least four air-to-surface weapons and use its powerful nose cannon for close air support of ground forces, Gilmore testified.

"This [F-35 variant] reminds

me of something before the A-10 not something after the A-10," said Rep. Martha McSally, R-Ariz., a freshman lawmaker and former Warthog pilot.

McSally said she was concerned about the lack of capabilities with the first F-35 variant, saying that weapons payload, loiter time over the battlefield, and the ability to take a hit from an enemy are key to the A-10 success.

Congress is now weighing the purchase of more F-35 Lightning II aircraft as part of the 2016 defense budget. The Government Accountability Office warned Tuesday that it may be a risky move due to the large

amount of testing still needed to be completed to field future variants.

Many lawmakers are frustrated with the delays, cost overruns and technical problems but believe the fifth generation fighter jet is needed to retain American air superiority in the coming decades.

Rep. Loretta Sanchez, D-Calif., said some critics have called for the costly development project to be scrapped.

"However, we are past that decision point. We just need to make this program work," she said.

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Militants seize 3 Iraqi villages

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — The Islamic State group launched an offensive in Iraq's western Anbar province on Wednesday, capturing three villages near the provincial capital of Ramadi and forcing villagers to flee from their homes as fierce clashes were underway between the extremists and government troops, residents said.

The militants' push comes after the Islamic State was dealt a major blow earlier this month, when Iraqi troops routed the group from Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's hometown. Wednesday's fighting could also further threaten Ramadi, 70 miles west of Baghdad. The city is mostly held by government forces but militants control some parts of it, mainly on the outskirts.

In a dawn advance, Islamic State extremists seized the villages of Sjariyah, Albu-Ghanim and Soufiya, which had also been under government control until now, the residents said.

DOD to exhume, ID some victims of Pearl Harbor

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The remains of an estimated 388 sailors and Marines, buried in a Honolulu cemetery as unknowns, will be exhumed and identified by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency's lab in Hawaii, officials said Tuesday.

The servicemembers died on the USS Oklahoma during the Japanese surprise attack on Oahu on Dec. 7, 1941, but the commingled remains were unidentifiable at the time and buried in numerous caskets at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, also known as the Punchbowl cemetery.

The disinterment process is expected to begin in three to six weeks, DPAA spokeswoman Lt. Col. Melinda Morgan said. The DOD has required that the identifications be made within five years of exhumation.

The move to exhume the Oklahoma remains is somewhat of an about-face for the

Defense Department, which last year sent a letter to family members saying the Navy opposed disinterment.

The task is the first major undertaking by the newly formed DPAA. Last year, then-Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel ordered the merger of several missing in action accounting agencies into a new single entity after an inspector general's report described mismanagement and waste.

Also on Tuesday, Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Work announced a "broader" DOD disinterment policy that will apply to all unidentified human remains from the Punchbowl cemetery and other U.S. military cemeteries.

The new policy calls for the following thresholds to be met before proceeding with disinterment:

■ In cases where remains are commingled, research must indicate that at least 60 percent of the servicemembers associated with the group can be individu-

ally identified.

■ For individual unknowns, at least a 50 percent likelihood of making an identification must be determined before disinterment.

The new policy calls for the DOD to meet those thresholds by conducting the necessary research to determine the list of possible missing servicemembers who could be among the unknowns, collecting family DNA for comparison to the remains, obtaining servicemembers' medical and dental records, and possessing and using "the scientific and technological ability and capacity to identify the personnel in a timely manner."

The DPAA will coordinate the Oklahoma disinterments with the Department of Veterans Affairs, which administers the Punchbowl, where 2,760 unknown servicemembers are buried.

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Survivors from S. Korean ferry feel guilt, sadness

The Associated Press

ANSAN, South Korea — "Field Trip" is still written in big letters on a calendar hanging on Yang Jeong-won's old classroom wall.

The letters cover four days in April last year and mark one of the highlights of the year — a trip, by ferry, to a southern resort island. The sight still manages to shock Yang, one of the few students to survive a disaster that continues to horrify South Korea.

Once heavy fog cleared, the Sewol, a 6,852-ton ferry, set off with 476 people on board,

including 325 students and 14 teachers from Danwon High School.

On the morning of April 16, 2014, the ferry listed, flipped upside down and sank. More than 300 people died. Yang, wearing a life jacket, managed to get to an exit and called out to rescuers.

A year later, Yang still can't believe what happened to her friends. She's now in her final year of high school, part of a senior class that shrank from 338 to just 88 students. She feels guilty about surviving.

"I came out of this alive, but my friends didn't," she said.

Ukraine fighting intensifies

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Fighting in eastern Ukraine has intensified in recent days, resulting in a "massive increase" in cease-fire violations and marking an escalation in the conflict between Russian-backed separatists and government troops, international monitors say.

Monitors with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe witnessed hundreds of violations to an already fragile cease-fire between Saturday and Monday, especially around rebel strongholds in Donetsk and Shyrokyne. In a report released Tuesday that details the long list of transgres-

sions, the OSCE said that small arms, artillery and mortar fire are all being deployed on the battlefield.

As tensions have escalated, monitors say the lack of security guarantees from rebels continues to prevent them from making a complete assessment of conditions. NATO officials have called on Russia to pressure rebels into granting access to observation points.

"It is very hard to see how any cease-fire can hold and be implemented if there is nobody there to supervise it," said Judy Dempsey, an analyst with the Brussels-based Carnegie Europe think tank.

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Tribe's Carrasco hit in face

The Associated Press

CLEVELAND — A split-second after throwing a pitch, Carlos Carrasco was face down in the dirt, motionless on the edge of the mound.

As Indians manager Terry Francona left the dugout to check his injured starter, he braced himself for the worst. At that moment, nothing mattered but his player's well-being.

"That's not a good feeling," Francona said. "When he's just laying there, man, that's scary."

Carrasco was struck in the face by a line drive in the first inning but only sustained a bruised jaw, and Chicago's Jose Quintana pitched six strong innings, leading the White Sox to a 4-1 win on Tuesday night.

Cleveland's No. 2 starter, Carrasco was knocked off his feet when Melky Cabrera — the second hitter — rocketed a shot up the middle that slammed the right side of the right-hander's face. Carrasco (1-1) luckily got a piece of his glove on the ball before it smashed him.

X-rays taken at Lutheran Hospital were negative, and Carrasco returned to Progressive Field during the game. Francona said Carrasco has a bruise, "a pretty good one," but was feeling well enough to do arm exercises.

"In the big picture, we dodged a really big bullet," Francona said. "Very fortunate."

The White Sox scored two runs in the first after Carrasco was injured and won their third straight. Chicago is 10-24 against Cleveland since 2013.

Quintana (1-0) allowed three hits, struck out six and improved to 4-0 in 10 starts against the Indians, whose left-handed heavy lineup is struggling against left-handers.

Jose Abreu hit his second homer in the fifth for a 4-1 lead, giving Quintana more cushion than he would need.

Cleveland managed just three hits and dropped its fourth straight.

With his concerned teammates looking on, Carrasco stayed down for several minutes. Cabrera, holding his batting helmet, came out to the side of the mound to check on Carrasco as well, and White Sox center fielder Adam Eaton dropped to one knee at second base in prayer.

"It was a very tough moment," said Cabrera, who was relieved to learn Carrasco was not hurt seriously. "It was real scary because it hit his face, but it's baseball. You can't control it once you hit the ball. I felt bad."

Francona said Carrasco was initially not very responsive when he was being checked on, but began to come around.

"There's a big relief, he knew where he was," Francona said. "Things that are more important than, 'Can he pitch in five days.' He's OK."

Red Sox 8, Nationals 7: Two errors by pitcher Blake Treinen allowed host Boston to erase a seventh-inning deficit as Washington struggled in the field for the second straight game.

Boston went ahead with three unearned runs without a hit in the inning, which included three errors.

Orioles 4, Yankees 3: Miguel Gonzalez (1-1) struck out a career-high 10 batters over seven innings, allowing one run and four hits for host Baltimore.

Tigers 2, Pirates 0: Shane Greene (2-0) allowed three hits over eight innings, including a pair of infield singles, as visiting Detroit rebounded from its first loss to improve to 7-1.

Mets 6, Phillies 5: Matt Harvey won his first home start in almost 20 months, and Lucas Duda hit a three-run double.

Harvey (2-0), back from Tommy John surgery, gave up three runs and five hits in six innings with eight strikeouts.

Rays 3, Blue Jays 2: Desmond Jennings hit a tiebreaking sacrifice fly in the eighth off Miguel Castro (0-1), helping visiting Tampa Bay to its fourth straight win.

Marlins 8, Braves 2: Giancarlo Stanton broke out of a slump with three hits and four RBIs as visiting Miami improved to

2-6.

Stanton, who signed a record 13-year, \$325 million contract in November, began the game hitting just .130 with three RBIs in 23 at-bats.

Reds 3, Cubs 2: Anthony DeSclafani (1-0) earned his first win for visiting Cincinnati, allowing two hits in seven scoreless innings.

Rangers 8, Angels 2: Robinson Chirinos had a career-high five RBIs with a home run and double.

Elvis Andrus homered in the sixth for host Texas. He had not homered in 481 at-bats since connecting May 21, the longest active homerless streak in the majors.

Athletics 4, Astros 0: Rookie Kendall Graveman (1-1) yielded four hits in 5¹/₃ innings for his first major league win, and four relievers for visiting Oakland completed the shutout.

Padres 5, Diamondbacks 1: Odrisamer Despaigne (1-0) pitched seven strong innings to help host San Diego.

Dodgers 6, Mariners 5: Howie Kendrick had a game-winning two-run single in the ninth against Seattle closer Fernando Rodney to lead host Los Angeles.

Rockies 4, Giants 1: Colorado third baseman Nolan Arenado made a sensational falling catch over the tarp in foul territory, Corey Dickerson had an RBI single among his three hits and the Rockies established their best road start in franchise history.

A sprinting Arenado crashed into the tarp and went over the rail along the left-field line while catching a popup by Gregor Blanco in the eighth. He immediately made the throw from his knees while still on the tarp then toppled to the dirt. Center fielder Charlie Blackmon followed with his own gem when he chased down a deep fly at the fence to rob pinch-hitter Buster Posey to end the inning.

Scott Oberg (1-0) pitched the fifth for the win in his major league debut as the Rockies moved to 5-0 on the road to start a season for the first time. They sent the reigning World Series champions to a fifth straight defeat.

Pacers still in chase

The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — C.J. Miles scored 25 points, George Hill added 24 and together they keyed a 7-2 spurt to open the second overtime Tuesday night as Indiana kept its playoff hopes alive with a 99-95 victory over Washington.

The Pacers (38-43) have won six straight and will make a fifth straight playoff appearance if they win at Memphis — or if Brooklyn loses to Orlando — on the final night of the regular season.

Martin Gortat and Bradley Beal each scored 19 points for the Wizards (46-35).

It was a grind for the Pacers, who struggled shooting all night and trailed 70-61 deficit with 7:07 left.

They rallied to take a late 79-75 lead, then Washington forced overtime. Indiana didn't lead again until Hill's mid-range jumper 23 seconds into the second overtime made it 87-85. And Hill finally sealed it with a 3 with 27.8 seconds left.

Clippers 112, Suns 101: Chris Paul's 22 points, including six three-pointers, led the Clippers over the injury-depleted Suns in L.A.'s final regular-season game before the NBA playoffs.

The visiting Clippers clinched the West's No. 3 seed with the win.

Blake Griffin hit his first six shots on his way to 20 points as Clippers coach Doc Rivers played his starters major minutes with a higher playoff seeding on the line. DeAndre Jordan had 13 points and 14 rebounds, setting the Clippers' single-season record for rebounds in a season.

The Suns were down to eight available players.

Celtics 95, Raptors 93: Jae Crowder hit an off-balance fall-away from deep on the right wing with .8 seconds left that secured the seventh seed in the Eastern Conference for the host Celtics.

Evan Turner and Avery Bradley each scored 14 points for Boston, which will face No. 2 seed Cleveland in the playoffs.

Rampone, Wambach, Brian make US women's roster

The Associated Press

U.S. women's national soccer team coach Jill Ellis thinks her World Cup roster includes a good mix of veterans and newcomers.

Among those on the 23-player squad announced Tuesday were Christie Rampone, preparing for her fifth World Cup, and 22-year-old Morgan Brian, getting ready for her first.

"I actually think we've got a really good balance," Ellis said. "How we're going to utilize players is part of the strategy going into this World Cup."

Seeking their third title and first since 1999, the Americans open World Cup play against Australia on June 8.

Rampone will turn 40 during the World Cup and is the oldest member of the team. Only four women have played in five World Cups: fellow American Kristine Lilly, Brazil's Formiga, Germany's Birgit Prinz and Japan's Homare Sawa.

Ellis said Rampone is a proven asset who is the second-fastest player on the team.

"I think that a player who has had that much experience, been in a captain's role, you just can't discount that," Ellis said.

Brian, the youngest player on the roster, played for Virginia in the women's College Cup final in early December before accompanying the U.S. team to Brazil for a tournament.

She kicked off this year by winning her second straight Hermann Trophy as the top women's college soccer player and was the first overall pick in the National Women's Soccer League draft by the Houston Dash.

"For me it's just been a whirlwind. I don't think it's going to sink in because you just think to yourself 'I'm on the United States women's national team playing in a World Cup,' and that's insane to me," Brian said. "It's cool to finally have that dream come true."

She joins seven other players making their World Cup roster debuts, including goalkeepers Ashlyn Harris and Alyssa Naeyer; defenders Whitney Engen, Julie Johnston and Meghan Klingenberg; and forwards Sydney Leroux and Christen Press.

They will join forwards Abby Wambach, Alex Morgan

and Amy Rodriguez; midfielders Lauren Holiday, Carli Lloyd, Megan Rapinoe, Shannon Boxx, Tobin Heath and Heather O'Reilly; and defenders Lori Chalupny, Ali Krieger, Kelley O'Hara and Becky Sauerbrunn.

The average age of the roster is 28, compared to just over 27 for the 2011 team.

Making her third World Cup roster was Hope Solo, who was suspended for 30 days in January after her husband was arrested for driving under the influence while in a U.S. Soccer Federation van during a team training camp. Solo also was in the van.

Featuring an expanded field of 24 teams, this year's World Cup will be played in six Canadian cities from June 6 through July 5. The top two nations in each of six groups advance to the round of 16 along with the top four third-place teams.

The United States is part of Group D with Australia, perennial African champion Nigeria, and Sweden. The Americans' opener against Australia is set for June 8 in Winnipeg, Manitoba.



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Ex-NFL star convicted of murder

The Associated Press

FALL RIVER, Mass. — Former New England Patriots star Aaron Hernandez was convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison Wednesday in a deadly late-night shooting, sealing the downfall of an athlete who once had a \$40 million contract and a standout career ahead of him.

Hernandez, 25, looked to his right, pursed his lips and sat down after the jury forewoman pronounced him guilty in the slaying of Odin Lloyd, a 27-year-old landscaper and amateur weekend football player who was dating the sister of Hernandez's fiancée. The conviction carried a mandatory sentence of life without parole and automatically triggers an appeal to Massachusetts' highest court.

Hernandez's mother, Terri, and his fiancée, Shayanna Jenkins, cried and gasped when they heard the verdict, and Lloyd's mother also cried. Jenkins wept loudly on his mother's shoulder. Hernandez, his eyes red, mouthed to them: "Be strong. Be strong."

The former football pro was also found guilty on weapons charges. The jury deliberated for 36 hours over seven days before rendering its verdict.

For reasons that were never made clear to the jury, Lloyd was shot six times in the middle of the night on June 17, 2013, in a deserted industrial park near Hernandez's home in North Attleborough.

Police almost immediately zeroed in on Hernandez because they found in Lloyd's pocket the key to a car the NFL player had rented. Within hours of Hernandez's arrest, the Patriots cut the former Pro Bowl athlete, who was considered one of the top tight ends in the game.

Prosecutors presented a wealth of evidence that Hernandez was with Lloyd at the time he was killed, including home security video from Hernandez's mansion, witness testimony and cellphone records that tracked Lloyd's movements.

Hernandez also faces '12 double murder charges

The Associated Press

FALL RIVER, Mass. — Former New England Patriots player Aaron Hernandez has a long legal road ahead, even after being convicted of a 2013 murder charge.

Hernandez is charged in a 2012 double killing in Boston, accused in the drive-by shooting of two men he felt disrespected him at a nightclub. Hernandez has pleaded not guilty to two counts of murder in that case.

Hernandez was found guilty Wednesday of first-degree murder in the 2013 shooting of Odin Lloyd. Lloyd, who was dating the sister of Hernandez's fiancée, was found shot six times in an industrial park less than a mile from Hernandez's home in North Attleborough.

Separately, in Boston, Hernandez is charged with shooting Daniel de Abreu and Safiro Furtado after an encounter at the nightclub Cure.

According to prosecutors, de Abreu accidentally bumped into him at a nightclub, spilling Hernandez's drink. Hernandez told a friend he thought the man was "trying" him, and surveillance video outside the club showed Hernandez pacing while his friend tried to calm him down.

Later, Hernandez drove around until he saw the men get in a car, followed them and shot at them from a silver SUV at a stop light, prosecutors said. A third man in their car also was shot but survived.

About six weeks after that shooting, Hernandez signed a five-year, \$40 million contract with the Patriots, and he went on to play for another season before Lloyd was killed. He was cut from the team soon after being arrested in Lloyd's killing in June 2013.

The judge in the Lloyd case barred prosecutors from telling jurors about the Boston double killing.

Suffolk Superior Court Judge Jeffrey Locke has not set a date for the Boston trial after delaying it until the Lloyd case was over.

Hernandez also faces civil lawsuits from the families of the men he is accused of killing. And he was sued by Alexander Bradley, a former friend who says Hernandez shot him in the face and left him for dead in an industrial park in Florida after arguing with him in February 2013.

Wallace and Carlos Ortiz, saying his client was a "23-year-old kid" who witnessed a shocking crime and didn't know what to do. Wallace and Ortiz will stand trial later.

Prosecutors have suggested Lloyd may have been killed because he knew too much about Hernandez's alleged involvement in a deadly 2012 drive-by shooting in Boston. But they were not allowed to tell the jury that because the judge said it was speculation.

As a result, they never offered a motive beyond saying Hernandez appeared angry with Lloyd at a nightclub two nights before the killing.

Hernandez faces further legal trouble: He is awaiting trial on murder charges in the drive-by shooting. He is accused of gunning down two men over a spilled drink at a nightclub.

In the Lloyd killing, the defense argued that investigators fixated on Hernandez because of his celebrity and conducted a shoddy investigation in their zeal to confirm their suspicions.

Prosecutors said Hernandez organized the killing, summoned his two friends to help carry it out and drove Lloyd and the others to the secluded spot in the industrial park. During closing arguments, prosecutors also accused Hernandez of pulling the trigger, though under the law it was not necessary to prove who fired the shots to convict him.

Security video from inside Hernandez's home showed him holding what appeared to be a gun less than 10 minutes after Lloyd was killed. The surveillance system also captured Hernandez, Wallace and Ortiz relaxing at his home hours after Lloyd was shot, hanging out in the basement "man cave," lounging by the pool and cuddling Hernandez's baby daughter.

Hernandez, a native of Bristol, Conn., was an All-American out of the University of Florida who was drafted by the Patriots in the fourth round in 2010.

Hernandez's lawyer, James Sultan, acknowledged for the first time during closing arguments that Hernandez was there

when Lloyd was killed. But the attorney pinned the shooting on two of Hernandez's friends, Ernest

Return of Tarasenko, Steen solidifies Blues

The Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — The St. Louis Blues played it close to the vest while Vladimir Tarasenko and Alexander Steen were out with injuries.

While waiting for one of the league's top goal scorers and one of the best two-way players to heal, they won a pair of tight 2-1 victories over rival Chicago.

"We were forced to do it," coach Ken Hitchcock said. "Injuries forced us to change and we had to play a more territorial game and check harder."

Now, the Central Division champions can have it their way.

The No. 2 seeds in the Western Conference will still roll four lines with a game that seeks to wear down the opposition in their first-round series against the Minnesota Wild that starts Thursday night, but it's easier done with skill on your side. Tarasenko scored 37 goals, led the team in scoring and doesn't need much space. Steen, second in scoring, is relentless.

"They've got guys that play hard and play the system, but then to have those guys you know they can be game-changers," Wild forward Zach Parise said. "You

have to know where they are on the ice."

Tarasenko missed five games and Steen six, both with undisclosed lower-body injuries. They dazzled playing on the same line when they returned in time for the regular-season finale against Minnesota. The timing was perfect on Steen's feed across the ice for a goal by Tarasenko and Steen also set up Jori Lehtera with an on-target backhand pass.

That kind of play means some peace of mind for a franchise that's had trouble this time of the year.

"You don't want to find out about yourself in the playoffs," Hitchcock said. "That's not a good feeling because you're trying to feel your way back and the game is at this furious pace. We gave them a lot of minutes, we played them in a lot of different situations. They were comfortable."

Steen is durable, leading the team in shifts per game, and he leads the team in power play points and assists. Last season he became a star with 20 goals in the first 24 games, trailing only Hall of Famer Brett Hull in franchise history.

Tarasenko is a dynamic scorer with speed and a signature power move to his left that buys time to get off a shot that goalies have trouble reading.

Red Wings' future uncertain

The Associated Press

DETROIT — Mike Babcock is in the final year of his contract, Henrik Zetterberg and Pavel Datsyuk aren't getting any younger — and Detroit has not advanced past the second round of the playoffs since 2009.

If any of that is weighing on the Red Wings, they aren't admitting it.

"It's our job to be ready to go in Game 1," Babcock said. "We'll have had significant time to prepare, whoever's available health-wise is going to play, and we expect to win."

Babcock is in his 10th season as Detroit's coach, and if he decides to test the open market after this season, he'd probably find a fair number of suitors. That's just one element of uncertainty facing the Red Wings as they enter their first-round series against Tampa Bay.

A late-season slide has left them looking like an underdog against the Lightning, and in a city accustomed to excellence on the ice, Detroit's lack of playoff success in recent years is noteworthy.

Babcock already made one big move this week, announcing that 23-year-old Petr Mrazek will start Game 1 in goal instead of Jimmy Howard on Thursday night in Tampa, Fla.

Youngsters such as Tomas Tatar and Gustav Nyquist have emerged to help the Red Wings extend their streak to 24 straight seasons in the playoffs, but it's veterans Zetterberg and Datsyuk — ages 34 and 36 — who still paced the team in scoring in 2014-15.

A lengthy run in the postseason this year would certainly make Detroit's long-term prospects seem brighter, no matter what the coaching staff and roster look like going forward.

Bruins fire Chiarelli after missing playoffs

BOSTON — The Boston Bruins fired general manager Peter Chiarelli on Wednesday, days after missing the playoffs for the first time in eight years and just four seasons after the franchise won its first Stanley Cup title since 1972.

The statement from the team said coach Claude Julien and the rest of his staff "will remain in place at this time."

The Bruins returned to the Stanley Cup Finals in 2013, and last year they had the best regular-season record in the league.

But this year they were eliminated from the playoff race on the final day of the regular season.

The Associated Press