

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Study: Many in military poisoned by carbon monoxide over decade

BY NANCY MONTGOMERY  
*Stars and Stripes*

Around 6,400 troops and their family members were poisoned by carbon monoxide in the past decade, a military health study has found.

Some 24 service members died from breathing the colorless, tasteless, odorless and deadly gas.

Most of the cases were deemed accidental, but around 11% of active-duty service members intentionally harmed themselves and one case was ruled an assault, said the study published last month in the Defense Health Agency's medical journal.

No details were provided for the assault case or the deaths.

Troops working in repair and engineering jobs accounted for more poisonings than those in other career fields.

"This finding warrants further analysis to examine the overall incidence rates of CO intoxication across occupations and highlights the importance of appropriate preventive measures for military personnel who repair or maintain vehicles," journal editor Cmdr. Shawn S. Clausen said in an email.

While motor vehicle exhaust was the second-most common source of carbon monoxide poisoning in confirmed cases among active-duty troops, those working in motor transport accounted for just 3.2% of cases, the lowest proportion, the study said.

Military personnel "face unique and deadly sources of significant CO exposure not found in the private sector," according to the Army textbook "Occupational Health and the Service Member."

**'This finding ... highlights the importance of appropriate preventive measures for military personnel who repair or maintain vehicles.'**

Cmdr. Shawn S. Clausen

editor of Defense Health Agency's medical journal

Tanks, howitzer and armed helicopter crews, as well as troops firing missiles or small arms inside indoor firing ranges, can be exposed to the gas. CO becomes dangerous when it's allowed to build up in a closed space.

"Military personnel can also potentially be exposed to CO ... by working with machinery, motor vehicles and gasoline-powered tools," Clausen said. Carbon monoxide poisoning was confirmed in nearly 1,270 active-duty troops, 361 reservists and just over 4,700 family members between 2009 and 2019, the study found.

Cases were diagnosed at more than 190 military installations and locations worldwide. Fort Carson in Colorado had the highest number of confirmed cases — 60 — during the 10-year period, followed by Naval Medical Center in San Diego with 52 cases. Less than 5% of confirmed cases affected service members assigned outside the U.S., the study said.

Carbon monoxide exposure often affected groups, the study said. For example, 21 soldiers were sickened when a corroded vent hose caused CO to build up in a kitchen tent used by soldiers during an exercise near Eielson Air Force Base, Ala., in September 2014. Four of the soldiers were hospitalized.

In 2017, four soldiers were treated for carbon monoxide exposure when the M1A2 Abrams tank they were in malfunctioned during an exercise in Latvia.

Last August, two service members and three family members were treated at Fort Bragg, N.C., for carbon monoxide exposure. It was later determined that the residents of more than 80 homes at the base were at risk because of blocked vents in the laundry rooms.

All the services require CO detectors in base housing, but off-base housing requirements vary by state.

The symptoms of mild-to-moderate CO poisoning include headache, dizziness, weakness, upset stomach, vomiting, chest pain and confusion. High exposure can produce seizures and coma, and ultimately lead to death.

Carbon monoxide decreases not only the amount of available oxygen in the air but also in red blood cells, killing by asphyxiation. Two out of three people who suffer severe cases of CO poisoning may have long-term complications, including severe intellectual impairment, blindness and deafness.

The vast majority of service members included in the study returned to duty with no limitations, it said.

## US, S. Korea mull curtailed training due to coronavirus

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — U.S. and South Korean forces are looking to curtail upcoming training exercises out of growing fears about the spread of the coronavirus, the defense leaders for both countries said Monday.

Army Gen. Robert Abrams, commander of U.S. Forces Korea, and Gen. Park Han-ki, chairman of the South Korean joint chiefs of staff, "are looking at scaling back the command post training due to concerns about the coronavirus," Defense Secretary Mark Esper said during a Pentagon news conference with South Korean Defense Minister Jeong Kyeong-doo.

On Sunday, 13 Republic of Korea soldiers were diagnosed with coronavirus, Jeong said.

"We do regard this situation as a serious one," he said.

Travel for South Korean service members has been limited, affecting normal military training and vacation leave, Jeong said.

The semi-annual joint command post exercises between the U.S. and South Korea, with the next happening in spring, have already been limited during the past year as part of an attempt by President Donald Trump's administration to persuade North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons.

North Korea leader Kim Jong Un has said the joint exercises could negatively affect the negotiations.

If there is any change to the training, Jeong said they will consider ways to make certain the combined U.S.-South Korean defense posture stays robust.

# More closures at bases in Europe possible

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

STUTTGART, Germany — Some Army facilities in Italy could be shuttered beyond March 1 due to concerns related to the coronavirus, which the military expects will also have implications for troops in Germany, U.S. European Command's top officer, Air Force Gen. Tod Wolters, told lawmakers Tuesday.

In Vicenza, Italy, the Army has closed on-base schools, child care centers, gyms and churches after a spike in coronavirus cases in the broader region. Military personnel have also been told not to travel to areas where clusters of confirmed cases have emerged.

Wolters said that there was a "50-50" possibility that the closures in Vicenza would be extended, in response to questions by Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., who cited Stars and Stripes reporting at the base.

The military is also prepared to execute a coronavirus prevention plan in Germany, which is home to tens of thousands of U.S. service members and their families.

"We're anticipating an increase in the number of cases in Germany," Wolters told the Senate Armed Services Committee during testimony.

The military overseas has been grappling with the rapid spread of coronavirus, particularly in South Korea, where a surge of cases has forced base

access and troop movement restrictions. As cases increase in Europe, EUCOM officials have said that command medical teams are closely monitoring for potential threats.

Wolters was in Washington to testify on EUCOM's piece of the Pentagon's 2021 budget request and the command's role in countering Russia and China.

Wolters said he would like more support in countering Russia at sea, where he said that Moscow's submarine activity increased by 50% in 2019. EUCOM is generally effective at tracking Russian submarines, but "not 100% of the time," he said.

Wolters called for two more Navy destroyers to be based

at Rota, Spain. Past EUCOM commanders also have sought similar ship increases, but recent infrastructure work at the Navy's Rota base now makes it possible, Wolters said.

China's inroads into European infrastructure are also a concern, Wolters said. The Pentagon has warned allies to steer clear of China's 5G technology, which it says poses an intelligence threat. Wolters also said that he is worried about China's investment in ports all over Europe, where it controls 10% of shipping rights in and out of the Continent.

"Those are daunting figures that should lead one to believe that we need to continue to be vigilant with respect to seaport equities," Wolters said.

## Italy sees 27% more virus cases

*Associated Press*

ROME — Italy reported a 27% increase in the number of coronavirus cases Tuesday and an infected doctor forced a hotel to be quarantined in Spain's Canary Islands, evidence that the epicenter of the outbreak in Europe is spreading with travelers to and from the afflicted north.

Premier Giuseppe Conte defended the measures that Italy has taken to contain the outbreak and predicted a stabilizing of numbers soon. He did acknowledge, however, that the rise in cases — the most outside Asia — was "worrisome."

"Obviously I can't say I'm not worried because I don't want anyone to think we're underestimating this emergency," he said before a meeting with a visiting World Health Organization mission. "But we trust that with the measures we've implemented, there will be a containing effect in the coming

days."

Italy has closed schools, museums and theaters in the two regions where clusters have formed and troops are enforcing quarantines around 10 towns in Lombardy and the epicenter of the Veneto cluster, Vo'Euganeo. But Italy hasn't yet identified the source of the outbreak and reported a 27% increase in positive cases from 222 to 283 overnight, including in regions outside the north. Seven people have died, all of them elderly, suffering from other ailments, or both.

The island of Sicily reported its first positive case from a woman vacationing from Bergamo, in Lombardy. Two cases were also reported in Tuscany, well south of the epicenter.

Croatia, meanwhile, confirmed its first case in a man who had been to Milan. And Austria confirmed two cases in a couple who traveled from Bergamo to their home in Innsbruck last Friday.

## DODEA's Bahrain School closes over virus concerns

By JOSHUA KARSTEN  
*Stars and Stripes*

MANAMA, Bahrain — Military students at the Bahrain School have been told to stay home for the rest of the week following the country's first confirmed coronavirus case and several others reported at the island kingdom's airport.

School officials said the move, announced Tuesday evening via text message and email, was a precautionary measure.

"We are working closely with our military and host nation partners to closely monitor the situation," the statement said. "All decisions will be made with the health of our staff, students and community in mind."

Bahrain is home to the Navy's 5th Fleet headquarters and the largest group of deployed service members and their families in the Middle East.

Bahrain's Health Ministry said that all public schools will be closed for the next two weeks as "precautionary measures taken to contain the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19)

among individuals who have visited Iran, before the country announced it was facing a COVID-19 pandemic," the statement said.

Bahrain officials said that 17 travelers have tested positive for the virus at Bahrain International Airport, with the travelers coming from Saudi Arabia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates.

The travelers were immediately quarantined and taken to health centers for treatment. Those accompanying infected travelers were also quarantined, the official Bahrain News Agency reported Tuesday.

Base school officials said that more guidance will be released as it becomes available. Naval Forces Central Command said Monday that service members are already subject to 14-day "in-house" quarantines and testing when coming to Bahrain from mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and South Korea. Personal leave to those countries is also restricted.

# Marine gets award for noncombat valor

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — An Okinawa Marine who saved a drowning pregnant woman caught in a rip current in 2018 was awarded the service's highest award for valor in a noncombat situation.

Maj. William Easter received the Navy and Marine Corps Medal from III Marine Expeditionary Force commander Lt. Gen. H. Stacy Clardy III in a ceremony Feb. 14 at unit headquarters aboard Camp Courtney, a Marine Corps statement said.

Easter, the III MEF theater security cooperation officer from Beaufort, S.C., was also

recognized for his heroism by the Japanese mayor of Chatan in January 2019.

"I think I'm just as brave as anybody else in the military," Easter said in the statement. "I was just the right person at the right time. I'm certain there are any number of people here, who are also the right people, and would have done the same thing."

On the afternoon of Dec. 8, 2018, Easter was preparing for a run on the Okinawa seawall near American Village when he heard cries for help coming from the shore, he told Stars and Stripes last year. An exhausted man had made it back to shore after snorkeling but his pregnant wife — an American

in her 20s — had been swept out and was approximately a quarter mile from land.

The man said he was too exhausted to swim out to her.

Easter instructed one bystander to call Japan's equivalent of 911 and another to find a flotation device, he and Japanese officials said.

"I could see her in the distance, a little head bobbing there in the water," he told Stars and Stripes last year. "I looked at it and I said, 'Wow, that is not a short swim. You're not going to do that very easily.'"

Easter then swam the approximately 300 yards out to the woman.

She was exhausted by the time he arrived, so he got her

up on the orange, circular life-preserver he carried. Then he treaded water for approximately 30 minutes while he waited for emergency services.

Chatan fire officials arrived on personal watercraft and plucked Easter and the woman from the sea, he said.

Easter's actions, Clardy said, likely saved multiple lives that day. If he hadn't gone in, others might have attempted to save the woman, which could have compounded the potential tragedy.

"He was risking his own life," Clardy said in the statement. "This was no small act and I am proud to present him with this award."

## US forces hit ISIS during partial truce with Taliban

BY J.P. LAWRENCE  
*Stars and Stripes*

KABUL, Afghanistan — The U.S. military launched two airstrikes against Islamic State fighters in Afghanistan on Tuesday, midway through a weeklong partial truce with the Taliban.

The airstrikes killed four ISIS fighters in Kunar province, said Col. Sonny Leggett, spokesman for U.S. Forces-Afghanistan.

"We continue to eliminate

ISIS terrorists wherever they hide to protect Afghanistan while honoring U.S.-Afghan-Taliban agreement to reduce the violence," Leggett said on Twitter.

An ISIS shadow deputy governor and a military leader are among the dead, said Abdul Ghani Musamim, spokesman for the governor of Kunar, located in eastern Afghanistan.

The strikes did not involve Afghan forces, said Fawad Aman, deputy spokesman for

the Afghan Defense Ministry.

The U.S., the Taliban and the Afghan government are midway through a seven-day partial truce, termed by the parties as an agreement for a reduction in violence.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said last week that the group would refrain from attacking provincial capitals, as well as Afghan and U.S. military bases, but insinuated that attacking checkpoints was not off-limits.

If violence in the country drops significantly, as it has during the initial days of the truce, U.S. and Taliban officials are expected to sign a broader deal Saturday.

That is expected to lead to talks among the insurgents, the Afghan government and other Afghan stakeholders to address issues such as how to integrate the Taliban into the government and military after more than 18 years of war.

## Syrian troops continue campaign as airstrike kills 3

*Associated Press*

ANKARA, Turkey — An airstrike on a rebel-held northwestern Syrian city struck a school Tuesday, killing three people, Syrian opposition activists said, as government forces moved forward in their offensive toward a town considered a symbol of the uprising against President Bashar Assad.

The violence came as Turkey's president announced that a Russian delegation would arrive the following day to resume talks aimed at easing tensions in the northwest Idlib region.

The area is the country's last rebel-controlled stronghold and the Syrian government's military campaign there, backed by

Russia, has created a humanitarian catastrophe with nearly one million people displaced from their homes since Dec. 1.

Most of them are now crowding areas close to the border with Turkey, living in camps, shelters, abandoned homes and in open fields. It is the largest single displacement of Syria's war, now in its ninth year.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said no consensus was reached for a four-way meeting next month between the leaders of France, Germany, Russia and Turkey meant to address the crisis. He added, however, that Russia's Vladimir Putin may still come to Turkey next week for a bilateral meeting. Moscow has so far

not confirmed a March 5 visit by the Russian president to Turkey.

Tensions have been running high between Turkey and Russia, which support opposing sides of the war in Syria. The Syrian government offensive has shattered a fragile cease-fire agreement that Turkey and Russia reached in 2018 and Turkey has threatened military action unless Syrian forces retreat to positions they held before the advance by the end of February.

"Russia supports Syria at the highest level," Erdogan told reporters before departing for a visit to Azerbaijan. "Even if they deny it, we have evidence. We are forced to be in this fight."

# In India, Trump talks domestic squabbles

Associated Press

NEW DELHI — Returning to domestic squabbles, President Donald Trump lashed out at Supreme Court justices and his Democratic rivals Tuesday during the second and last day of a whirlwind trip to India. Addressing reporters and business leaders, Trump warned of economic calamity if he loses his reelection race in November and repeated his call for two liberal-leaning Supreme Court justices to recuse themselves from cases involving him or his administration.

The Republican president also said he had not been briefed on intelligence suggesting Russia is meddling in the 2020 election, either to bolster him or Democratic candidate

Bernie Sanders.

“Nobody ever told me that,” he said at a news conference, later adding, “I want no help from any country and I haven’t been given help from any country,” despite Russia’s well-documented meddling in the 2016 election to help him win.

Trump had joked at the beginning of the news conference that he would be “very, very conservative” in his answers to avoid distracting from his “fantastic two days” in India.

But then he quickly launched into attacks, including criticizing Supreme Court Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sonia Sotomayor, the latter for a blistering dissent that was critical of the Trump administration’s rush to claim emergencies when asking the Supreme

Court to review cases.

“I just don’t know how they can not recuse themselves for anything Trump or Trump-related,” he said.

He added: “What Justice Sotomayor said yesterday was highly inappropriate. She’s trying to shame people with perhaps a different view into voting her way.” He said Ginsburg had gone “wild” against him during the 2016 campaign.

Trump spent much of Tuesday meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and emerged saying he was optimistic about the prospects of inking a trade deal with India despite moves by both sides that created doubt about the ability to reach an agreement. Trump had made clear before the trip that hammering out

a long-sought trade deal with India was unlikely during the two-day trip.

“Our teams have made tremendous progress on a comprehensive trade agreement and I’m optimistic we can reach a deal that will be of great importance to both countries,” Trump told reporters on the second and final day of his whirlwind, 36-hour, first official visit to India. He said at the news conference that, if a deal happens, it will likely be “towards the end of the year.”

The day began with an elaborate welcome ceremony in front of the grand Rashtrapati Bhavan Presidential Palace in New Delhi, continuing the pomp and pageantry the Indian government had lavished on Trump a day earlier.

## Sanders’ old, new praise for communists roils race

The Washington Post

The mayor of tiny Burlington, Vt., was back from Nicaragua and eager to share the good news.

The country’s Soviet-backed government — forged via armed rebellion — was cutting infant mortality, reducing illiteracy and redistributing land to peasant farmers. Its Sandinista leaders, branded terrorists by the United States government, impressed him with “their intelligence and their sincerity.”

Three years later, Bernie Sanders was fresh off the plane from Moscow, reveling in the beauty of the land and the contentedness of the people.

And a year after that, he returned from Cuba having tapped into a revolutionary spirit “far deeper and more profound than I understood it to be.”

With Sanders now surging to the top of the Democratic presidential field, those three-decade-old impressions introduced a volatile new element in the race Monday as rivals reacted to Sanders’ decision to defend his remarks.

Asked about his favorable reviews of Fidel Castro’s Cuba in a “60 Minutes” interview that aired on CBS on Sunday, Sanders said that the communist leader deserved criticism for “the authoritarian nature” of his government — as well as praise where it was due, including for “a massive literacy program.”

The comments offered instant fodder for opponents who had already been sharing the old clips, and highlighted the risk to a candidate with a track record of sympathy for communist and socialist governments.

Rivals seized on the brand-new video to portray the senator from Vermont as naive — a possible preview of attack lines in Tuesday night’s debate, and of the barrage Sanders is likely to endure in the general election if he makes it that far.

“Fidel Castro left a dark legacy of forced labor camps, religious repression, widespread poverty, firing squads and the murder of thousands of his own people,” former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg tweeted. “But sure, Bernie, let’s talk about his literacy program.”

## US crackdown underway on immigrants who use services

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Pastor Antonio Velasquez says that before the Trump administration announced a crackdown on immigrants using government social services, people lined up before sunrise outside a state office in a largely Latino Phoenix neighborhood to sign up for food stamps and Medicaid.

No more.

“You had to arrive at 3 in the morning, and it might take you until the end of the day,” he said, pointing behind the office in the Maryvale neighborhood to show how long the lines got.

But no one lined up one recent weekday morning, and there were just a handful of people inside.

With new rules taking effect Monday that disqualify more people from green cards if they use government benefits, droves of immigrants, including citizens and legal residents, have dropped social services they or their children may be entitled to out of fear they will be kicked out of the U.S., said Velasquez and other advocates.

Advocates around the U.S.

gathered Monday to discuss and criticize the policy.

Participants at a New York City roundtable said that in anticipation of the change, neighborhoods with higher immigrant populations had seen enrollment declines in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, known as WIC. They also urged immigrants to get legal advice on how they may be affected.

Bethany Li, of Greater Boston Legal Services, said Chinese families are passing on WIC benefits not covered by the new rules.

The guidelines that aim to determine whether immigrants seeking legal residency may become a government burden are part of the Trump administration’s broader effort to reduce immigration, particularly among poorer people.

The rules that critics say amount to a “wealth test” were set to take effect in October but were delayed by legal challenges alleging a violation of due process under the U.S. Constitution.

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Vandals target historic town's 9/11 memorial

**MA** PLYMOUTH — A week after Plymouth Rock was defaced with graffiti, it appears as if vandals have targeted the historic Massachusetts town's 9/11 memorial.

A statue of a police officer was knocked over sometime over the weekend, and two nearby lamp posts were knocked over. The statue's head was knocked off. A nearby figure of a firefighter was untouched.

On Feb. 16, Plymouth Rock, the symbolic spot of the Pilgrims landing 400 years ago, was covered in paint. Vandals also targeted the Pilgrim Maiden statue and several other significant spots.

It was not clear if the two vandalism cases are connected.

## 4 hospitalized after wave slams boat

**VA** VIRGINIA BEACH — Four people were taken to a hospital after a rogue wave hit their whale-watching boat during a Virginia Aquarium tour.

The incident happened after the vessel left the Virginia Beach Fishing Center, Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center spokesman Matt Klepeisz told news outlets. The boat was passing through the Rudee Inlet with about 124 people on board when the wave struck it.

The boat returned to the fishing center, and paramedics took four people for treatment, he said.

## Man drives Jeep off roof of parking garage

**CA** SANTA MONICA — A man was hospitalized after driving his Jeep off the sixth floor of a Los Angeles-

area parking garage.

Officers responding found the destroyed vehicle up against a McDonald's restaurant across the street from the public parking structure in Santa Monica, police said.

Firefighters extricated him from the wreckage and took him to a local trauma center, where he was listed in critical condition, the Santa Monica Fire Department said.

Police in the coastal city were investigating what caused the crash.

## Man smashes window, grabs woman on couch

**RI** LINCOLN — An 18-year-old man was arrested after authorities said he smashed the window of a Rhode Island home and grabbed a woman who was sitting on a couch.

Police said that Jared Yankee grabbed the woman, but she was able to break free from his grasp. Yankee then paced around the yard and yelled.

When officers arrived, police said that Yankee was shirtless and wearing flannel pants. Police said that he refused to comply with officers' commands and was eventually restrained and arrested.

## Tree falls due to high winds, crushes man

**WA** RENTON — A man was critically injured in Renton, Wash., after a tree fell on a six-unit apartment building during a morning of high winds and heavy rain.

The man was sleeping on a couch in the living room of one of the units when the 200-foot tree came crashing down, KING-TV reported.

It took about 45 minutes to rescue the man, who had the tree across his pelvis and was

critically injured.

A cold front that moved through western Washington over the weekend brought wind gusts up to 40 mph, knocking out power for nearly 20,000 customers in the Puget Sound.

## Experts say bald eagle eggs may never hatch

**CA** MONROVIA — Two California bald eagle eggs have passed their normal incubation time and may never hatch, experts said.

The eggs in a nest at Big Bear Lake have been seen daily on streaming video from a camera positioned at the nest, The San Gabriel Valley Tribune reported.

The eggs most likely contain dead offspring, although they are still being attended by their parents, Jackie and Shadow, the U.S. Forest Service said.

"It's hard to say this, but the odds of our Big Bear bald eagle nest's eggs hatching this year are diminishing each day," Zach Behrens, public affairs officer for the San Bernardino National Forest, wrote in a social media post.

## Reward offered for leads to whooping crane killers

**LA** NEW ORLEANS — Louisiana and other donors are offering \$11,000 in rewards for information about whoever shot and killed two endangered whooping cranes about a year apart.

There's a \$5,000 reward for information about whoever killed one in Jefferson Davis Parish in November, and another \$6,000 for tips leading to arrest and conviction in a November 2018 killing.

A 1½-year-old crane's body was found Nov. 15 in a rice and crawfish field in Elton, Adam Einck, spokesman for the De-

partment of Wildlife and Fisheries' enforcement division, said. A necropsy determined that it had been shot and killed a day or two earlier.

Einck said there's also still a \$6,000 reward out for tips leading to the arrest and conviction of whoever shot a whooping crane between Crowley and Rayne in Acadia Parish in November 2018.

## Church to pay off students' lunch debts

**OH** CLAYTON — A church program in Ohio will pay off students' outstanding lunch debt in nine school districts after raising more than \$40,000 in donations.

The Salem Church of God's Next Steps Pastor Bob Hawker asked congregants to donate to the \$14,000 combined student lunch debt of Northmont and Brookville school districts. The congregation raised over \$40,000 in four days.

## Dog stolen from pet store taken to firehouse

**FL** PEMBROKE PINES — An English bulldog puppy that was stolen from a Florida pet store was found a day later after it was dropped off at a fire station.

The puppy, named Oscar, appeared to be in good health and was returned to its caretakers at a Petland store in Pembroke Pines.

WPLG-TV reported that authorities are still looking for the two men who stole the chocolate English bulldog.

The men posed as customers and were caught by surveillance cameras walking out of the store with the puppy.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

# Can Ovechkin overtake Gretzky's mark?

Associated Press

Alex Ovechkin is making the seemingly impossible appear to be not so far-fetched after all.

Wayne Gretzky's 894 career goals has, for decades, loomed as one of hockey's most untouchable records. The "Great One" set the bar so high it appeared out of reach for even the NHL's best scorers.

Ovechkin, on Saturday, became the second-fastest and second-youngest player to reach 700 goals behind only Gretzky. Because he's only 34 and shows no signs of slowing down, belief is growing that Ovechkin can challenge Gretzky's mark.

"Alex is going to score another probably 150 goals, maybe more, before he retires," Hall of Famer and fellow 700 goal-scorer Phil Esposito said. "He's got a chance to catch Wayne. There's no doubt about that."

Gretzky scored his 894 goals in 1,487 games over a 20-year career with the Edmonton Oilers, Los Angeles Kings, St. Louis Blues and New York Rangers. A vast majority of his goals came during the sport's highest-scoring era.

Ovechkin is in the midst of his fifth 40-goal season since turning 30. Last season, he became the oldest to win the goal-scoring title since Esposito in 1974-75, and he's

on pace for 57 this year.

"I think he'll score 50 until he's 50 years old, it seems like," Colorado Avalanche forward Nathan MacKinnon said. "I never thought (catching Gretzky) would happen. I hope he can get close."

Ovechkin is under contract through next season and would likely need to play four more seasons to take a legitimate shot at the milestone. Longtime running mate Nicklas Backstrom just signed on for five more years.

Asked what Ovechkin needs to do to approach Gretzky's record, Esposito said: "Stay with the Washington Capitals. Stay with a good team."

Gretzky recently told NHL.com he's rooting for Ovechkin to break his record, with staying healthy and playing on a good team the two necessary ingredients. Ovechkin has been one of the most durable players in hockey during his career.

"The guy's missed 17 games in 15 years due to injury — that's freaking incredible," former player and executive-turned NHL Network analyst Brian Lawton said. "They have a quality team that has staying power. He's going to get three or four more years of being on an elite team."

Ovechkin wasn't always scoring at this pace. At the low point of his career, he

scored 32 goals in 2010-11 and 38 in 2011-12 before Washington bowed out in the second round of the playoffs.

An elite NHL goal-scorer's prime usually ends in his mid-20s, and doubt crept in that the same would happen to Ovechkin.

Not so fast.

"I think everyone halfway through his career would've said, no, he's going to tail off at some point," Calgary Flames captain Mark Giordano said. "But he hasn't stopped, so he has a chance."

Two-time NHL leading scorer Connor McDavid grew up watching Ovechkin play plenty against his idol, Pittsburgh's Sidney Crosby, and has been impressed with the consistency of the goals piling up.

"He just seems ageless and just keeps on scoring goals," McDavid said. "I don't see any reason he can't keep doing that."

The desire is still there. Veteran coach Todd McLellan enjoys watching Ovechkin's excitement for scoring goals — except against his own team — and because of that is hoping he cracks 894.

"It's great for our game to see him," McLellan said. "As long as that excitement stays there, he's still going to have the skill and the shot. He's going to have a great team around him. I think he can do it."

## Trade winds blow Hurricanes' way with three deals

Associated Press

Hurricanes president Don Waddell resisted the urge to sign Zamboni driver David Ayres — or acquire anyone else, for that matter — to address Carolina's injury-depleted goaltending ranks before the NHL trade deadline struck Monday.

Waddell, however, did manage to upgrade the rest of his roster to better position his team in the tightly contested Metropolitan Division over the final six weeks of the season.

The Hurricanes acquired center Vincent Trocheck in a multiplayer deal with Florida. And they bulked up their defense by adding Sami Vatanen from New Jersey and sending a first-round draft pick to land Brady Skjei from the New York Rangers.

"We believe in the guys that we had here, but we thought we needed to strengthen us at certain positions," Waddell said. "I

think, overall, it's a strong message that we're here to win."

The Hurricanes weren't the only Metropolitan team making moves when just seven points separate the third-place Philadelphia Flyers and seventh-place Rangers.

The New York Islanders acquired Jean-Gabriel Pageau from the Ottawa Senators, and then signed the playmaking forward to a six-year contract extension.

Patrick Marleau is back in the Eastern Conference after the Pittsburgh Penguins acquired the 40-year-old in a trade with San Jose.

The Penguins then brought back forward Conor Sheary, a member of Pittsburgh's past two Stanley Cup winners, in a trade with Buffalo.

Overall, the 32 trades completed were the most on the NHL's final day of trading. And the 55 players dealt matched the record set on March 3, 2010.

And the two biggest deals that didn't happen involved Chris Kreider, who elected to re-sign with the New York Rangers, and Wild forward Zach Parise, who stayed put in Minnesota.

Kreider came off the market after signing a seven-year contract extension. With the Rangers having won 10 of 13 to climb into contention, general manager Jeff Gorton weighed the team's long- and short-term options as negotiations with Kreider came down to the wire.

In Carolina, Waddell has to be hoping the same when it comes to his goaltending. James Reimer (lower body) and Petr Mrazek (concussion) are considered week to week after both were hurt against Toronto last weekend. The injuries forced Carolina to turn to the 42-year-old Ayres, the emergency backup, who helped secure a 6-3 victory.

That leaves Carolina having to lean on minor-league call-

ups Anton Forsberg and Alex Nedeljkovic in net for the near future at least.

Carolina's key addition was Trocheck, a seventh-year center, who has 10 goals and 36 points in 55 games this season. Carolina gave up forwards Erik Haula and Lucas Wallmark, plus a pair of prospects.

The rebuilding Senators were sellers for a second consecutive year. Aside from trading Pageau, the Senators dealt forwards Vladislav Namestnikov to Colorado and Tyler Ennis to Edmonton.

Ottawa now has 13 picks, including nine in the first three rounds, in this year's draft.

Elsewhere:

■ Tampa Bay gave up a first-round pick to acquire right wing Barclay Goodrow from San Jose.

■ The Vegas Golden Knights shored up their leaky goaltending by acquiring Robin Lehner in a trade with Chicago.

## NBA roundup

## Embiid's 49 points lead 76ers by Hawks

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Joel Embiid scored a career-high 49 points and grabbed 14 rebounds, Tobias Harris had 25 points and the Philadelphia 76ers beat the Atlanta Hawks 129-112 on Monday night.

Missing All-Star Ben Simmons for the second time in three games because of a back injury, the Sixers mixed up their starting lineup and got 15 points from Furkan Korkmaz in a reserve role.

Embiid carried them.

"I said before the All-Star break I was going to have a different mindset, be aggressive," Embiid said. "I said I was going to get back to having fun. Having fun comes in different forms. I don't have to always be smiling and laughing. I can have fun just dominating the game."

Trae Young led the Hawks with 28 points despite missing nine of 11 from three-point range. De'Andre Hunter added 22 and John Collins had 21 for Atlanta.

Simmons only played five minutes in a loss at Milwaukee on Saturday before exiting. He had tests on Sunday and needs further evaluation.

**Bucks 137, Wizards 134 (OT):** Khris Middleton scored Milwaukee's final nine points, helping the Bucks outlast Bradley Beal and host Washington in overtime.

Middleton, who finished with 40 points, hit a 3-pointer with 30.2 seconds left to give the Bucks a 135-132 lead.

After Beal — who had his second straight 50-point game — made two free throws, Middleton was fouled with 7.8 seconds left and made both attempts from the line to

make it 137-134. Troy Brown Jr.'s 3-pointer rimmed out at the buzzer.

Beal scored a career-high 55 points one night after he had 53 in a loss at Chicago.

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 22 points and 14 rebounds for Milwaukee.

**Rockets 123, Knicks 112:** James Harden scored 37 points, and host Houston earned its fourth straight victory.

Harden had 31 by halftime, helping the Rockets to a 72-57 lead at the break. He cooled down eventually, but his first-half work put his team in control against struggling New York, which lost its fourth in a row.

Harden, Russell Westbrook and P.J. Tucker arrived at the arena about 70 minutes before tip-off after attending Kobe and Gianna Bryant's memorial service in Los Angeles. Westbrook was expected to play, but was scratched with a sore thumb.

New York got 21 points from RJ Barrett, and Julius Randle added 17 points with 12 rebounds.

**Suns 131, Jazz 111:** Ricky Rubio had 22 points, 11 assists and seven steals, leading Phoenix to the win at Utah.

In his first game back in Salt Lake City after playing for the Jazz for two seasons, Rubio led an offense that shot 56% and seemed a step ahead of the Jazz all night.

Devin Booker had 24 points and 10 assists for the Suns.

Donovan Mitchell scored 38 points for Utah.

**Magic 115, Nets 113:** Aaron Gordon had 27 points, 10 rebounds and a big blocked shot in the final seconds, helping Orlando rally for the win at Brooklyn.

The Magic charged back from a 19-point deficit in the second half to move within 1½ games of the Nets for seventh place in the Eastern Conference.

Spencer Dinwiddie had 24 points and eight assists for Brooklyn, which had won five straight at home by double digits.

**Cavaliers 125, Heat 119 (OT):** Rookie Kevin Porter Jr. scored a season-high 30 points, including the go-ahead basket in overtime, and host Cleveland rallied from a 22-point deficit to defeat Miami.

Porter's dunk after a pass from Kevin Love gave the Cavs a 119-118 lead with 1:20 to play. Fellow rookie Darius Garland's runner in the lane put Cleveland ahead 121-118 with 40 seconds remaining.

Jae Crowder missed a three-pointer from the corner before Love scored after an offensive rebound and Porter hit two free throws to seal it.

**Mavericks 139, Timberwolves 123:** Tim Hardaway Jr. scored 23 points and Luka Doncic had 20, lifting Dallas to the home win.

The Mavericks rested most of their starters in the fourth quarter against Minnesota after scoring 81 points before halftime.

**Clippers 124, Grizzlies 97:** Kawhi Leonard scored 25 points, Montrezl Harrell added 22 and host Los Angeles snapped a three-game losing streak.

Leonard had 14 points in the first quarter as the Clippers roared out to a 40-14 lead.

## Bemstrom's OT goal lifts Blue Jackets over Senators

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The Columbus Blue Jackets ditched their eight-game losing streak — and lost two more players to injuries.

Emil Bemstrom scored 4:35 into overtime, and the banged-up Blue Jackets beat the Ottawa Senators 4-3 on Monday night.

Bemstrom knocked home a rebound for his seventh of the season. Nick Foligno scored twice for Columbus, and Stefan Matteau tied it with his second of the season midway through the third period.

But the Blue Jackets' first

win since Feb. 7 might have been a costly one.

Goaltender Elvis Merzlikins departed in the second period following a jarring collision with former Jackets forward Anthony Duclair. Center Riley Nash also left in the second.

The team has been ravaged by injuries this year. Merzlikins was replaced by Joonas Korpi, who was just activated after sitting out with a knee injury since Dec. 29.

There was no word on the status of Merzlikins and Nash, but Columbus added goalie Matiss Kivlenieks to the roster on emergency recall from the

team's AHL affiliate in Cleveland ahead of Tuesday's game at Minnesota.

"We have looked at this as a great opportunity," Blue Jackets coach John Tortorella said. "We lose a couple more guys tonight. It's just a great opportunity to define team and define not giving in."

Colin White also scored, and Marcus Hogberg had 41 saves in Ottawa's third straight loss.

The Blue Jackets' slide had reached eight, but they managed to get a point in five of the losses to stay in contention. The win enabled them to jump over idle Carolina into the Eastern

Conference's second wild-card slot.

Foligno — still sporting two black eyes from taking a puck in the face Thursday — got Columbus on the board 4:10 into the first when he swept the puck in from the slot.

Brown tied it at 10:48 when he banged a shot off the near post, and got another just 9 seconds into a power play to put the Senators up 2-1 in the second.

Foligno got his ninth of the season with 7:28 left in the second, a tap-in after a nice play by Boone Jenner.

## College basketball roundup

# No letdown as No. 1 Kansas tops Okla. St.

Associated Press

LAWRENCE, Kan. — When shots aren't falling early, Kansas can always rely on defense and Doke.

Udoka Azubuike had 19 points and 16 rebounds, the Jayhawks shut down Oklahoma State long enough for their offense to come alive in the second half, and coach Bill Self's team rolled to an 83-58 victory over the Cowboys on Monday night to celebrate its return to the No. 1 ranking.

Devon Dotson added 11 points and Christian Braun and David McCormack had 10 apiece for Kansas (25-3, 14-1), whose victory over No. 2 Baylor over the weekend allowed the Jayhawks to retake the top spot in the AP poll. And the win over Oklahoma State (14-14, 4-11) gave Kansas a half-game lead over Bears in the race for the Big 12 title.

"It was kind of rough at first, you know, starting to get going," Jayhawks guard Ochai Agbaji said, "but the coaches, they did a good job of getting us pumped up for the game. We just had to come into this game with a lot more focus, because you

have to finish out the rest of this conference season."

Dotson and fellow backcourt mate Marcus Garrett were a combined 5-for-20 from the field, but Azubuike and the rest of the team picked them up. Kansas has won five straight against the Cowboys and 22 of the last 24 games played against them in Allen Fieldhouse as it burnished its credentials for the No. 1 overall NCAA Tournament seeding.

"Damn, they're good," Oklahoma State coach Mike Boynton said. "They have a really good team."

Cameron McGriff led the Cowboys with 16 points, though most came with the game well out of reach. Isaac Likekele and Lindy Waters added 11 apiece as Oklahoma State was held to 39% shooting from the field.

**No. 6 Florida State 82, No. 11 Louisville 67:** Trent Forrest scored 14 of his 16 points after halftime, and the Seminoles rallied from a double-digit deficit to beat the visiting Cardinals.

FSU (24-4, 14-3 Atlantic Coast Conference) moved past Louisville into first place in the ACC. They lead the Cardinals (23-6,

14-4) and No. 7 Duke by a half-game.

Patrick Williams' thunderous dunk put an exclamation point to a 15-0 run that put the Seminoles ahead for good. Florida State outscored Louisville 50-27 in the second half and the Seminoles extended their home winning streak to 22 games.

Devin Vassell and M.J. Walker each scored 12 points for FSU, which set a school record for ACC regular-season wins with three remaining in the 20-game schedule.

**Texas 67, No. 20 West Virginia 57:** Andrew Jones scored 22 points to lead the injury-depleted Longhorns to a win at home over the Mountaineers.

Courtney Ramey added 21 points for Texas (17-11, 7-8 Big 12), which has won three in a row. West Virginia (19-9, 7-8) has lost six straight on the road in conference play.

The Mountaineers beat the Longhorns by 38 points back on Jan. 20, the worst loss of coach Shaka Smart's five years with the Longhorns. But West Virginia came limping into the rematch and Texas did not resemble the timid team that got pushed around in Morgantown.

## Oregon's Ionescu honors Kobe, then sets NCAA record

Associated Press

STANFORD, Calif. — Sabrina Ionescu's strength inspired her Oregon coaches and teammates all day, from the way she courageously spoke at the memorial service for Kobe Bryant in Los Angeles earlier in the day, then flew back to the Bay Area and took the court still feeling the effects of the flu, all before leading the Ducks with yet another brilliant performance on both ends.

And doing something never done before in college basketball, by a man or a woman.

Ionescu became the first player in NCAA history to reach 2,000 points, 1,000 assists and 1,000 rebounds and notched her record 26th career triple-double, too, leading the No. 3 Ducks past fourth-ranked Stanford 74-66 on Monday night.

Ionescu wasn't made available to the media for a second straight game, speaking to

ESPN on Monday.

"That one was for him. To do it on 2-24-20 was huge," she told the network. "We talked about it in the preseason. I can't put it into words. He's looking down and proud of me and happy for this moment with my team."

Ionescu hit the milestone on a defensive rebound with 1:47 remaining in the third quarter and finished with 21 points, 12 assists and 12 rebounds in her first triple-double against a top-10 opponent and eighth overall this season to help Oregon (26-2, 15-1 Pac-12) clinch at least a share of its third straight Pac-12 regular-season title.

"Incredible. I thought she was so poised and so heartfelt today," said coach Kelly Graves, whose wife, Mary, accompanied Ionescu. "At her age and relative limited experience and things like that, I just thought she nailed it. It was amazing, and she wrote that, and that was from her. She's pretty spe-

cial in more ways that just what you're seeing on the court."

Ionescu also had a triple-double Friday night at California while playing near her East Bay hometown of Walnut Creek, then delivered her eighth career road triple-double for the Ducks on an emotional day just hours after attending the service for Bryant and daughter, Gianna, in Southern California.

"I don't know many people that could have done what she did today," Graves said. "... I knew this was the way it was going to end tonight for her. I'm glad that it ended in a victory but I knew that she was going to get that. It's so fitting that she did it tonight."

Hall of Fame Cardinal coach Tara VanDerveer wasn't surprised by Ionescu's toughness despite her difficult day.

"She's a player. I didn't expect anything different than what we saw," VanDerveer said.

She now has 2,467 points, 1,041 assists and 1,003 rebounds, helping the Ducks secure Monday at least 15 conference wins for a third consecutive season. Ionescu shot 9-for-19, missing her three three-point attempts. She had plenty of help from Satou Sabally, who scored 27 points on 10-for-17 shooting with four three-pointers.

"When she came back, we were there for her. It wasn't the easiest day, but she always has our backs so it was our turn to have her back," Sabally said. "We just lifted her up."

Golden State Warriors star Stephen Curry sat on the baseline supporting Ionescu and women's basketball for the second straight game she played in Northern California after he was in Berkeley with his two daughters Friday night. He watched Oregon run its winning streak to 14 in a row, and nine straight on the road.