

DOD rethinks how to array forces

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration faces a conundrum as it rethinks the positioning of military forces around the world: How to focus more on China and Russia without retreating from longstanding Mideast threats — and to make this shift with potentially leaner Pentagon budgets.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin ordered a monthslong “global posture” review just days after taking office. It will assess how the United States can best arrange and support its far-flung network of troops, weapons, bases and alliances to buttress President Joe Biden’s foreign policy.

The review is part of the administration’s effort to chart a path for a military still caught in decades-old Mideast conflicts, facing flat or declining budgets and grappling with internal problems like racism and extremism.

Its outcome could have a long-lasting impact on the military’s first priority: ensuring it is ready for war in an era of uncertain arms control. Also at stake are relations with allies and partners, weakened in some cases by the Trump administration’s “America first” approach to diplomacy.

Austin’s review is closely related to a pending administration decision on whether to fulfill the prior administration’s promise to fully withdraw from Afghanistan this spring.

And it is advancing separately from big-dollar questions about modernizing the strategic nuclear force.

Like the Trump administration, Biden’s national security team views China, not militant extremists like al-Qaida or the Islamic State group, as the No. 1 long-term security challenge. Unlike his predecessor, Biden sees great value in U.S. commitments to European nations in the NATO alliance.

That could lead to significant shifts in the U.S. military “footprint” in the Middle East, Europe and the Asia-Pacific, although such changes have been tried before with limited success. The Trump administration, for example, felt compelled to send thousands of extra air and naval forces to the Persian Gulf area in 2019 in an effort to deter what it called threats to regional stability. Biden has seen reminders of this problem in recent days with violence in Iraq and Afghanistan.

It might also mean a Biden embrace of recent efforts by military commanders to seek more innovative ways to deploy forces, untethered from permanent bases that carry political, financial and security costs. A recent example was a U.S. aircraft carrier visit to a Vietnamese port. Commanders see value in deploying forces in smaller groups on less predictable cycles in order to keep China off balance.

Hints of change were surfacing before Biden took office.

In December, Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, spoke of his own view that technological and geopolitical change argue for rethinking old ways of organizing and positioning forces.

The very survival of U.S. forces will depend on adapting to the rise of China, the spread of technologies like artificial intelligence and robotics, and the emergence of unconventional threats like pandemics and climate change, Milley said.

“Smaller will be better in the future. A small force that is nearly invisible and undetectable, that’s in a constant state of movement, and is widely distributed — that would be a force that is survivable,” he told a Washington conference. “You’re not going to accomplish any objective if you’re dead.”

Austin made a similar, narrower point last month about the positioning of U.S. forces in Asia and the Pacific.

“There’s no question that we need a more resilient and distributed force posture in the Indo-Pacific in response to China’s counter-intervention capabilities and approaches, supported by new operational concepts,” Austin wrote in response to Senate questions posed in advance of his confirmation hearing.

Contractors charged in Navy wastewater dumping scheme

By **CAITLIN DOORNBOS**

Stars and Stripes

Three Japanese contractors were indicted by a federal grand jury on charges they defrauded the Navy in a 13-year scheme to illegally dump untreated ship wastewater they were hired to decontaminate, according to the U.S. Justice Department.

Sojiro Imahashi, president and CEO of the Yokohama, Japan-based Kanto Kosan Co., and two employees, Tsuyoshi Ifuku and Yuki Yamamiya, were charged Tuesday in Washington, D.C., District Court with one count of conspiracy to make false claims and commit ocean dumping and major fraud against the United States; four counts of major fraud against the U.S.; and six

counts of submitting false claims, according to a Justice Department statement Thursday.

From 2007-20, Kanto Kosan received about \$120 million in Navy contracts, “tens of millions of which related to the removal, treatment, and disposal of contaminated oily wastewater generated by U.S. Navy ships” at bases in Yokosuka, Sasebo and Okinawa, according to the statement.

But instead of treating the wastewater according to Japanese environmental standards, the company allegedly dumped it into the ocean, according to the statement.

The indictment alleges Kanto Kosan would “minimally treat” the oily wastewater to remove visible contaminants and then discharge the water into the ocean, accord-

ing to the Justice Department.

The wastewater was contaminated with oil, firefighting foam, chemicals and other contaminants associated with ship operations, according to the indictment.

Not only could releasing untreated water cause environmental issues such as pollution, but “the appearance of U.S. Navy ships dumping wastewater into Japanese waters would have undermined the U.S.-Japan strategic relationship,” according to the indictment.

If convicted, the defendants will be required to pay back the government for funds fraudulently taken in addition to any other punishments, according to the indictment.

New motto for US Army Europe, Africa

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. Army Europe and Africa is keeping “strong,” but adding “together.”

“Stronger Together” is the new command slogan, replacing the nearly 7-year-old guiding mantra of “Strong Europe,” the Army announced Friday.

The change was needed given the command’s expanded mission, which now includes Africa after the consolidation that elevated USAREUR-AF to a four-star command led by Gen. Christopher Cavoli. In November, U.S. Army Europe merged with U.S. Army Africa, which fall under the command of Cavoli’s Wiesbaden head-

quarters.

“The consolidation was a historic moment for us, and it’s important to show that we are moving forward as a command,” U.S. Army Europe and Africa Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Abernethy said in a statement. “This new slogan says it all: We really are ‘Stronger Together.’”

The new name came after a contest that generated more than 200 submissions.

Entries included “Commitment Across Continents,” “Freedom Forward,” “Strength Through Unity” and “Bridging Continents.”

“Stronger Together” was submitted by multiple people and was the pick of U.S. Army Europe and Africa leadership, the

command said.

The Army appears to have opted for command cohesion over originality, since U.S. European Command’s motto also is “Stronger Together.”

The togetherness theme also gels with informal Africa Command slogans. Over the years, AFRICOM commanders during speeches have liked to reference the African proverb: “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

“I’m happy with our new slogan, and it’s been fun seeing how creative people got with their submissions,” Abernethy said. “But, more importantly, I’m glad we were able to come together as a community in making our decision.”

Residents reassured after deaths at Yokota air base

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — The commander of the largest U.S. military base in Tokyo has moved to assure residents they are safe after the body of a man who had been missing for 16 days was found in his own apartment building on the installation.

“Over the past 12 months our base has experienced the deaths of six members,” Col. Andrew Campbell, who leads Yokota’s 374th Airlift Wing, said in a video message posted on the base’s official Facebook page Thursday evening.

The most recent reported death was that of Trevor Balint, 34, of Hubbard, Ohio. Balint, the spouse of Defense Department computer programmer and analyst Britni Balint, disappeared Feb. 1, prompting a search of the base from the ground and the air. His body was found Tuesday morning in the eastside housing tower where the couple lived.

On Feb. 9, while the search for Balint was still underway, the base announced the death of a Defense Department dependent identified a week later as Kayla Ash, wife of a 374th Logistics Readiness Squadron member.

Campbell, in his video message Thursday, offered condolences to the families and friends of those who lost loved ones.

“I also want to reassure our community that these deaths, while each tragic, reflect no known danger to our community at large ... any danger to the community that an investigation might discover would have been or will be appropriately addressed,” he said.

The Air Force is still investigating the deaths of both Balint and Ash. In November, a probe was launched into the death of a Security Forces dog handler, Senior Airman Edwin Leyva, who was pronounced dead Nov. 1 at Yokota’s Urgent Care Center.

Air Force base in Japan sees a junior golf boom

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Junior golf is thriving at the home of U.S. Forces Japan in western Tokyo, as dozens of youngsters seek out alternatives to team sports and other activities that were shut down because of the coronavirus.

Dozens of masked kid golfers swarmed Yokota’s Par 3 course and driving range Thursday for their weekly practice session. Participation has grown steadily over the past year, from 60 kids to 90, according to Yokota golf captain and PGA professional Patrick Bowman, one of four coaches working with the kids.

“COVID-19 has boosted the numbers,” he said.

Ninety Yokota kids are signed up for \$75-a-year junior golf memberships in two teams — the Tama Hawks and the Fuji Flyers. About 25 of their moms have formed their own group — the Cherry Blossoms — and meet for ca-

sual rounds.

When other sports and activities shut down, and even when schools closed last year, the golf sessions continued, Bowman said.

“We chose to keep doing this,” he said. “[Air Force leadership] didn’t give us a reason to stop it. The rule was, just don’t get COVID.”

Some of the golf kids have been quarantined because of contacts with cases in the community but no infections have been linked to golf, Bowman said.

“It’s fun but everybody gets to kind of stay away from each other,” he said. “We’ve never had a scare.”

The junior golf sessions, which are an official PGA program, aren’t intended to groom future professionals. They’re supposed to be a fun social activity, Bowman said.

The kids learn the basics of swinging, chipping and putting along with golf ethics, such as fixing divots and pitch marks and raking bunkers.

Stars dimmed for 2 Dem governors

Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. — At the outset of the coronavirus pandemic, two Democratic governors on opposite ends of the country were hailed as heroes for their leadership in a crisis. Now they're leaders on the ropes.

Andrew Cuomo of New York and Gavin Newsom of California are embroiled in distinct political woes. For Cuomo, it's a federal investigation into whether his administration sought to hide the true toll of the pandemic. For Newsom, it's fending off a recall effort fueled by opposition to his lockdowns — and his own personal missteps.

But for both men the bottom line is clear: If you're not careful, the same crisis that can raise your stock can just as easily bring you down.

Cuomo and Newsom both seized the moment in their own ways. Cuomo went on television for daily briefings that were paternal, almost philosophical, and also sharply critical of the Trump administration. They became must-see TV across the country, aided in part by his CNN news host brother. Newsom, meanwhile, instituted early lockdowns, and for a time his state avoided the worst of the virus. He was a smoother, reassuring presence. He studiously avoided

partisanship, even landing himself in an ad for President Donald Trump.

But ultimately it was their actions, not their tone or words, that brought them down to earth.

While the coronavirus may have first landed on U.S. soil on the West Coast, it exploded into public consciousness in March as New York City was wracked by a hideous outbreak. As the epidemic spiraled, Cuomo on March 25 issued a directive barring nursing homes from refusing patients based solely on a COVID-19 diagnosis. Cuomo defended the directive as an effort to prevent catastrophic hospital overcrowding and discrimination against virus patients.

But the nursing home issue exploded onto the political scene with two recent revelations. First, the state's Democratic attorney general chastised the Cuomo administration for minimizing the death toll at nursing homes by excluding certain fatalities from the count. Cuomo's administration then revealed at least 15,000 people living in long-term care facilities have died of COVID-19, nearly double the number Cuomo had initially disclosed.

"The nursing homes story really exposed

quite a bit about questions about his leadership style and the success of his leadership during COVID," said Christina Greer, a political science professor at Fordham University. "The governor wrote a book touting his accomplishments, and we don't know if we're halfway out of the pandemic."

The meltdown in California has been more gradual. A month after Cuomo released his coronavirus book, an embarrassed Newsom was apologizing for attending a lobbyist's birthday party at the posh French Laundry restaurant, even as he was telling Californians to avoid gatherings.

Republicans had circulated recall petitions against Newsom months before, complaining about his handling of homelessness and the economy, but they shifted to include his COVID-19 response in their complaints and began racking up signatures.

Stutzman said Newsom is suffering for failing to provide the smooth, efficient government he promised when elected. But part of his fall, and Cuomo's, was inevitable because they are no longer being compared to Trump and his often hands-off approach to the virus response.

Vaccinated people should wear masks

Associated Press

You're fully vaccinated against the coronavirus — now what? Don't expect to shed your mask and get back to normal activities right away.

That's going to be a disappointment, if not a shock, to many people.

In Miami, Noemi Caraballo, 81, got her second dose on Tuesday and is looking forward to seeing friends, resuming fitness classes and running errands after nearly a year of being extremely cautious, even ordering groceries online.

"Her line is, 'I'm tired of talking to the cats and the parrots,'" said her daughter Susan Caraballo. "She wants to do things and talk to people."

But the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hasn't yet changed its guidelines: At least for now, people should follow the same rules as everybody else about wearing a mask, keeping a 6-foot distance and avoiding crowds — even after they've gotten their second vaccine dose.

Vaccines in use so far require two doses, and experts say especially don't let your guard down after the first dose.

In a webcast exchange, Dr. Anthony Fauci only could point to the CDC's recommendations, which so far are mum about exceptions for vaccinated people getting together. "Hang on," he told the woman, saying he expected updates to the guidelines as more people get the coveted shots.

All UK adults to get 1st vaccine dose by July 31

Associated Press

LONDON — The British government declared Sunday that every adult in the country should get a first coronavirus vaccine shot by July 31, at least a month earlier than its previous target, as it prepared to set out a "cautious" plan to ease the U.K.'s lockdown.

The new target also aims for everyone 50 and over and those with an underlying health condition to get their first of two vaccine shots by April 15, rather than the previous date of May 1.

The early success of Britain's vaccination effort is welcome good news for a country that has had more than 120,000 coronavirus deaths, the highest toll in Europe. More than 17.2 million people, a third of the country's

adults, have had at least one shot since inoculations began on Dec. 8.

Britain is delaying giving second vaccine doses until 12 weeks after the first, rather than three to four weeks, in order to give more people partial protection quickly. The approach has been criticized in some countries — and by Pfizer, which says it does not have any data to support the interval — but it is backed by the U.K. government's scientific advisers.

News of the new vaccine targets came as Prime Minister Boris Johnson met Sunday with senior ministers to finalize a "road map" out of the national lockdown that he plans to announce on Monday.

Frozen pipes, electric woes as cold eases

Associated Press

DALLAS — Higher temperatures spread across the southern United States on Saturday, bringing relief to a winter-weary region that faces a challenging clean-up and expensive repairs from days of extreme cold and widespread power outages.

In hard-hit Texas, where millions were warned to boil tap water before drinking it, the warm-up was expected to last for several days. The thaw produced burst pipes throughout the region, adding to the list of woes from severe conditions that were blamed for more than 70 deaths.

By Saturday afternoon, the sun had come out in Dallas and temperatures were nearing the 50s. People emerged to walk and jog in residential neighborhoods after days indoors. Many roads had dried

out, and patches of snow were melting. Snowmen slumped.

Linda Nguyen woke up in a Dallas hotel room Saturday morning with an assurance she hadn't had in nearly a week: She and her cat had somewhere to sleep with power and water.

Electricity had been restored to her apartment on Wednesday. But when Nguyen arrived home from work the next evening, she found a soaked carpet. A pipe had burst in her bedroom.

"It's essentially unlivable," said Nguyen, 27, who works in real estate. "Everything is completely ruined."

Deaths attributed to the weather include a man at an Abilene health care facility where the lack of water pressure made medical treatment impossible. Officials also reported deaths from hypother-

mia, including homeless people and those inside buildings with no power or heat. Others died in car accidents on icy roads or from suspected carbon monoxide poisoning.

Roughly half the deaths reported so far occurred in Texas, with multiple fatalities also in Tennessee, Kentucky, Oregon and a few other Southern and Midwestern states.

A Tennessee farmer died trying to save two calves from a frozen pond.

President Joe Biden's office said Saturday he has declared a major disaster in Texas, directing federal agencies to help in the recovery.

U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a New York Democrat, tweeted Saturday that she helped raise more than \$3 million toward relief. She was soliciting help for a Houston food bank, one of 12 Texas organiza-

tions she said would benefit from the donations.

The storms left more than 300,000 still without power across the country Saturday, many of them in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi.

More than 50,000 Oregon electricity customers were among those without power, more than a week after an ice storm ravaged the electrical grid. Portland General Electric had hoped to have service back to all but 15,000 customers by Friday night. But the utility discovered additional damage in previously inaccessible areas.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown ordered the National Guard to go door-to-door in some areas to check on residents' welfare. At its peak, what was the worst ice storm in 40 years knocked out power to more than 350,000 customers.

Customers and staff fired back at shooter; 3 dead after attack

Associated Press

METAIRIE, La. — A person entered a gun store and shooting range in a New Orleans suburb and fatally shot two people Saturday, prompting customers and staff to open fire on the shooter, a sheriff said. The shooter also died.

The shooting happened around 2:50 p.m. at the Jefferson Gun Outlet in the suburb of Metairie, according to a release from the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office.

Sheriff Joseph Lopinto said the shooter initially struck two people inside, and then several other people — whether employees or store customers — opened fire on the shooter, both inside and outside of the building.

Guns and ammunition are sold in the front of the outlet that faces a main thoroughfare through Jefferson Parish. Customers who want to frequent the gun range generally go around to the side entrance of the building. Staff who work there often wear a sidearm.

Lopinto said two other people were also hit by gunfire and were hospitalized in sta-

ble condition. He said there were multiple shooters.

"We're trying to put it all together," the sheriff said during a short briefing.

None of the dead or wounded were immediately identified and details remained unclear.

Tyrone Russell and Wanetta Joseph were both in a conceal-and-carry course at the store when they heard what they both described as rapid firing. They said the gunfire sounded much louder than the usual muffled shooting that they are used to hearing inside the shooting range.

"It got extremely loud, like a bomb almost," said Joseph, who hid with other students under a table — not knowing if there were multiple shooters or if one was near the classroom. One instructor stayed with the students while two others left the room and headed toward the sound of gunfire.

Russell said that when he was led out, he could see a guy "laid out" in the parking lot not far from his car, which was struck by bullets. He described seeing shattered glass, bullet casings strewn about the store.

Parts fall from sky in Colo. plane scare

Associated Press

BROOMFIELD — David Delucia was settling back into his airplane seat and starting to relax on his way to a long-awaited vacation when a huge explosion and flash of light interrupted an in-flight announcement and put him in survival mode.

The Boeing 777-200, headed from Denver to Honolulu on Saturday with 231 passengers and 10 crew aboard, suffered a catastrophic failure in its right engine and flames erupted under the wing as the plane began to lose altitude.

As Delucia and his wife prepared for the worst, people in this Denver suburb reacted in horror as huge pieces of the engine casing and chunks of fiberglass rained down on sports fields and streets and lawns, just missing one home and crushing a truck. The explosion, visible from the ground, left a trail of black smoke in the sky, and tiny pieces of insulation filled the air like ash.

The plane landed safely at Denver International Airport, and no one on board or on the ground was hurt, authorities said. But both those in the air and on the ground were deeply shaken.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man accused of faking kidnapping to evade work

AZ CASA GRANDE — Arizona police said a man who claimed he had been kidnapped later confessed during an interview that he made up the story up to avoid work.

Police said they found Brandon Soules near a water tower with his hands bound behind his back and a bandana stuffed in his mouth, the Casa Grande Dispatch reported.

Soules told police that two masked men had kidnapped him, knocked him unconscious, then left him where he was found.

Coolidge detectives conducted an investigation that found no evidence that a kidnapping or assault had occurred.

Sewer break discharges wastewater into river

DE DOVER — A force main break caused wastewater to flow into a Delaware river, and people in the vicinity were being advised to take precautions, officials said.

The Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control said the Kent County Levy Court Public Works is looking into the break which allowed the spill into the St. Jones River.

Firefighter charged after threats to Councilmember

WA SEATTLE — The King County Prosecutor's Office filed criminal charges against a Seattle firefighter who authorities said sent threatening emails to a City Councilmember.

KOMO reported two counts

of cyberstalking and one count of second-degree identity theft were filed against Andrew Finseth.

Finseth allegedly sent four threatening emails to Councilmember Kshama Sawant from a fellow firefighter's email in December 2020 and January 2021. The email address was illegally accessed, the prosecutor's office said.

The emails expressed a strong dislike for Sawant and her performance as a councilmember and warned her to "get out of the city or else."

Fire damages 8 boats docked at marina

CA DANA POINT — A 25-foot powerboat sunk after it exploded and sparked a fire, damaging seven other boats at a Southern California marina, authorities said.

One person was assessed by paramedics, but declined to be treated or transported to a hospital, Orange County Fire Authority Captain Thanh Nguyen told the Orange County Register.

An investigation is underway.

Police find kittens in 'suspicious package'

OH NEW MIAMI — A police bomb squad responding to a suspicious package call at an Ohio church made an unexpected discovery: six newborn kittens and their mother inside a duffel bag.

The Butler County Sheriff's Office said its bomb squad was called to a church in New Miami. When the responding officers heard purring instead of ticking coming from the black bag, they used their X-ray

equipment to view what was inside.

The day-old kittens and their mother were found along with a note stating they had been born.

"Mom's name is Sprinkles," the note also read. "She began giving birth at 2 p.m."

Police: Mechanic crushed to death by elevator

NY NEW YORK — A 25-year-old mechanic was crushed to death when an elevator he was working on fell on him in the Bronx, authorities said.

Police said the victim was pronounced dead at a local hospital.

A city Department of Buildings spokesperson said mechanics working for Champion Elevator Corp. were performing modernization work on the elevator when it fell down the shaft and crushed one of the mechanics.

Lawyer: Owner used shoe camera to film employees

IL FRANKFORT — The owner of three suburban Chicago restaurants who is criminally charged with secretly filming up the skirts of female employees may have used a camera in his shoe to make nearly 2,000 videos, attorneys said.

The allegations against Michael Papandrea, 59, of Frankfort, were included in a news release by attorneys who filed a lawsuit in Cook County Circuit Court on behalf of eight women and girls who once worked for Papandrea.

A hard drive seized by authorities last year contained more than 24,000 recently delet-

ed covert videos and photographs up the skirts of young women, prosecutors allege. The Chicago Tribune reported that attorney David A. Axelrod, who filed the suit, alleges that 2,000 videos came from a hidden shoe web came and others came from a camera positioned over a toilet.

Nonbiodegradable balloon releases banned

VA RICHMOND — Virginia lawmakers approved legislation that would ban the intentional release of all nonbiodegradable balloons and slap offenders with a civil fine of \$25 per balloon.

The legislation was backed by environmentalists and residents who live along the state's shoreline and regularly complain about litter from foil and latex balloons on beaches and the potential harm to marine animals by ingesting balloon remnants.

Neglected horses up for adoption after seizure

CT MONTVILLE — Eight malnourished and neglected horses seized by the state last year from a Connecticut farm are available for adoption, officials said.

Attorney General William Tong and Department of Agriculture Commissioner Bryan Hurlburt announced the state has secured permanent custody of the animals, which received extensive medical care and rehabilitation at the state's Second Chance Large Animal Rehabilitation Program in Niantic.

— From The Associated Press



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Djokovic wins 9th Australian Open

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Maybe, just maybe, the thinking went, Novak Djokovic would be just a tad more susceptible to trouble this time around at the Australian Open.

After all, he tore an abdominal muscle in the third round and wasn't sure he could continue to compete. Entering Sunday, Djokovic ceded five sets in the tournament, the most he ever dropped en route to a major final. And to top it all off, he was facing Daniil Medvedev, owner of a 20-match winning streak.

Yeah, right. We're talking about Djokovic at Melbourne Park, where his dominance is most certainly intact — nine finals, nine championships. Plus, he's still gaining on Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal in the Grand Slam standings, now up to 18 overall, two shy of the men's record those rivals share.

Djokovic used improved serving, along with his usual relentless returning and baseline excellence to grab 11 of 13 games in

one stretch and beat Medvedev 7-5, 6-2, 6-2 for a third consecutive Australian Open trophy.

"Definitely, emotionally, the most challenging Grand Slam that I ever had, with everything that was happening — injury, off-the-court stuff, quarantines," Djokovic said. "A roller-coaster ride."

When the match ended after less than two hours, Djokovic went to the sideline, lifted his white shirt and peeled pieces of beige athletic tape from his stomach.

"I was quite worried," Djokovic said about the injury. "I did not (think) realistically that I could actually play. I didn't know until two hours before the fourth-round match."

Dealing with what he called "bearable" pain, Djokovic improved to a combined 18-0 in semifinals and finals on Melbourne's hard courts.

"Probably, it's not your last one," Medvedev said. "I have no words to say."

Djokovic, a 33-year-old from Serbia, has won six of the last 10 majors and will stay at

No. 1 in the rankings at least through March 8. That will give him 311 weeks there, breaking another mark held by Federer.

His goals now are squarely on Grand Slams, even more than before.

Put Djokovic's nine triumphs in Australia alongside five at Wimbledon, three at the U.S. Open and one at the French Open. The math looks good for him: He is about a year younger than Nadal and 6½ years younger than Federer.

"I do enjoy the success every single time even more," Djokovic said, "because I know that the longer the time passes, the more difficult it's going to become."

The No. 4-seeded Medvedev was appearing in his second Slam final; he was the runner-up to Nadal at the 2019 U.S. Open.

The 25-year-old from Russia had won 12 in a row against Top 10 opponents, but trying to solve Djokovic in Australia is a unique challenge.

"He's really good (at) reading an opponent's game," Medvedev said, "knowing what you will do next, how to beat you."

Players who opted out of short season eager to be back on field

Associated Press

David Price spent much of 2020 in front of his television, watching from afar as his Los Angeles Dodgers chased an elusive World Series championship.

Trepidation about playing baseball through a pandemic trumped his urge to play — but that doesn't mean the 2012 AL Cy Young Award winner never thought about an early return.

"It definitely crossed my mind," Price said Friday from Dodgers spring training in Glendale, Ariz. "But I didn't want to just come back to be back. I wanted to come back to stay."

Sixteen months since his last competitive game, Price is indeed back, just like many of the nearly 20 big leaguers who opted out of the coronavirus-shortened 2020 season — a list including All-Stars like San Francisco's Buster Posey, Milwaukee's Lorenzo Cain, the New York Mets' Marcus Stroman and Washington's Ryan Zimmerman.

Traded from Boston to the Dodgers last February, the 35-year-old Price pitched in spring exhibitions for LA before deciding to go home. Instead of playing, he did what many Americans have done with their unexpected time — he watched a lot of TV.

"On the West Coast, baseball starts at 10

a.m.," he said. "I had baseball on TV all day long, East Coast games and West Coast games."

Coming back after all that wasn't a hard decision.

"I feel like our team and MLB handled it extremely well," Price said. "I know they had a lot of protocols they had to go through. The training staff were bending over backwards to keep guys COVID free."

"We have a lot more information on it now," he added. "All of that played into the decision to play this year. I knew I wanted to play this year."

Nationals right-hander Joe Ross echoed that sentiment. He hasn't pitched since starting Game 5 of the 2019 World Series, passing on a chance to defend the title because of all the uncertainties at the time about the effectiveness of MLB's protocols.

After early season outbreaks on the Cardinals and Marlins, MLB adjusted its safety guidelines and successfully played through the end of the season. The league has enhanced its protocols this spring, including the introduction of electronic contact tracing wristbands for players to wear around team facilities.

"Everything so far has been going great," Ross said. "It's kind of a normal, quote-unquote, spring training as far as be-

ing back on the field and stuff like that."

Teams have concerns about overtaxing pitchers after last year's abbreviated workloads, and those apprehensions are even stronger for pitchers like Ross who didn't pitch at all. It doesn't help that the 27-year-old has a checkered health history, including Tommy John surgery in 2017.

"We have to be very careful," Washington manager Dave Martinez said. "I know it's been (3½) years since he's had Tommy John, but we want to keep him healthy."

The Mets have similar concerns for Stroman, a 5-foot-7 right-hander who tore a muscle in his left calf last July and opted out a few weeks later. Fiery and confident as always, Stroman thinks he's put in the work necessary to enter the season full bore.

"I never have to get ready because I stay ready," he said. "I'm ready to rock. I'm ready to go out there and throw 200-plus innings like I do every year. My preparations are elite."

An agreement between the league and union promised that players deemed high-risk for serious COVID-19 symptoms would still be paid in 2020 if they opted out. Those who weren't high-risk were still allowed to skip the season, but they had to forgo their salaries.

Hurtful loss: Duke edges No. 7 Virginia

Associated Press

DURHAM, N.C. — Freshman Jaemyn Brakefield scored the go-ahead basket on a reverse layup with 1:58 left and Duke came up with a final-possession stop and upset No. 7 Virginia 66-65 on Saturday night.

Matthew Hurt scored 22 points to lead the Blue Devils (10-8, 8-6 Atlantic Coast Conference). They claimed a much-needed third straight win to improve their uncertain chances of making the NCAA Tournament.

Brakefield's scoring drive, while drawing a foul on Jay Huff, finally got Duke a slim lead. Freshman DJ Steward had a chance to increase the margin, but missed the front end of a 1-and-1 free-throw opportunity with 9.6 seconds left.

No. 1 Gonzaga 106, San Diego 69: Drew Timme scored 17 of his 21 points in the first half, Jalen Suggs added 17 points and the host Bulldogs won their 26th straight game.

Corey Kispert added 16 points to help Gonzaga (22-0, 13-0 West Coast) get its 14th straight victory against the Toreros and 49th consecutive win at home.

No. 5 Illinois 94, Minnesota 63: Ayo Dosunmu had 19 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists for his second triple-double of the season, Kofi Cockburn scored 22 points in 24 minutes, and the Illini cruised past the host Gophers for their seventh consecutive victory.

Trent Frazier added 15 points and six steals to help Illinois (16-5, 12-3) stay in second place in the bruising Big Ten with two weeks to go in league play. The Illini had a 31-8 edge in fast-break points, shot 56% from the floor and forced 18 turnovers by Minnesota (13-10, 6-10).

Freshman Jamal Mashburn Jr. led Minnesota with 16 points and six rebounds, with his father, former NBA player Jamal Mashburn, watching in person for the first time in his college career.

No. 8 Alabama 82, Vanderbilt 78: Jaden Shackelford scored a season-high 27 points and the host Crimson Tide beat the Commodores to move within a victory of clinching at least a share of their first Southeastern Conference regular-season title in 19 years.

Jahvon Quinerly made a late three-pointer and a clinching free throw with 2 seconds left to help Alabama (18-5, 13-1) turn back the Commodores (6-12, 2-10).

No. 9 Oklahoma 66, Iowa State 56: Austin Reaves scored 20 points to lead the Sooners to a road win.

Oklahoma (14-5, 9-4 Big 12) has won three

third straight.

The Cyclones (2-16, 0-13) trailed by as many as 21 in the first half before rallying to a 46-45 lead on Tre Jackson's three-pointer with 11:29 remaining. The Sooners responded with a 16-4 run.

No. 10 Villanova 68, Connecticut 60: Collin Gillespie scored 20 points and Jeremiah Robinson-Earl had 17 points and 11 rebounds to help the host Wildcats win.

Justin Moore added 11 points for Villanova (14-3, 9-2 Big East).

James Bouknight, in his second game back after missing eight due to elbow surgery, scored 21 points for the Huskies (10-6, 7-6).

No. 13 West Virginia 84, No. 12 Texas 82: Sean McNeil and the Mountaineers erased a 19-point deficit in the second half, then withstood a flurry of last-second misses to hold off the host Longhorns.

McNeil played only two minutes in the first half after picking up two fouls, and scored all 16 of his points after the break. Miles McBride had 17 for West Virginia (15-6, 8-4 Big 12).

Courtney Ramey scored a career-best 28 points for Texas (13-6, 7-5), making a career-high seven three-point baskets in eight attempts.

No. 23 Kansas 67, No. 15 Texas Tech 61: Christian Braun hit a corner three with 24 seconds left, David McCormack scored 17 points and the host Jayhawks beat the Red Raiders.

Ochai Agbaji had 14 points, and Jalen Wilson added 11 for Kansas (17-7, 11-5 Big 12). Braun and Marcus Garrett each had 10 points.

Marcus Santos-Silva and Kevin McCullar each scored 12 points for Texas Tech (14-7, 6-6).

No. 16 FSU 79, Pittsburgh 72: Raiquan Gray had 16 points and eight rebounds and the Seminoles won on the road for their third straight victory.

Malik Osborne had 12 points and nine rebounds, and RayQuan Evans also scored 12 points for FSU (13-3, 9-2 Atlantic Coast Conference). Justin Champagnie had 21 points and 10 rebounds for the Panthers (9-9, 5-8).

Arizona 81, No. 17 Southern California 72: James Akinjo scored 20 points and the visiting Wildcats ended the Pac-12-leading Trojans' seven-game winning streak.

Jordan Brown had 19 points and 13 rebounds. Azuolas Tubelis added 16 points and a career-high 15 rebounds for Arizona (15-8, 9-8 Pac-12), which gave coach Sean

Miller his 300th victory in program history while avoiding their first three-game skid of the season.

Evan Mobley scored 19 of his 23 points in the second half for USC (18-4, 12-3).

Kentucky 70, No. 19 Tennessee 55: Isaiah Jackson scored 16 points and the visiting Wildcats matched a season high with their third straight victory.

Davion Mintz hit all five of his three-point shots in the first half and had 15 points for Kentucky (8-13, 7-7 Southeastern Conference). Victor Bailey scored 18 points for the Volunteers (15-6, 8-6).

No. 20 Missouri 93, South Carolina 78: Dru Smith scored 17 points, Mark Smith had 13 and the Tigers won on the road to end a three-game losing streak.

Missouri (14-6, 7-6 Southeastern Conference) opened a 19-point lead in the first half and stayed comfortably in front the rest of the way.

AJ Lawson had 22 points for the Gamecocks (5-11, 3-9).

No. 25 San Diego State 75, Fresno State 57: Jordan Schakel scored 14 points — 12 on three-pointers in the first half — and the visiting Aztecs earned their eighth straight victory.

Matt Mitchell and Terrell Gomez scored 13 apiece for San Diego State (17-4, 11-3 Mountain West).

Deon Stroud scored 17 points for the Bulldogs (9-9, 7-9).

North Carolina 99, Louisville 54: Day'Ron Sharpe had 21 points, 11 rebounds and two blocks to lead five Tar Heels scoring in double figures and host North Carolina trailed for just 29 seconds.

Kerwin Walton had a career-high 19 points on 7-of-10 shooting, Armando Bacot scored 14, Garrison Brooks 12 and Walker Kessler added 10 for UNC (14-7, 8-5 ACC).

Army 69, Holy Cross 65: Josh Caldwell had 13 points as the host Black Knights held on to beat the Crusaders.

Lonnie Grayson had 12 points and six rebounds for Army (10-6, 6-5 Patriot League). Alex King added 11 points. Jalen Rucker had 10 points.

Navy 72, American 60: Greg Summers had 19 points and 10 rebounds to lift the Midshipmen to a road win.

Patrick Dorsey had 15 points and six rebounds for Navy (12-2, 9-1 Patriot League), which earned its fourth straight road victory. Daniel Deaver added 10 points and seven rebounds. Cam Davis had 10 points and eight rebounds.

Avs down Golden Knights in delayed game at Lake Tahoe

Associated Press

STATELINE, Nev. — The setting was spectacular but the ice conditions were far from it, leading to a more than eight-hour delay between the first and second period of the outdoor game between the Vegas Golden Knights and Colorado Avalanche at Lake Tahoe.

The NHL decided to halt the game Saturday afternoon because bright sun and temperatures hovering

around freezing led to poor ice conditions that had players and officials repeatedly falling because of holes on the ice.

The game resumed 8 hours, 7 minutes with the Avalanche leading 1-0. Colorado won the game 3-2.

“We’ve done over 30 outdoor games,” Commissioner Gary Bettman told broadcaster NBC. “This has been the most difficult weather circumstance we’ve had, and it’s a beautiful day. But

if you look up at the sun, the cloud cover is everywhere but where the sun is, and it did a number on the ice.”

The game was halted after the first period at 12:55 p.m. PST. Workers covered the ice soon after before removing the cover after the sun went down.

Bettman said some players wanted to keep playing while others didn’t, but the final decision was made in consultation with the union because of safety.

Penguins edge Islanders in Crosby’s 1,000th game

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Sidney Crosby had two assists in his 1,000th NHL game and the Pittsburgh Penguins beat the Islanders 3-2 on Saturday.

Kris Letang scored twice, including a tie-breaking goal in the third period, to help Pittsburgh win for the fourth time in five games. Mike Matheson also scored, and Tristan Jarry made 33 saves.

Jordan Eberle and Brock Nelson scored for New York. The Islanders have dropped two straight following a season-high eight-game points streak.

Crosby became the 25th active skater to play in 1,000 games. He’s also the first player in Penguins history to play 1,000 games with the team.

Oilers 7, Flames 1: Connor McDavid scored a natural hat trick and added two assists, leading host Edmonton in a rout of Calgary.

Ryan Nugent-Hopkins had two goals and Alex Chiasson and Josh Archibald also scored for Edmonton.

Maple Leafs 5, Canadiens 3: Auston Matthews scored twice to increase his NHL-leading goals total to 18 and added two assists in host Toronto’s victory over Montreal.

Rangers 4, Capitals 1: Alexis Lafreniere

scored his second NHL goal, Artemi Panarin had two assists and New York made the best of a new-look lineup, winning at Washington for its second consecutive victory.

Wild 5, Ducks 1: Kevin Fiala had two goals and an assist, Kaapo Kahkonen made 26 saves and Minnesota won at Anaheim to sweep the two-game set.

Hurricanes 4, Lightning 0: Alex Nedeljkovic made 24 saves for first NHL shutout and host Carolina beat Tampa Bay.

Sharks 5, Blues 4: Logan Couture scored his second goal of the game midway through the third period and San Jose won at St. Louis.

Sabres 3, Devils 2: Sam Reinhart scored two goals and Buffalo won at New Jersey to snap a four-game losing streak.

Kings 4, Coyotes 2: Alex Iafallo scored two goals, Cal Peterson stopped 22 shots and Los Angeles won at Arizona for its fourth straight victory.

Red Wings 2, Panthers 1: Mathias Brome scored his first NHL goal late in the second period and host Detroit held off Florida.

Predators 4, Blue Jackets 2: Calle Jarnkrok scored in the first and third periods, Pekka Rinne made 21 saves and Nashville won at Columbus to split the two-game series.

Nunn, Butler lead Heat in defeat of Lakers

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Kendrick Nunn scored 27 points, Jimmy Butler had 24 points and eight rebounds, and the Miami Heat held off the Los Angeles Lakers 96-94 on Saturday night in an NBA Finals rematch.

Bam Adebayo had 16 points and 10 rebounds for the Heat in the teams’ first meeting since the Lakers won their 17th championship with a six-game victory over Miami four months ago.

LeBron James had 19 points, nine assists and nine rebounds for Los Angeles. The defending NBA champions lost their second straight game without starters Anthony Davis and Dennis Schröder.

James stole the Heat’s inbound pass with 8.4 seconds left to create one last chance for the Lakers, but the 17-time All-Star passed off to Alex Caruso, who missed a three-pointer at the buzzer.

Hornets 102, Warriors 100: Seconds after Golden State’s Draymond Green was ejected, Terry Rozier hit an off-balance jumper from the left corner as time expired to give host Charlotte a wild victory.

Rozier — who had 36 points — made the winner after Green received two technical fouls and was ejected with 9.3 seconds for arguing the outcome of a jump ball.

The Warriors were leading by two when officials ruled Hornets coach James Borrego had called a timeout as Gordon Hayward came down with the jump ball. Green began jumping around the court, screaming at officials that Golden State had tied up Hayward and it should have been another jump ball.

Suns 128, Grizzlies 97: Devin Booker scored 23 points, hitting five of Phoenix’s franchise-record 24 three-pointers, and Chris Paul passed Oscar Robertson for six place on the NBA’s career assist list in a romp over Memphis.

Paul had 16 points and six assists. He has 9,891 assists, four more than Robertson had in his Hall of Fame career.

Wizards 118, Trail Blazers 111: Russell Westbrook had 27 points, 13 assists and 11 rebounds, and visiting Washington snapped Portland’s six-game winning streak.

Bulls 122, Kings 114: Zach LaVine scored 38 points and host Chicago beat Sacramento.