

Chinese forces still active near Taiwan

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

A large contingent of Chinese aircraft and warships remained active Tuesday in the waters around Taiwan, despite the official conclusion of their three-day exercise around the island, Taiwan's Defense Ministry said.

Taiwan's military reported 91 Chinese aircraft and a dozen vessels operating in the Taiwan Strait and elsewhere near the island at 6 a.m. Tuesday. Taiwanese forces continued to monitor the situation with their own aircraft, ships and missile systems, according to a series of tweets from the Taiwan Ministry of National Defense.

Beijing on Saturday began the drills, dubbed Joint Sword, which included live-fire exercises, simulated strikes on Taiwanese targets and scores of fighter jets, bombers, helicopters and warships active in the waters and skies around Taiwan.

China's Defense Ministry intended the drills to be a "serious warning against the 'Taiwan independence' separatist forces colluding with external forces and provocations,"

the ministry said Saturday, referring to Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen's meeting with House Speaker Kevin McCarthy in California last week.

Beijing considers self-governing Taiwan to be a breakaway province that must be reunited with the mainland, possibly by force.

China Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin, at a Monday news conference, repeated the defense ministry's warning and said Joint Sword was a "necessary move to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity."

Tsai in a Facebook post Monday night said China used her visit with McCarthy as a pretense to "launch military exercises to cause instability in Taiwan and the region."

Taiwan's military "will continue to hold their positions and defend the country," and the island's defense minister, Chiu Kuocheng, has been "fully authorized" to "respond in accordance with military expertise," Tsai said in the same post.

Of the Chinese forces still active in the region on Tuesday, 54 aircraft crossed the

median line of the Taiwan Strait from the southwest and southeast, according to tweets by Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense, and eight vessels remained in the waters around Taiwan as of 11 a.m.

The aircraft and warships matched the ministry's report from the previous day, which identified 91 aircraft and 12 vessels operating in the area as of 6 p.m. Monday.

The number of Chinese forces active around Taiwan on Monday and Tuesday were the highest ever recorded, surpassing the previous high of 71 aircraft and nine vessels reported on Dec. 25, according to an analysis by the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

A series of sorties from J-15 fighter jets from the Chinese aircraft carrier Shandong marked the first time those aircraft entered Taiwan's air defense identification zone, according to the analysis. Tsai's meeting with McCarthy, and her subsequent meeting with a U.S. delegation in Taipei on Saturday, spurred a variety of other reactions from Beijing beyond Joint Sword.

DOD: Leak of documents a 'very serious' security risk

By DOUG G. WARE
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The recent leak online of U.S. documents about the Ukraine war and sensitive information about other countries has created a serious national security risk, the Pentagon said Monday.

The first discovery that some documents were revealed on social media sites happened last week, but it was reported during the weekend that more information was leaked than originally realized. The documents included information about various issues, including Ukraine's defense efforts against Russian forces and intelligence efforts relating to some American allies.

"We are still investigating how this happened," Chris Meagher, assistant to the secretary of defense for public affairs, told reporters Monday afternoon. "These [documents] are highly classified and contain sensitive information. I would like to highlight that they present a very serious risk to national security."

He said the Defense Department is taking every step available to mitigate the damage of the leaks and is reviewing how such intelligence is distributed, and who sees it.

The leak of Ukraine documents was first reported Thursday by The New York Times, and the following day more documents related to non-Ukraine information were found on social media sites. Those records included intelligence gathering on U.S. allies such as South Korea and Israel. Some of the information was posted weeks ago.

Meagher said the Justice Department has launched a criminal investigation to determine who posted the documents, and a separate review is being conducted by the Defense Department and other federal agencies to assess the leak's impact on the United States and allies and partners. None of the documents posted online are high-quality scans, but rather they are photos taken of the physical papers.

While Meagher didn't say all the documents posted online are authentic, he did say

some of it appears to "contain sensitive and highly classified material." He also said some of the images appear to be altered.

"We are not going to get into the validity of the purported documents posted online, but a Pentagon team continues to review and assess the veracity of the photographed documents," he said.

Meagher also did not say how many documents are involved, which ones might have been doctored, who had access to them or whether U.S. officials have apologized to allied countries that were included in some of the records.

"I'm not going to get into those details," he said. "Regardless of the situation, any leak of classified information is deeply damaging and hurts trust."

The Pentagon underscored it's been communicating with allies, partners and congressional lawmakers about the leaked materials.

"Those conversations are underway and ongoing and happening at high levels throughout government," Meagher said.

Key countries, revelations from DOD leak

The Washington Post

A leak of classified U.S. military documents has offered a glimpse of not only how the United States gathers intelligence, but also what it thinks about countries across the world. The documents, which number in the dozens and were leaked over a month ago on Discord, a chat service popular with gamers, mostly focus on the war in Ukraine, offering frank assessments of the capabilities of both the Ukrainian and Russian militaries.

Still, the countries included in the documents range far beyond the immediate participants in the conflict, with geopolitical giants like China and smaller regional nations like Haiti bearing mention.

■ Ukraine

The documents primarily concern Ukraine's military strength after a year of heavy fighting, pointing to weak spots in Ukrainian air defenses and potential problems with ammunition supplies.

Among the worrying details in the documents: One late February snapshot designed for the Defense Department's Joint Staff stated that Ukraine's "ability to provide medium range air defense to protect the [front lines] will be completely reduced by May 23. UKR assessed to withstand 2-3 more wave strikes" from attacking Russian missiles and drones.

Ukrainian officials have publicly downplayed the leaks. Privately, though, some have been angered that vulnerabilities shared with the U.S. have now become public.

■ Russia

Several documents offer further evidence that the U.S. intelligence community has infiltrated the Russian military to a considerable degree. In some cases, the U.S. has been able to warn Ukraine of impending attacks, the documents suggest. The documents also make reference to internal planning by the GRU, Russia's military intelligence agency, and the Wagner Group, the private military contractor crucial to Russia's war effort, suggesting both are compromised by the U.S.

Some of the documents also provide more detail about alarming events. One report states that a Russian fighter jet nearly shot down a British surveillance plane on Sept. 29 off the coast of Crimea — an incident that could have been far more dangerous than was publicly acknowledged at the time and

fits into a pattern of harassment by Russian air forces in the area.

Russia has begun analyzing the documents, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Monday, adding that they appeared to be "quite interesting." Some pro-Russian military bloggers have warned against reading too much into the leak, arguing without evidence that it could be a U.S. disinformation campaign.

■ China

The documents included analysis on wide-ranging risks posed by China, including Beijing's willingness to send lethal aid to Russia and details of an experimental hypersonic weapons test conducted by China in February.

One assessment published in the leak said a Ukrainian attack on Russian soil using NATO weaponry could draw Beijing into the war. It said that a Ukrainian hit on a significant strategic target — or senior leader — in Russia, may act as "further justification China to send lethal aid" to Moscow.

Another document included details of a test conducted by Beijing of one of its advanced experimental missiles — the DF-27 hypersonic glide vehicle — on Feb. 25. It said the vehicle flew for 12 minutes across a range of 1,302 miles, and that it possessed a "high probability" of penetrating U.S. ballistic missile defense systems.

One section of the leaked documents said British State Secretary for Defense Ben Wallace had tasked his ministry to explore plans to deploy one of its two naval aircraft carriers to the Indo Pacific, potentially in cooperation with Asian allies or the U.S. The document weighed potential negative reactions from Beijing.

One leaked document said a Chinese state-backed engineering firm was in negotiations in 2022 with Nicaragua's government for the development of a deep sea port that raised military concerns. It said the Nicaraguan government "probably would consider offering Beijing naval access in exchange for economic investment."

Other information shared in leaks included details of a newly certified Chinese warship and a rocket launch in March that delivered two satellites expected to enhance Beijing's military mapping capabilities.

■ Egypt

One document dated Feb. 17 summarizes purported conversations between President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and senior Egyptian

military officials which referenced plans to supply Russia with artillery rounds and gunpowder. In the document, Sisi instructs the officials to keep the production and shipment of the rockets secret "to avoid problems with the West."

The document quotes a person identified as Salah al-Din as saying he would "order his people to work shift work if necessary because it was the least Egypt could do to repay Russia for unspecified help earlier." The document does not make it clear what the earlier Russian help was.

■ Iran

Iran has long been a top target for U.S. espionage, and the CIA has notched notable successes in penetrating the Islamic Republic's nuclear program and security apparatus in the past. The leaked documents suggest U.S. agencies are still able to routinely monitor at least some of Iran's secret weapons activity, as well as internal deliberations by top Iranian officials.

One report with a top-secret label describes what appear to be private discussions among senior Iranian leaders over how to spin an upcoming visit by Rafael Grossi, chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The Iranians are seen debating whether to allow domestic news media coverage of the visit, and if so, how to shape the coverage to benefit the government. Grossi was traveling to Iran in part to confront Iranian officials over what the IAEA has suspected are undeclared facilities where nuclear weapons research occurred in the past.

A separate document, sourced to intercepted communications and satellite photos, describes advanced preparations by Iran for testing a new space launch missile and satellite.

The documents hint at U.S. monitoring of the IAEA itself, as a further means of gaining insight into Iran's nuclear efforts.

■ South Korea

One document reports South Korea's National Security Council in early March "grappled" with a U.S. request that the country send artillery ammunition to Ukraine. Seoul was concerned the request could anger Moscow, the report said, citing signals intelligence.

South Korea's presidential office said Monday that it would seek "appropriate measures" from the U.S. if the leaks were verified.

Ky. shooter livestreamed bank attack

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — A Louisville bank employee armed with a rifle opened fire at his workplace Monday morning, killing five people — including a close friend of Kentucky's governor — while livestreaming the attack on Instagram, authorities said.

Police arrived as shots were still being fired inside Old National Bank and killed the shooter in an exchange of gunfire, Louisville Metro Police Department Chief Jacquelyn Gwinn-Villaruel said. The city's mayor, Craig Greenberg, called the attack "an evil act of targeted violence."

Police Tuesday said the shooter bought the AR-15 rifle legally from a local dealership on April 4 and targeted certain people in the attack.

The shooting, the 15th mass killing in the country this year, comes just two weeks after a former student killed three chil-

dren and three adults at a Christian elementary school in Nashville, Tenn., about 160 miles to the south. That state's governor and his wife also had friends killed in that shooting.

In Louisville, the chief identified the shooter as Connor Sturgeon, 25, who she said was livestreaming during the attack.

"That's tragic to know that that incident was out there and captured," she said.

Meta, the company that owns Facebook and Instagram, said in a statement that it had "quickly removed the livestream of this tragic incident this morning."

Social media companies have imposed tougher rules over the past few years to prohibit violent and extremist content. They have set up systems to remove posts and streams that violate those restrictions, but shocking material like the Louisville shooting continues to slip through the cracks, prompting

lawmakers and other critics to lash out at the technology industry for slipshod safeguards and moderation policies.

A man who fled the building during the shooting told WHAS-TV that the shooter opened fire with a long rifle in a conference room in the back of the building's first floor.

"Whoever was next to me got shot — blood is on me from it," he told the news station, pointing to his shirt. He said he fled to a break room and shut the door.

Nine people, including two police officers, were treated for injuries, University of Louisville Hospital spokeswoman Heather Fountaine said in an email. One of the wounded, identified as Deana Eckert, 57, later died, police said Monday night.

One of the wounded officers, Nickolas Wilt, 26, graduated from the police academy on March 31. He was in critical condition after being shot in the

head and having surgery, the police chief said. At least three patients had been discharged.

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear said he lost one of his closest friends in the shooting.

"Tommy Elliott helped me build my law career, helped me become governor, gave me advice on being a good dad," said Beshear, his voice shaking with emotion. "He's one of the people I talked to most in the world, and very rarely were we talking about my job. He was an incredible friend."

Also killed in the shooting were Josh Barrick, Jim Tutt and Juliana Farmer, police said.

As part of the investigation, police descended on the neighborhood where the suspect lived, about 5 miles south of the shooting. The street was blocked as federal and local officers talked to residents. One home was cordoned off with caution tape.

Democrats urge chief justice to probe Thomas vacations

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democrats on the Senate Judiciary Committee called on U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts on Monday to open an investigation into the undisclosed acceptance of luxury trips taken by Justice Clarence Thomas and his wife that were paid for by a Republican megadonor.

The letter said the committee plans to hold a hearing in coming days regarding the "need to restore confidence in the Supreme Court's ethical standards." And if the Supreme Court does not deal with the issue on its own, the committee will consider voting on legislation. Such a measure would also need support from the Republican-led House to become law.

"But you do not need to wait for Congress to act to undertake your own investigation into the report-

ed conduct and to ensure that it cannot happen again," the 11 Democratic senators wrote to Roberts. "We urge you to do so."

The nonprofit investigative journalism organization ProPublica reported Thursday that Thomas, who has been a justice for more than 31 years, has for more than two decades accepted luxury trips from Republican donor Harlan Crow nearly every year. Thomas, 74, and his wife, Virginia, have traveled on Crow's yacht and private jet as well as stayed at his private resort in New York's Adirondack Mountains, ProPublica reported. A 2019 trip to Indonesia the story detailed could have cost more than \$500,000 had Thomas chartered the plane and yacht himself.

The senators said Thomas' acceptance of favors from Crow was known more than a decade ago.

Mother of Va. 6-year-old who shot teacher indicted

Associated Press

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. — A grand jury in Virginia has indicted the mother of a 6-year-old boy who shot his teacher on charges of child neglect and failing to secure her handgun in the family's home, a prosecutor said Monday.

A grand jury sitting in Newport News charged the boy's 25-year-old mother with felony child neglect and a misdemeanor charge of endangering a child by reckless storage of a firearm, Commonwealth's Attorney Howard Gwynn said in a news release.

The Associated Press isn't naming the mother to shield the identity of her son.

The boy shot first-grade teacher Abby Zwerner on Jan. 6 inside her classroom at Richneck Elementary School. Police said the

boy's mother legally purchased the gun. Her attorney, James Ellenson, has said the gun was secured on a top shelf in her closet and had a trigger lock.

Ellenson said Monday that his client plans to turn herself in later this week. He did not comment on the indictments, which were first reported by the Daily Press.

Gwynn said his office has petitioned the court to impanel a special grand jury to continue an investigation into any security issues that may have contributed to the shooting.

"The safety and security of Newport News students is of utmost importance. The Special Grand Jury will investigate to determine whether additional charges against additional persons are justified by the facts and the law," Gwynn said.

Panel reinstates lawmaker ousted from Tenn. House

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — One of the two Black Democrats who were expelled last week from the GOP-led Tennessee House was reinstated Monday after Nashville's governing council voted to send him straight back to the Legislature.

The unanimous vote by the Nashville Metropolitan Council took only a few minutes to restore Rep. Justin Jones to office just four days after Republicans stripped him of his seat.

Moments later, Jones marched to the Capitol several blocks away. He took the oath of office on the steps and entered the building while supporters sang "This Little Light of Mine."

A loud round of applause erupted as Jones walked into the chamber with Democratic Rep. Gloria Johnson, who was also targeted for expulsion but spared by one vote.

"To the people of Tennessee, I stand with you," Jones said in his first statement on the House floor. "We will continue to be your voice here. And no expulsion, no attempt to silence us will stop us, but it will only galvanize and strengthen our movement.

And we will continue to show up in the people's house.

"Power to the people," he shouted, to cheers. Republican House Speaker Cameron Sexton told Jones' supporters in the galleries to "please refrain from disrupting the proceedings."

Republicans banished Jones and fellow lawmaker Justin Pearson over their role in a gun-control protest on the House floor in the aftermath of a deadly school shooting.

Pearson could be reappointed Wednesday at a meeting of the Shelby County Commission.

The expulsions on Thursday made Tennessee a new front in the battle for the future of American democracy and propelled the ousted lawmakers into the national spotlight. In the span of a few days, the two had raised thousands of campaign dollars and the Tennessee Democratic Party had received a new jolt of support from across the United States.

Jones' appointment is an interim basis. Special elections for the seats will take place in the coming months. Jones and Pearson have said they plan to run in the special election.

Biden ends COVID-19 emergency

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. national emergency to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic ended Monday as President Joe Biden signed a bipartisan congressional resolution to bring it to a close after three years — weeks before it was set to expire alongside a separate public health emergency.

The national emergency allowed the government to take sweeping steps to respond to the virus and support the country's economic, health and welfare systems. Some of the emergency measures have already been successfully wound-down, while others are still being phased out. The public health emergency, which underpins tough immigration restrictions at the U.S.-Mexico border, is set to expire on May 11.

The White House issued a one-line statement Monday saying Biden had signed the measure behind closed doors, after having publicly opposed the resolution, though not to the point of issuing a veto. More than 197 Democrats in the House voted against it when the GOP-controlled chamber passed it in February. Biden let lawmakers know last month that he would sign it.

The administration said once it became clear that Congress was moving to speed up the end of the national emergency, it worked to expedite agency preparations for a return to normal procedures. Among the changes: The Department of Housing and Urban Development's COVID-19 mortgage forbearance program is set to end at the end of May, and the Department of Veterans Affairs is now returning to a requirement for in-home visits to determine eligibility for caregiver assistance.

States stock abortion meds after ruling

Associated Press

BOSTON — A growing number of states led by Democratic governors are stockpiling doses of drugs used in medication abortions, amid fears that a court ruling could restrict access to the most commonly used method of abortion in the United States.

Massachusetts purchased enough doses of the drug mifepristone — one of two drugs used in combination to end pregnancies — to last for more than a year, Democratic Gov. Maura Healey said Monday. California has secured an emergency stockpile of up to 2 million pills of misoprostol, the other drug used in abortion medication, Gov. Gavin Newsom, also a Democrat, announced.

And in Washington state, Democratic Gov. Jay Inslee announced last week that the state purchased 30,000 doses of the generic version of mifepristone — which he said is enough to last the state's residents three years. The shipment arrived in late March.

"Abortion is still legal and accessible here in California, and we won't stand by as fundamental freedoms are stripped away," Newsom said Friday.

The actions come as U.S. District Judge Mat-

thew Kacsmaryk, a Trump appointee in Amarillo, Texas, overruled decades of scientific approval Friday and put on hold federal approval of mifepristone.

The judge stayed his ruling for a week so federal authorities could file a challenge.

The Biden administration slammed the ruling and on Monday appealed the decision, saying it would thwart the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's scientific judgment and "severely harm women, particularly those for whom mifepristone is a medical or practical necessity."

Adding to the confusion was a second opinion also released on Friday by District Judge Thomas O. Rice, an Obama appointee, directing U.S. authorities not to make any changes that would restrict access to the drug in at least 17 states where Democrats sued in an effort to protect availability.

Healey said the Kacsmaryk ruling threatens access to the medication even in states supportive of abortion rights like Massachusetts.

"It harms patients, undermines medical expertise and takes away freedom. It's an attempt to punish, to shame, to marginalize women. It's unnecessary," Healey said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man not guilty in slaying now arrested in another

TX HOUSTON — A Houston man declared innocent in 2021 after being convicted in a fatal stabbing and serving seven years in prison has been charged with murder in the shooting of a fellow motorist, police said.

Lydell Grant, 46, is accused of killing Edwin Arevalo, 33, following a minor traffic collision, Houston police said. Police said Grant got out of his vehicle, shot Arvelo and then fled.

Grant was taken into custody, police said.

In 2012, Grant was convicted of killing Aaron Scheerhoorn, 28, who was stabbed outside a Houston bar in 2010. But Grant was declared innocent in 2021 by the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals after a new analysis of DNA found on the victim's fingernails.

Bank thief, 78: 'I didn't mean to scare you'

MO HARRISONVILLE — A 78-year-old woman with two past bank robbery convictions faces new charges after authorities allege she handed a teller a note that said "I didn't mean to scare you" during a recent Missouri heist.

Bonnie Gooch is jailed on \$25,000 bond after she was charged with one count of stealing or attempting to steal from a financial institution in the holdup in Pleasant Hill, The Kansas City Star reported.

She also was convicted of robbing a California bank in 1977 and one in the Kansas City suburb of Lee's Summit in 2020.

Court documents filed in Cass County in the latest case said the

robbery note demanded "13,000 small bills," adding "thank you sorry I didn't mean to scare you."

She smelled strongly of alcohol when officers stopped her less than 2 miles away, with cash scattered on the car's floorboard, prosecutors added.

1 killed, many hurt after boy, 13, crashes car

CA WOODLAND — One person was killed and nearly a dozen other people were injured in a fiery crash caused by a 13-year-old boy driving a stolen car trying to evade police in Northern California, authorities said.

The pursuit began when an officer tried to pull over the car and it sped away erratically in Woodland, police said. The car collided with two other cars at an intersection, causing at least two of the vehicles involved to catch fire, the Woodland Police Department said in a statement.

The 13-year-old was arrested on suspicion of two felonies, vehicular manslaughter with negligence and evading an officer causing injury, police said.

Church raises \$520K to erase medical bills

NE LINCOLN — A Nebraska church has raised more than \$520,000 to pay off the medical bills of residents in its neighborhood, ending the 14-month campaign on Easter Sunday.

An estimated 10,000 people contributed to the First-Plymouth Congregational Church effort, The Lincoln Journal Star reported. The effort came about after the Rev. Juan Carlos Huerfano took on outreach efforts at the Lincoln church, starting

something called justNeighbors. The ministry centered around community connection, helping neighbors with laundry, filling their gas tanks and providing health care to those without insurance.

Secretary sentenced for taking \$90K from church

AL MONTGOMERY — An Alabama woman has been sentenced to 18 months in federal prison after authorities said she stole nearly \$90,000 from a now-closed church where she worked as secretary, using some of the money for trips to casinos.

Carmen Ramer Davis, 59, of Opp, was sentenced after pleading guilty in November to eight counts of wire fraud, court records showed. Brooklyn Congregational Methodist Church in Coffee County closed because of financial hardship soon after the fraud was discovered in August 2019, and it has not reopened, according to a news release by Middle District of Alabama U.S. Attorney Sandra Stewart.

Prosecutors said Davis obtained a debit card for the church account without the knowledge of church leaders, and she used it to make fraudulent cash withdrawals and purchase items for herself. She also wrote checks from the church account to herself or made them out to cash, without permission.

Suit: State flouts prison solitary confinement rules

NY ALBANY — New York prison officials were accused in a lawsuit of subjecting people to prolonged solitary confinement in violation of a state law meant to limit the practice.

The New York Civil Liberties

Union and Prisoners' Legal Services of New York filed a class-action lawsuit in an Albany court claiming that the state routinely flouts limits on solitary confinement approved in 2021 by state lawmakers.

The state law limits solitary confinement in most cases to three consecutive days or six days in any given 30-day period. But prisoners can be confined alone for longer periods for specified "heinous and destructive" acts, such as injuring someone or acquiring a deadly weapon. In those cases, the "extended segregation" limit is 15 consecutive days or 20 days in a 60-day period. The lawsuit accuses prison officials of holding people in extended segregation even though they don't meet the narrow criteria spelled out in the law.

Workers who filed racial suit must pay legal fees

MO SPRINGFIELD — Two women who sued the Springfield school district over having to undergo mandatory racial equity training have been ordered to pay the district's legal fees.

U.S. District Judge Douglas Harpool ordered Jennifer Lumley and Brooke Henderson to pay the district \$312,869 in legal fees, The Springfield News-Leader reported.

Harpool ruled against the women in January after they claimed in their lawsuit that the training they were required to take in the 2020-21 school year violated their constitutional rights.

In his ruling, Harpool said the women, who still work for the district, had not shown they were harmed by the training.

— From wire reports

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Bruins' Pastrnak reaches lofty goal

Associated Press

David Pastrnak followed Brad Marchand's advice all the way to a career year.

Many years ago, not long after Pastrnak entered the NHL in 2014-15, Marchand told his Boston Bruins teammate, "You have to always aim 10 goals higher than you think you can get."

Pastrnak did just that, shooting for 60 goals this season. He knew 50 was a possibility, then on Sunday racked up a hat trick to reach 60 for the first time — the latest highlight in a stretch that has seen him carry the Bruins to the top of the league and the single-season victories record.

"Wasn't really thinking I would get there," Pastrnak said, acknowledging it wasn't for lack of belief. "I know what kind of player I am in this

league right now, and I came really close before COVID, so I knew I could do it. That helps with your mindset."

Three years after the pandemic halted his pursuit of 50 goals just shy at 48, Pastrnak joined Connor McDavid at the 60 mark. It's the first time two players have reached 60 goals in the same season since Pittsburgh Penguins teammates Mario Lemieux and Jaromir Jagr in 1995-96 — and it has been 30 years since two players on different teams have done it.

When Pastrnak finished off his three-goal game to get to 60, hats rained down in Philadelphia from the many Bruins fans in attendance who saluted the team for picking up its record-setting 63rd victory of the season.

It was only fitting that Pastr-

nak helped Boston make history while he was making his own.

"It's been a lot of fun, I'm not going to lie," he said. "It's definitely special to hit it in a game like this."

The Czech winger almost certainly will lose out to McDavid for the Hart Trophy as league MVP, but that's not taking away the Bruins' appreciation of what Pastrnak has accomplished so far. Coach Jim Montgomery said Pastrnak reached this milestone because of a combination of confidence, creativity and competitiveness.

"Those three C's exude from him," Montgomery said. "And then you combine that with an attitude of he's a team-first guy and he cares about and loves (playing for the Bruins)."

Good thing, too, because he's not going anywhere. Boston

last month signed Pastrnak to a \$90 million, eight-year contract through 2031 — the sixth-richest deal in NHL history.

Pastrnak during contract negotiations thought about how amazing it would be to play his career with one team, something that's becoming increasingly rare in a salary cap league. With that and the 60-goal mark now behind him, he and the Bruins, who have led the NHL all season, are turning their attention to the playoffs and the pursuit of the franchise's first Stanley Cup championship since 2011.

"Our focus each day is to get better each game and get prepared for playoffs," Pastrnak said. "Obviously the record is amazing, but we're building toward something bigger than the NHL record. That's our focus."

Capitals deal blow to Islanders' postseason hopes

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Ilya Sorokin allowed three goals on the first nine shots he faced behind a sloppy defense, and the New York Islanders' playoff hopes took a significant hit with a 5-2 loss to the Washington Capitals on Monday night.

The Islanders needed only to win out against opponents out of contention to return to the postseason after a one-year absence. After an uninspired effort that lacked the intensity and urgency the situation warranted, they'll need help to secure one of the two wild cards in the Eastern Conference with just one game left to play.

New York trails Florida by one point in the standings after the Panthers lost in overtime to Toronto. Pittsburgh is one point back but has two games left against the two worst teams in the NHL, Tuesday against Chicago and Thursday at Colum-

bus, while the Panthers have one remaining.

Stars 6, Red Wings 1: Joe Pavelski scored to reach 1,000 career points, Roope Hintz had a goal and three assists and visiting Dallas beat Detroit.

Pavelski, playing in his 1,248th game, became the 10th American-born player to reach the milestone when he tipped Miro Heiskanen's shot from the point. The Stars, who have won four straight, tied idle Colorado for the Central Division lead with two games remaining.

Maple Leafs 2, Panthers 1 (OT): John Tavares scored with 21.3 seconds remaining in overtime and visiting Toronto snapped Florida's six-game winning streak.

The Panthers managed to gain a point and moved closer to a playoff spot in the Eastern Conference. Florida has gone 6-0-1 since losing in Ottawa on March 27.

Jets 6, Sharks 2: Josh Morrissey had a goal and two assists as host Winnipeg moved closer to securing a playoff berth.

The Jets now have 93 points and can clinch the Western Conference's final wild-card berth by gaining at least a point in their final two games.

Senators 3, Hurricanes 2: Claude Giroux had two goals and an assist to reach 1,000 career points to lead host Ottawa.

Giroux became the 96th player to achieve the milestone. The 35-year-old entered the game needing two points to hit the momentous marker and took less than one period to make it happen.

Sabres 3, Rangers 2 (SO): Casey Mittelstadt scored the tying goal in the third period and got the deciding goal in the shootout to lead visiting Buffalo.

The Sabres are 7-1-1 in their last nine games to keep their slim playoff hopes alive. The

victory also gave Buffalo 40 wins in a season for the first time since the team won 43 games in 2010-11.

Wild 4, Blackhawks 2: Marcus Johansson scored two goals late in the third period, and short-handed Minnesota beat host Chicago.

Kraken 4, Coyotes 1: Jared McCann scored his 40th goal of the season and visiting Seattle reached the 100-point mark in its second NHL season.

Predators 3, Flames 2 (SO): Tommy Novak scored the deciding goal in the shootout and visiting Nashville preserved its playoff hopes.

Kings 3, Canucks 0: Joonas Korpisalo stopped 20 shots for his first shutout of the season and fourth of his career as host Los Angeles stopped a three-game losing streak.

Arthur Kaliyev, Vladislav Gavrikov and Drew Doughty scored for the Kings.

8 teams get new life in NBA play-in tournament

Associated Press

MIAMI — Getting to the play-in tournament probably wasn't the goal of any team when training camps opened back in September.

It does, however, beat the alternative.

There are 12 teams with playoff spots right now, 10 teams whose seasons are over — and eight teams with a second chance. The play-in tournament started Tuesday, with Atlanta going to Miami and Minnesota visiting the Los Angeles Lakers, with the winners going to the postseason.

Oklahoma City goes to New Orleans and Chicago visits Toronto on Wednesday for elimination games; loser goes home, winner moves on to face the loser of Tuesday's games in another

win-or-go-home contest.

"You have to embrace this new experience," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. "To the old heads in our locker room, each of us have experienced long NBA careers and not have had this opportunity. I think it's been great for the league. How harrowing this has been, the last six, eight weeks for 16 teams in the West and the East. It's just been great for competition and overall, it's been great for the league."

The NBA added it to boost end-of-season excitement, give more teams playoff hope — and discourage tanking. Dallas still had a chance at the play-in until its 81st game of the season on Friday, when it held several rotation players out and lost. The NBA is investigating the Mavericks' motivations there and if Dallas lost

to protect its draft odds.

The Heat were the No. 1 seed in the East last season and now need the play-in just to get back to the playoffs. But they're also playing perhaps their best basketball of the season — just like the Lakers, who went a West-best 16-7 after the All-Star break.

No team that has used the play-in tournament — Portland in 2020 in the bubble under a slightly different format; Boston, Washington, the Lakers and Memphis in 2021; Brooklyn, Atlanta, Minnesota and New Orleans last year — to reach the actual playoffs has ever won a first-round series.

But it still provides hope, and perhaps a shot in the arm for those who survive and advance.

"We're looking forward to it," Spoelstra said. "Our guys love

competition. And this has high stakes to it. And that's ultimately where you find out about yourself — when there's stakes to it, when there's consequences to it."

Even in Year 3 of this format, it still can be confusing to follow. Here's how it works:

■ No. 7 plays No. 8. The winner is in and gets the No. 7 seed for the playoffs. The loser has a second chance.

■ No. 9 plays No. 10. The loser's season is over. The winner moves on to face the loser of the 7 vs. 8 game.

■ The remaining teams (the 7-8 loser and the 9-10 winner) play at the higher seed, with the winner getting the No. 8 seed. The loser's season ends.

■ All six games either have a team qualifying for the playoffs, or getting eliminated, or both.

Boston heads to Fever as No. 1 overall pick in WNBA draft

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The Indiana Fever made the most of the first No. 1 draft pick in franchise history, selecting Aliyah Boston.

The South Carolina star had a stellar college career, leading the Gamecocks to a national championship her junior year, losing only nine games total and helping her team to three Final Four appearances. The 6-foot-5 Boston was a three-time Associated Press All-American and also the Player of the Year as a junior.

"It's really special, I'm thankful to God for putting me in this position," said the 21-year-old Boston, from the U.S. Virgin Islands. "Everyone in Indiana, they saw something in me, I'm ready to get there and get to work."

The Fever had the worst record in the league last season, going 5-31.

"Aliyah Boston will have an immediate impact on our franchise on and off the court," Fever GM Lin Dunn said. "We are excited to pair her with Kelsey (Mitchell) and NaLyssa (Smith) as we reload the Indiana Fever. We are very impressed with Aliyah's post skills as well as her natural leadership skills. This is a great day for our franchise!"

Boston, like many other players, have had to choose whether to return to college for a

fifth season because of the extra year granted for the coronavirus or turn pro. She decided to enter the WNBA Draft, joining 111 other players to declare.

"Everyone that has a COVID year has a tough choice," Boston said. "You could be somewhere you know the system. ... It took a lot of thought."

She was one of three South Carolina players taken in the first round. Laetitia Amihire went eighth to Atlanta and Zia Cooke 10th to Los Angeles. It's the 10th time that three players from the same team were drafted in the opening round, and the first since Oregon had three in 2020.

The Gamecocks also had two other players drafted, with Brea Beal going 24th to Minnesota and Victoria Saxton picked next by Indiana.

"It's an amazing experience really, because this group of girls have been through life together," Amihire said. "These four years haven't been only about basketball. Being able to be with them on one of our biggest nights is an amazing experience."

Minnesota took Diamond Miller of Maryland with the No. 2 pick, and Dallas drafted Maddy Siegrist of Villanova with the third pick. Big East Commissioner Val Ackerman, who was the WNBA's first president, sat with Siegrist.

The Wings also drafted UConn guard Lou Lopez Senechal two picks later. She had transferred to UConn after a stellar career at Fairfield.

"It feels surreal; really didn't think I'd be here," Senechal said. "I've come a long way, gone through a lot of challenges."

Stephanie Soares of Iowa State went fourth to Washington. The Mystics traded her to Dallas soon after selecting the 6-foot-7 center. Washington got back a first round pick in 2025 and second-round pick in 2024.

"It was a very interesting feeling," Soares said. "Pure excitement going to Washington, but now getting to go to Dallas. It's going to be a great next step to the journey."

Soares tore her ACL in January and will miss the upcoming WNBA season.

Stanford guard Haley Jones went sixth to Atlanta. Indiana's Grace Berger was drafted seventh by the Fever. She was the first Hoosiers player selected in the first round in school history.

Seattle took Tennessee's Jordan Horston ninth. Dallas chose Maryland's Abby Meyers with the 11th pick. Meyers started her career at Princeton before finishing with the Terrapins.

Minnesota closed out the first round taking French center Maïa Hirsch.

Rays extend win streak to 10 to start year

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — The Tampa Bay Rays became the first major league team since the 1987 Milwaukee Brewers to open the season with 10 straight wins, getting a solo homer from Brandon Lowe in the eighth inning to beat the Boston Red Sox 1-0 on Monday night.

The 1987 Brewers and 1982 Atlanta Braves share the major league record for the best start to a season at 13-0. The Rays are the seventh team since 1901 to begin the year with 10 or more wins.

"It's cool to be part of it," right fielder Luke Raley said,

Lowe homered for the third straight game, sending a 3-2, one-out pitch from Chris Martin (0-1) into the right-field stands. Lowe has nine RBIs over his last three games.

"This is the first night where it's kind of quiet offensively," Rays manager Kevin Cash said. "I kind of felt like at any given moment somebody could knock one out of the ballpark. Probably the right guy with Brandon."

Tampa Bay opener Jalen Beeks allowed one hit over two innings, and Josh Fleming gave

up one hit over the next four. After Garrett Cleavinger worked a perfect seventh, Colin Poche (1-0) worked out of bases-loaded, two-out jam in the eighth by striking out Rafael Devers.

Braves 5, Reds 4 (10): Sean Murphy hit a two-run homer in the 10th inning and host Atlanta recovered after blowing a two-run lead in the ninth to beat Cincinnati.

Murphy blasted the first pitch from Derek Law (0-2) to center field for his third hit of the game, driving in designated runner Austin Riley. Atlanta snapped a three-game skid.

Braves fill-in closer A.J. Minter blew a 3-1 lead in the ninth, wasting a strong start by rookie Bryce Elder, who allowed six hits in 6⅓ innings and departed with a 1-0 lead.

Rangers 11, Royals 2: Andrew Heaney tied an AL record by striking out nine consecutive batters, Adolis Garcia hit a grand slam and host Texas routed Kansas City.

Heaney (1-1) began the streak by fanning Matt Duffy and Nicky Lopez to end the first inning, then struck out the side in the second and third innings. After Salvador Perez went down swinging leading off the

fourth, Duffy ended the streak with a flyout to right field.

Mets 5, Padres 0: Max Scherzer shut down San Diego for five innings, rebounding from his postseason flop last year, and host New York won the playoff rematch.

Jeff McNeil and Francisco Lindor each laced a two-run double as the Mets finally beat Yu Darvish (0-1) for the first time. Eduardo Escobar added a sacrifice fly, and four relievers finished a two-hitter.

Guardians 3, Yankees 2: Shane Bieber shook off a rough first inning to pitch seven, and Josh Naylor hit a tiebreaking sacrifice fly to lift host Cleveland past New York.

Phillies 15, Marlins 3: Alec Bohm homered and had six RBIs as host Philadelphia tagged NL Cy Young Award winner Sandy Alcantara for nine runs.

Dodgers 9, Giants 1: Max Muncy hit a grand slam and a three-run drive for his 10th career multihomer game as visiting Los Angeles beat San Francisco.

Cubs 3, Mariners 2 (10): Nico Hoerner's soft single off Matt Brash with one out in the 10th inning scored pinch-runner

Nick Madrigal and gave host Chicago the win over Seattle.

Astros 8, Pirates 2: Yordan Alvarez had three hits and boosted his RBI total to a major-league-leading 16 by driving in two runs as visiting Houston beat Pittsburgh.

Diamondbacks 3, Brewers 0: Zac Gallen struck out 11 over seven innings, Christian Walker smacked a two-run homer and host Arizona beat Milwaukee.

Rockies 7, Cardinals 4: Germán Márquez pitched five strong innings before leaving with tightness in his right forearm, Alan Trejo tied a career high with three hits and host Colorado beat St. Louis.

White Sox 4, Twins 3: Hanser Alberto hit a three-run homer and visiting Chicago's Dylan Cease had another strong outing against Minnesota.

Orioles 5, Athletics 1: Adley Rutschman homered for the second straight game and Kyle Gibson earned his third victory in as many starts with host Baltimore.

Nationals 6, Angels 4: Jeimer Candelario and CJ Abrams drove in two runs apiece, and visiting Washington pounded out 14 hits to beat Los Angeles.

US women's soccer goes on after injury to Swanson

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — With forward Mallory Swanson sidelined by a serious knee injury for the foreseeable future, the United States is facing uncertainty as it prepares for the approaching Women's World Cup.

How will the U.S. replace one of its best players?

"I think that in this past year, you've seen a lot of players go down with injury and we've been able to adapt," forward Lynn Williams said. "I think that's what the team's going to continue to do, is continue to adapt. Mal's absence is a huge hole to fill, but we have amazing players on this team and we're going to figure out a way to do it."

Swanson tore the patella tendon in her left knee during an exhibition match against Ire-

land on Saturday, throwing her availability for soccer's biggest tournament this summer into doubt since there is no official timeline for her return. Swanson was the team's leading scorer this year with seven goals and a six-game scoring streak, tied for fourth-longest in team history.

Williams and Trinity Rodman are among the players coach Vlatko Andonovski will look at to fill the void. Also in the mix is Megan Rapinoe, who is injured and was not with the team when it faced Ireland again Tuesday night.

"No matter who gets injured it is a tough moment because their careers, their futures are impacted, and the team is impacted," Andonovski said. "Mal is arguably one of the best players in the world. It's unfortunate what

happened, but I think that the team is doing well and they do galvanize and bond around unfortunate things like this."

Alyssa Thompson was hastily brought to St. Louis to take Swanson's place among the 26 players called up for the two matches against Ireland. The 18-year-old was the top pick in the NWSL Draft out of high school by Angel City.

Thompson, who has already made a pair of appearances with the national team, was at practice with Angel City when she got the text. Her mom packed her suitcase and she barely made her flight because of traffic in Los Angeles.

"I'm just happy to be here, and I can control what I can control," Thompson said. "I'm just going to put my best foot forward and see what happens."