

NATO calls for trans-Atlantic unity

By SLOBODAN LEKIC

Stars and Stripes

Senior officials from NATO's 30 member states discussed on Tuesday a range of issues confronting the alliance, including how to counter Moscow following its defense ministry's announcement that it would strengthen its forces in western Russia.

The virtual meeting of foreign and defense ministers came just a day after the Russian statement, and after a training overflight of all 30 members of the alliance by U.S. B-52 strategic bombers.

The talks are supposed to advance the agenda for a summit of NATO heads of states and governments on June 14 in Brussels.

On Monday, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters that NATO has seen an increased Russian military presence in several areas, including the Arctic, the Baltic and Black seas, the Mediterranean and Middle East.

"This is one of the main reasons why NATO over the last years has increased the readiness of our forces and also why we have

deployed battlegroups to the eastern part of the alliance," he said. "NATO is there to protect and defend all allies."

Tensions with Moscow have simmered since Russian troops seized control of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and have since backed eastern Ukrainian separatists in an ongoing conflict that has left thousands dead.

In March, Russia stationed more than 100,000 troops in its border region with Ukraine in a move that stoked fears of a possible invasion.

Moscow said the buildup was part of a defensive exercise and withdrew much of those forces in May. But Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu told them to leave their weapons behind for Russia's Zapad (West) 2021 military exercises in September, The Associated Press reported.

Shoigu announced Monday that its military would establish "another 20 units and formations" in western Russia by the end of this year. He did not provide any further details on the units but added that they would

receive "2,000 new weapons systems."

Pointing to increasingly frequent exercises by NATO forces and flights by U.S. strategic bombers near Russia's borders, Shoigu charged that such actions "destroy the international security system and force us to take the relevant countermeasures."

The United States and its allies are conducting a series of exercises this spring across the Continent. The Defender Europe-21 drills, now in their second year, involve about 30,000 troops from NATO members and partner states like Sweden and Finland.

NATO's meetings are also expected to address the latest developments on Ukraine as well as the alliance's rapidly decreasing engagement in Afghanistan, from which the last coalition forces are scheduled to withdraw by Sept. 11.

"This is a pivotal moment for our alliance, and our collective security," Stoltenberg said ahead of the meeting. "In a more competitive and unpredictable world, we need trans-Atlantic unity."

Aquilino makes 1st overseas visit as INDOPACOM chief

By SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Adm. John Aquilino, on his first overseas trip as commander of U.S. forces in the Indo-Pacific, placed a wreath at a memorial to fallen troops Tuesday before meeting with Japan's top civilian and military leaders.

The day after Memorial Day, when America honors its own fallen, Aquilino called at Japan's Ministry of Defense in Tokyo and paid tribute to Japanese service members who died on duty. He assumed command of the Hawaii-based U.S. Indo-Pacific Command on April 30.

During World War II, over 2 million Japanese troops died fighting compared to 161,000 American service members.

More than 76 years after hostilities ended, the two nations are firm friends whose alliance is often described by U.S. and Japanese leaders as the cornerstone of peace

and prosperity in the region.

That sentiment was repeated by Aquilino and those he met with Tuesday, including Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi and Japan Self-Defense Forces Gen. Koji Yamazaki, chief of staff for the Joint Staff.

Suga, at the start of a meeting at his office, told Aquilino that he built a personal relationship of trust with President Joe Biden during an April summit in Washington.

"Let us, Japan and the U.S., work closely," Suga said to the admiral.

Aquilino told Suga it was particularly important for him to visit Japan in his first overseas trip as INDOPACOM leader.

"The U.S.-Japan alliance is the cornerstone of peace and security in the Pacific today," he said.

Beyond praising the alliance, the leaders said little in public about security challeng-

es they face, such as North Korean nuclear weapons and missiles and Chinese claims over the South China Sea and the Japanese-administered Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea.

Aquilino's predecessor, Adm. Philip Davidson, told the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 9 that China could invade Taiwan, 1,300 miles southwest of Tokyo, "in the next six years."

Aquilino, who commanded the U.S. Pacific Fleet before taking charge of INDOPACOM, is expected to maintain Davidson's hard line regarding Beijing.

During his confirmation hearing earlier this spring, Aquilino told senators the U.S. needs to bolster funding for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative to better challenge China's influence in the region. He also warned that Beijing was increasing its stockpile of nuclear weapons "faster than anyone previously believed."

Navy helps Japanese sailors mark their 1st Fleet Week

BY DANIEL BETANCOURT

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The coronavirus pandemic did not halt the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force's first-ever Fleet Week, a six-day event held in conjunction with Fleet Week in New York City, according to Naval Forces Japan.

The Navy and the JMSDF shifted what they hoped would be public events to a mix of real and virtual ones, like the Navy Sea Legs challenge, shared via social media.

"We are proud and honored to be celebrating Fleet Week Japan with an important partner," Naval Forces Japan spokeswoman Cmdr. Katie Cerezo told Stars and Stripes in an email. "For JMSDF to hold Fleet Week Japan at the same time as New York made sense; the ties between New York and Japan are deep and long-standing."

During Fleet Week, deployed vessels make a port call at a city for several days, their crews take in the sights and interact with the public, which is often afforded tours of the warships. Fleet Week ran in Japan and New York from May 26 through

Monday.

In the Navy Sea Leg challenge, participants climbed stairs to reach the height of iconic landmarks in New York City and across Japan. A different landmark was featured each day, ranging from 354 steps on May 26 for the Statue of Liberty to 19,600 steps over the weekend for Mount Fuji, according to a Navy news release on May 19.

Anyone who took up the challenge was encouraged to post something with the hashtag #NavySeaLegs on social media platforms Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to show they completed each event. Other hashtags associated with Fleet Week are #FleetWeekJapan and #FleetWeek-NYC.

"Despite the challenges of COVID, we still need to maintain and develop the strong relationships we've built with our JMSDF partners," Rear Adm. Brian Fort, commander of Naval Forces Japan, said in a statement provided May 25 to Stars and Stripes. "Celebrating Fleet Week jointly and with interactive challenges meant that we were able to continue to build on our ties and share our experiences together."

USAF weather squadron adds 'combat' to name

BY DAVID CHOI

Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — One of the Air Force squadrons responsible for measuring the weather on the Korean Peninsula added a new "combat" designation to its title Tuesday, signifying its unique role in supporting Army units.

The 607th Combat Weather Squadron at Camp Humphreys joins a short list of Air Force units whose primary duty is to provide Army assets with data on weather fluctuations.

"This signifies and differentiates what we do, versus what the traditional Air Force weather squadrons do," the commander of the 607th, Lt. Col. Kevin Bourne, told Stars and Stripes on Sunday. "That name change basically puts us into a bracket of our own and really gives us the identity of working with, living with, and supporting Army operations."

"It sets us apart and really gives us our own identity," he said.

The 607th, unlike traditional weather squadrons in the Air Force, is expected to seamlessly embed with and support Army units. This requires the airmen to receive additional training on land navigation, hand-to-hand combat and weapons, Bourne said. The Army does not have a dedicated weather forecaster career field and requires the support of units like the 607th.

The squadron's roughly 60 service members use portable meteorological systems to measure the weather throughout South Korea, which then makes its way into both Army ground and aviation assets' risk assessments.

"Everything requires planning and weather is a part of that," said Master Sgt. Sean Reynolds, a weather forecaster. "Before pilots can take off, they need to get a valid weather brief. Winds, visibility and thunderstorms make risk assessments."

Accurately measuring the peninsula's weather remains an important task, particularly for aviation units, Reynolds added. The mountainous terrain isolates inclement weather, such as tropical storms, which aviators use in their flight planning.

S. Korea police: US troops at huge beach party ignored virus rules

BY MATTHEW KEELER
AND YOO KYONG CHANG

Stars and Stripes

OSAN AIR BASE, South Korea — U.S. Forces Korea is cooperating with an investigation by Korean National Police into allegations of service members' misconduct at a popular beach in Busan over Memorial Day weekend, according to a USFK statement Tuesday.

Haeundae Police responded to more than 30 reports on Saturday night of a large party on the beach involving 1,500 or more foreigners. Many were disregarding South Korea's coronavirus rules for wearing masks in public areas, maintaining 6 feet between individuals and limiting groups to five people, an officer who responded to the complaints told Stars and Stripes on Tuesday.

Additional complaints included drinking, smoking, setting off fireworks, loud music, singing and close-contact dancing. Although drinking is allowed, smoking and the use of fireworks are prohibited on public beaches.

Many foreigners at the beach "seem to be USFK service members because they wore a crew cut," the police officer said. "I mean, cropped close in military style. They seemed to have gathered there for enjoying a U.S. holiday called Memorial Day."

South Korean government officials typically speak to the media on condition of anonymity.

USFK acknowledged the complaints in a statement Monday from spokesman Col. Lee Peters. The command declined further comment, citing the Korean police investigation.

Iraq embassy attack caused \$35M in damage

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

An Iranian-backed militia's New Year's 2020 attack on the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad caused \$35 million worth of damage, a government watchdog agency report found.

The losses made up the bulk of over \$37 million in total fire damages at U.S. diplomatic facilities overseas in fiscal year 2020, said a footnote to a State Department Inspector General report released last week about the department's global fire protection program.

The note attributes the damages to a fire "following a terrorist attack" without further details, but a State Department spokesperson asked to clarify the footnote told the news website Code and Dagger that "hostile militia attacks" damaged embassy access points on Dec. 31, 2019. The Baghdad attack began that night and continued into the next day.

"What you saw was Iranian-backed terrorists ... come into the American embassy and

posing a risk to American diplomats and personnel inside the embassy," then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in an appearance on Fox News at the time.

The embassy attack came days after U.S. airstrikes hit sites in Iraq and Syria that the Defense Department said were used by the Iran-backed militia Kataeb Hezbollah. The Pentagon has blamed the group for dozens of rocket attacks on bases housing Americans in Iraq in the past two years, including one that killed an Iraqi American contractor in Kirkuk days after Christmas 2019.

After the airstrikes, mobs waving militia flags penetrated and torched three high-security gate reception buildings meant to hold off attackers long enough for Marines and other security personnel to set up deadlier defenses, Time magazine revealed in a detailed report of the attack last year.

Destruction of the gate buildings alone was estimated at about \$20 million, the magazine

reported, citing an unnamed senior security official who deemed it money well spent because it bought time for the staff inside the compound. The facility, nearly the size of Vatican City, housed some 1,300 personnel, the State Department has said.

The mob also threw Molotov cocktails over the perimeter wall, apparently attempting to ignite the embassy's fuel depot, but that fire was put out before it caused a larger explosion, Time reported.

The State Department's Bureau of Overseas Building Operations, which is responsible for the fire protection program, did not immediately respond to a Stars and Stripes inquiry about the damages.

The destruction made the department's fire losses last year the most on record in the last six years, the IG found, compared to a low of about \$360,000 for an unspecified year in the same period. The number of fire incidents each year ranged from 95 to 154 in that time.

Austin: Cruz's claim about image Army projects emboldens Russia

The Dallas Morning News

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin slammed Sen. Ted Cruz on Monday for accusing the Army of projecting an image of "pansies" because of its inclusive recruiting policies, asserting that the Texas Republican's rhetoric only emboldens adversaries.

China and Russia "would like to capitalize on talking points like that," the Pentagon chief told CNN in a Memorial Day interview, insisting the U.S. military will never be "soft."

Earlier in May, Cruz complained that "woke" policies have undermined military readiness, amplifying conservative complaints about a recruiting ad that featured a female soldier raised by two moms.

"Holy crap," Cruz wrote in a tweet. "Perhaps a woke, emasculated military is not the best idea."

He escalated his attack by complaining of a "woke cancer" afflicting the military. "We have the greatest military on earth, but Dem politicians and woke media are trying to turn them into pansies," he asserted.

"I think we're doing a great job in terms of recruiting the right kinds of people, providing access to people from every corner, every walk of life in this country," Austin told CNN, insisting that diversity "must be a part of who we are."

The uproar began with a viral video that contrasts the Army ad, featuring a soldier who marched for gay rights as a girl, with an uber-macho Russian recruitment ad that shows chiseled soldiers doing pushups, paratroopers jumping from planes and a sniper taking aim in the snow. Cruz's "holy crap" assessment was a comment on that video as he retweeted it.

LGBTQ advocates and Democratic veterans have accused Cruz of amplifying Kremlin propaganda.

He has insisted that it's a distortion to interpret his comments as attacking the military, rather than the progressive ideology reflected in the ad that features Cpl. Emma Malonord.

"This is the story of a soldier who operates your nation's Patriot Missile Defense Systems," she says in the partly animated video. "It begins in California with a little girl raised by two moms."

Young Emma is seen playing violin and marching for gay rights — "I like to think I've been defending freedom from an early age." A top high school student and a sorority girl, "I needed my own adventures, my own challenge. And after meeting with an Army recruiter, I found it — a way to prove my inner strength and maybe shatter some stereotypes along the way."

Huge American flag stolen from vets cemetery

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Authorities said a huge American flag and several smaller flags were stolen from a Southern California veterans cemetery over the Memorial Day weekend.

Les' Melnyk, a spokesperson for the Department of Veterans Affairs' National Cemetery Administration, said the garrison flag at Los Angeles National Cemetery was reported stolen sometime late Sunday or early Monday.

The cemetery's gates were closed at the time, Melnyk said. Veterans Affairs police are investigating the theft of the flag, which measures 25 feet by 30 feet, he said.

The crime "cannot detract in the slightest way from the honor and respect we pay on this Memorial Day to those service men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice for our nation," Melnyk said.

Rebekah Adams, a volunteer at the Los Angeles National Cemetery Support Foundation, said it would be difficult to remove the flag that is usually handled by three people.

"It's so sad and shocking something like this would happen on Memorial Day," Adams said.

Vaccine push for Olympics likely too late

Associated Press

TOKYO — It may be too little, too late.

That's the realization sinking in as Japan scrambles to catch up on a frustratingly slow vaccination drive less than two months before the Summer Olympics, delayed by a year because of the coronavirus pandemic, are scheduled to start.

The Olympics risk becoming an incubator for "a Tokyo variant," as 15,000 foreign athletes and tens of thousands of officials, sponsors and journalists from about 200 countries descend on — and potentially mix with — a largely unvaccinated Japanese population, said Dr. Naoto Ueyama, a physician, head of the Japan Doctors Union.

With infections in Tokyo and other heavily populated areas currently at high levels and hospitals already under strain treating serious cases despite a state of emergency, experts have warned there is little slack in the system.

Even if the country succeeds in meeting its goal of fully vaccinating all 36 million elderly by the end of July — already a week into the Games — about 70% of the population would not be inoculated. And many have dismissed the target as overly optimistic anyway.

To meet it, Japan is vowing to soon start administering 1 million doses daily. It currently is only giving 500,000 per day, already a big improvement after

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga called on military doctors and nurses and started making legal exceptions to recruit other vaccinators in order to boost the drive.

"Vaccinations under the current pace are not going to help prevent infections during the Olympics," Tokyo Medical Association Chairman Haruo Ozaki said. "The Olympics can trigger a global spread of different variants of the virus."

The International Olympic Committee says more than 80% of athletes and staff staying in the Olympic Village on Tokyo Bay will be vaccinated — and they are expected to remain largely in a bubble at the village and venues. On Tuesday, Japan

started vaccinating athletes who will go to the Games, the Japanese Olympic Committee said.

But vaccination rates are not clear for others who will work at or attend the Games and are coming from abroad, including hard-hit regions, and experts warn that even strict rules won't prevent all mingling, especially among non-athletes.

Prominent medical journals have questioned the wisdom of pushing ahead with the Tokyo Games and the Asahi Shimbun — the country's second-largest newspaper — has called for them to be canceled, reflecting widespread opposition to holding the Olympics now among the Japanese population.

Calif. prepares to ease COVID-19 restrictions

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Californians headed to campgrounds, beaches and restaurants over the long holiday weekend as the state prepared to shed some of its coronavirus rules.

Southern California beaches were busy with families barbecuing and children playing in the sand and surf. Business owners said they were scrambling to hire workers to keep up with the stream of customers eager to get out since virus cases have fallen and vaccinations have risen.

"It feels very, very close to normal," Bob Alfero, a resident of seaside Santa Monica, told KCBS-TV.

The surge in travel and recreation comes as California prepares to relax social distancing and masking rules in two weeks as long as coronavirus cases remain low.

California was the first U.S. state to impose a statewide shutdown when the virus emerged in March 2020 and the nation's ep-

icenter for the disease in early 2021.

But the state has reported a significant turnaround. In recent weeks, newly reported infections in California have fallen below 1,000 on some days and the state's positivity rate has been 1%.

The state is now expected to end its tier system for business operations on June 15. Already, about 90% of California's population is in the lower two of the state's four tiers guiding business activities.

Large-scale indoor events will have vaccination or negative test requirements until at least October.

At Los Angeles International Airport, travel reached a 2021 record on Friday with more than 78,000 passengers passing through Transportation Security Administration checkpoints, airport officials said. Daily passenger traffic is still about half of what it was two years ago but has been steadily increasing, the Los Angeles Times reported.

Biden to honor victims of Tulsa race massacre

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden was set to take part in a remembrance of one of the nation's darkest — and largely forgotten — moments of racial violence Tuesday when he helps commemorate the 100th anniversary of the destruction of a thriving Black community in Tulsa, Okla.

Biden's appearance, in which he was to mark the deaths of hundreds of Black people killed by a white mob a century ago, comes amid a national reckoning on racial justice.

Biden will be the first president to participate in remembrances of the destruction of what was known as "Black Wall Street." In 1921 — on May 31 and June 1 — some Tulsans looted and burned the Greenwood district.

He will meet privately with survivors of the massacre. Up to 300 Black Tulsans were killed, and thousands of survivors were forced for a time into internment camps overseen by the National Guard. Burned bricks and a fragment of a church basement are about all that survive today of the more than 30-block historically

Black district.

During Tuesday's meeting, Biden planned to "convey his heartfelt gratitude for their bravery in sharing the stories of the trauma and violence that was wrought on them and their families," said White House principal deputy press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre.

Biden will also "explain that we need to know our history from the original sin of slavery, through the Tulsa race massacre to racial discrimination and housing in order to build common ground, to truly repair and rebuild," she said.

The Tulsa massacre has only recently entered the national discourse — and the presidential visit will put an even brighter spotlight on the event.

"This is so important because we have to recognize what we have done if we are going to be otherwise," said Eddie Glaude, chair of the Center for African American Studies at Princeton University. Biden's visit, Glaude said, "has to be more than symbolic. To tell the truth is the precondition for reconciliation, and reconciliation is the basis for repair."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man flees troopers in high-speed chase

ID COEUR D'ALENE — A Spokane, Wash., man was tased following a dangerous high-speed chase in northern Idaho.

Idaho State Police said Jonathan D. Lewis, 33, was driving a Hyundai SUV erratically on Interstate 90 and trying to pass other vehicles between lanes, CBS2 reported.

Troopers learned the SUV had been stolen and tried pulling Lewis over. That's when he took off at a high rate of speed, police said. At one point, Lewis hit the brakes causing a trooper to swerve quickly. He then collided with the trooper's vehicle.

The pursuit continued on I-90 and Highway 95 at speeds higher than 110 mph.

Lewis eventually collided with two more vehicles, police said. A spike strip was used to end the chase.

Bear moved out of state treks 90 miles back

MI TRAVERSE CITY — An apparently home-sick bear who was moved from an area in northwestern Michigan where he had raided bird feeders and trash cans has traveled about 90 miles back to the same location.

A radio collar placed on the bear indicates he's back in Grand Traverse County following his removal in April to the Alpena area, the Traverse City Record-Eagle reported.

The bear was trapped by state wildlife officials. He was given a lip tattoo, ear tags and fitted with the electronic collar before being carted to the eastern Lower Peninsula.

"For some reason he likes the

Lake Michigan coast," said Steve Griffith, a wildlife biologist for the DNR's Traverse City office.

Airport to change name after years of fighting

FL MELBOURNE — After years of fighting and litigation over who can include "Orlando" in the name of their central Florida airport, Orlando International Airport officials and Orlando Melbourne International Airport officials have tentatively agreed that Orlando Melbourne International Airport will change its name to Melbourne Orlando International Airport.

The Melbourne International Airport began operations in 1928 and changed its name in 2015 to Orlando Melbourne International Airport in an effort to attract more travelers.

A lawsuit claimed the Orlando Melbourne International Airport was misleading passengers into believing they were going to the theme park mecca in the middle of the state instead of Florida's Atlantic coast.

Juvenile facing charges in expensive golf course fire

AZ CAMP VERDE — An 11-year-old boy is facing multiple felony charges after a fire caused more than \$30,000 worth of damage at a defunct golf course near Camp Verde, according to authorities.

Yavapai County Sheriff's officials said Copper Canyon and U.S. Forest Service fire crews responded to a fire at the old Beaver Creek Golf Course in Lake Montezuma northeast of Camp Verde. They said crews contained the fire, but two vacant structures were burned.

Witnesses reported seeing three boys playing with aerosol cans and a lighter before the fire

started.

Sheriff's officials told The Arizona Republic that an investigation showed the 11-year-old boy intentionally started the fire and the two other boys tried to stop him and put out the fire before it grew.

Mall evacuated after shots; 2 teens detained

PA PITTSBURGH — A fight between multiple people at a western Pennsylvania mall culminated in gunfire, forcing stores to lock down and shoppers to evacuate, police said. No one was injured.

Two young men were arrested in connection with the shooting at the Ross Park Mall in Ross Township and were being questioned, said Police Detective Sergeant Brian Kohlhepp.

Police recovered three guns from the two suspects, both of whom are believed to be 17 years old, Kohlhepp said. Neither of them was immediately charged.

He said the investigation was hampered because the mall does not have surveillance cameras, although multiple stores inside do.

Metro region adding new area code amid growth

CO DENVER — The Denver metro area will have a new area code next year when available phone numbers starting with 303 and 720 are expected to run out.

The Colorado Sun reported all current phone customers can keep their existing phone numbers and area codes. But starting in April 2022, people requesting new telephone service or to move their service may be assigned the new 983 area code.

The change comes as the state's population continues its explo-

sive growth. Colorado added about 1.5 million people over the last two decades.

Looped cable not noose, college president says

CT NEW BRITAIN — Officials at a college in Connecticut received a complaint of a noose hanging from a construction site on campus but determined that the looped cable was not, in fact, a noose.

"A construction crew working on campus hung an American flag from a crane's cable in recognition of Memorial Day," Central Connecticut State University President Zulma R. Toro said in a news release quoted by the Hartford Courant. "The cable has a steel loop at its end."

Atlantic Shark Institute to study 5 shark species

RI SOUTH KINGSTOWN — The arrival of summer in Rhode Island also means the arrival of sharks.

Jon Dodd, executive director of the Atlantic Shark Institute in South Kingstown, hopes to learn more about five species of shark by catching and tagging several, dropping video cameras into the water to observe them in their natural habitat, and monitoring acoustic equipment to get a better idea of their travel patterns.

"These sharks are critical to the health of our oceans in a wide variety of ways, and that makes this research all the more important," he told The Providence Journal. "We can't continue to take over 100 million sharks out of the ocean, every year, and not create longterm issues to the health and well-being of our planet."

The institute is studying great white, shortfin mako, thresher, porbeagle and blue sharks.

— From wire reports

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Osaka withdraws from French Open

Associated Press

Naomi Osaka withdrew from the French Open on Monday and wrote on Twitter that she would be taking a break from competition, a dramatic turn of events for a four-time Grand Slam champion who said she experiences “huge waves of anxiety” before speaking to the media and revealed she has “suffered long bouts of depression.”

Osaka’s agent, Stuart Duguid, confirmed in an email to The Associated Press that the world’s No. 2-ranked tennis player was pulling out before her second-round match at the clay-court tournament in Paris.

The stunning move came a day after Osaka, a 23-year-old who was born in Japan and moved with her family to the U.S. at age 3, was fined \$15,000 for skipping the postmatch news conference after her first-round victory at the French Open. She also was threatened by all four Grand Slam tournaments with possible additional punishment, including disqualification or suspension, if she continued with her intention — which Osaka revealed last week on Twitter — to not “do any press during Roland Garros.”

She framed the matter as a mental health issue, saying that it can create self-doubt to have to answer questions after a loss.

“First and foremost we are sorry and sad for Naomi Osaka. The outcome of Naomi withdrawing from Roland Garros is unfortunate,” French tennis federation president Gilles Moretton said Monday. “We wish her the best and the quickest possible recovery. And we look forward to having Naomi in our tournament next year.”

Moretton said the four major tournaments, and the professional tennis tours, “remain very committed to all athletes’ well-being and to continually improving every aspect of players’ experience in our tournament, including with the media, like we always have.”

In Monday’s post, Osaka spoke about dealing with depression since the 2018 U.S. Open, which she won by beating Serena Williams in a final filled with controversy.

“I would never trivialize mental health or use the term lightly,” Osaka wrote, explaining that speaking with the media makes her anxious.

“I think now the best thing for the tournament, the other

players and my well-being is that I withdraw so that everyone can get back to focusing on the tennis going on in Paris,” Osaka wrote. “I never wanted to be a distraction and I accept that my timing was not ideal and my message could have been clearer.”

She continued: “Anyone that knows me knows I’m introverted, and anyone that has seen me at the tournaments will notice that I’m often wearing headphones as that helps dull my social anxiety. ... I am not a natural public speaker and get huge waves of anxiety before I speak to the world’s media.”

Williams was asked about Osaka on Monday after winning her opening match in the first scheduled night session in French Open history.

“I feel for Naomi. I feel like I wish I could give her a hug because I know what it’s like. ... I’ve been in those positions,” Williams said. “We have different personalities, and people are different. Not everyone is the same. I’m thick; other people are thin. Everyone is different and everyone handles things differently. You just have to let her handle it the way she wants to, in the best way she thinks she can, and

that’s the only thing I can say. I think she’s doing the best that she can.”

Osaka has never been past the third round on the French Open’s red clay. It takes seven victories to win a Grand Slam title, which she has done four times at hard-court tournaments: the U.S. Open in 2018 and 2020; the Australian Open in 2019 and this February.

Tennis players are required to attend news conferences if requested to do so. The maximum fine of \$20,000 is not a big deal to Osaka, the world’s highest-earning female athlete, thanks to endorsement contracts totaling tens of millions of dollars.

“Mental health and awareness around it is one of the highest priorities to the WTA,” the women’s tennis tour said in a statement emailed by a spokeswoman. “We have invested significant resources, staffing and educational tools in this area for the past 20-plus years and continue to develop our mental health support system for the betterment of the athletes and the organization. We remain here to support and assist Naomi in any way possible and we hope to see her back on the court soon.”

Top-ranked Barty, Nadal prevail in opening matches

Associated Press

PARIS—At the mercy of Bernarda Pera’s deep groundstrokes and struggling with her moves, top-ranked Ashleigh Barty gave the impression that her return to Roland Garros would be short-lived.

In ideal playing conditions on the sun-kissed Court Philippe Chatrier, Barty was often left stranded on the red clay by the big shots of her American opponent. But two years after claiming the French Open title, the top-ranked Australian fought hard enough to overcome the challenge and eventually prevailed 6-4, 3-6, 6-2 on Tuesday.

Rafael Nadal’s bid for a record-breaking 21st Grand Slam title started with a straight-

set victory.

Nadal twice was a point from dropping the third set against Alexei Popyrin but eventually held on there and wound up winning the first-round match at Court Philippe Chatrier 6-3, 6-2, 7-6 (3).

Nadal has now won 26 consecutive sets at Roland Garros dating to the 2019 final that he won.

The seeded players in the women’s draw scheduled early in the day got off to solid starts. Fifth-seeded Elina Svitolina trailed 5-2 in the second set but beat wild card Oceane Babel 6-2, 7-5. Australian Open runner-up Jennifer Brady breezed past Anastasiya Sevastova 6-3, 6-3 to reach the second

round and match her best performance at the French Open.

Venus Williams was runner-up at Roland Garros against her sister, Serena, 19 years ago but has now lost her opening match at the clay-court major for the fourth year in a row.

The American veteran’s 24th appearance at the French Open ended in a 6-3, 6-1 defeat against Ekaterina Alexandrova of Russia.

Two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova pulled out of the tournament because of an ankle injury. Kvitova said she fell and hurt her ankle during “post-match press requirements” after her first-round victory on Sunday.

Wizards avoid sweep, Embiid hurt for 76ers

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — After the Philadelphia 76ers lost NBA MVP finalist Joel Embiid to what the team called a sore right knee late in the first quarter Monday night, they lost their lead — and their chance at the franchise's first playoff sweep in 36 years.

With Embiid gone for most of Game 4, Bradley Beal's 27 points, Russell Westbrook's 12th career playoff triple-double and Washington's strategy of fouling Ben Simmons whenever possible down the stretch all helped the Wizards beat the 76ers 122-114 to cut Philadelphia's series edge to 3-1.

"Each guy thought they had to win the game for us," 76ers coach Doc Rivers said about what happened to his team's offense after Embiid departed.

"You've still got to play right. ... Tonight we didn't play right, on either end."

Asked for more information about Embiid's knee, Rivers said, "I really don't know," and added that some "precautionary" tests will be done Tuesday.

Tobias Harris, who led Philadelphia with 21 points and 13 rebounds, summed up his club's situation this way: "It's not the end of the world."

Simmons' take?

"Obviously," Simmons said, "we need Joel to win. He's a big part of this team."

But the center headed to the locker room late in the first quarter after taking a hard fall behind the baseline when his shot was blocked by Robin Lopez. Embiid tried to play on, wincing and leaning over dur-

ing breaks in play, before checking out eventually and limping off.

He never returned and finished with eight points and six rebounds in 11 minutes.

"We took advantage of what was on the floor," Beal said.

The Sixers led by as many as 11 in the opening period but that was down to 61-60 at halftime.

Jazz 120, Grizzlies 113: Donovan Mitchell scored 30 points, and top-seeded Utah won at Memphis for a 3-1 series lead.

All-Star Rudy Gobert scored 13 of his 17 points in the third quarter. Jordan Clarkson, the NBA's 6th man of the year winner, scored 24 for the Jazz. Bojan Bogdanovic added 13, Mike Conley had 11.

Ja Morant, who averaged

33.7 points through the first three games, scored 23 and had 12 assists for the Grizzlies. Dillon Brooks and Jaren Jackson Jr. each added 21, De'Anthony Melton had all 15 of his points in the fourth quarter and Jonas Valanciunas finished with 14 points and 12 rebounds.

Last season, Utah blew a 3-1 series edge in losing its first-round series in seven games to Denver in the bubble. This time around, the team with the NBA's best record in the regular season is going home trying to close out this first-round, best-of-seven series on Wednesday night in Salt Lake City.

"We obviously remember that feeling that we had last season, and it's not something we want to experience again," Conley said.

Cizikas' OT goal lifts Islanders past Bruins

Associated Press

BOSTON — Casey Cizikas saw the open ice ahead. And he knew the Boston defense would be coming on quickly.

"I knew that D-man was going to be tracking me hard," Cizikas said Monday night after his breakaway goal with 14:48 gone in overtime gave the Islanders a 4-3 victory over the Bruins and sent the second-round series back to New York tied at one game apiece.

"I just wanted to get a shot off," Cizikas added, "and I was able to beat him."

Cizikas picked up a loose puck that bounced off Boston forward Charlie Coyle's skate and he raced in all alone on Tuukka Rask before beating him high on the stick side. A fourth-line center, Cizikas hadn't scored since April 1 and hadn't netted a playoff goal since 2015.

"It's been a real long time. You're just trying to do the right things in overtime. Be in the right spot," he said. "I was lucky for that puck to pop off in the middle there, and give me an opportunity to get that one."

Semyon Varlamov returned to the net to make 39 saves for the Islanders, who head back to the Nassau Coliseum in Uniondale, N.Y., for Game 3 on Thursday night. The

Islanders said they will be increasing capacity to 12,000 for the second round after hosting 9,000 for Game 6 of the first-round series against the Penguins.

"We know how that barn rocks," Cizikas said. "We're going to build off that crowd. We're looking forward to it."

Josh Bailey, Kyle Palmieri and Jean-Gabriel Pageau all scored in the second period — with a little help from the Bruins — as New York rallied from a 1-0 deficit to take a 3-1 lead.

But Brad Marchand set up Patrice Bergeron's one-timer to make it a one-goal game midway through the third. Then Marchand tied it with a goal of his own about five minutes later.

"Obviously, we were on our heels a little bit, but I thought we regrouped," Islanders coach Barry Trotz said. "That's the type of series I expected going into it, and I expect the same when we get on the Island."

Varlamov, who started both losses in the six-game victory over Pittsburgh in the first round, stopped all six Boston shots in overtime.

"We made a play that obviously was ill-advised, and they scored on a breakaway," Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy said. "Here we are, it's 1-1. They're a good hockey

club. We certainly didn't expect it to be easy."

Tuukka Rask made 38 saves in his 100th career playoff game, and Coyle scored Boston's other goal.

But that doesn't mean the Bruins weren't putting pucks in the nets.

Canadiens 3, Maple Leafs 1: Carey Price made 30 saves and visiting Montreal advanced to the second round by beating Toronto in Game 7 of their first-round playoff series.

Brendan Gallagher, Corey Perry and Tyler Toffoli also scored for the Canadiens, who stormed back from a 3-1 deficit for the third time in franchise history to win a series. Eric Staal had two assists for Montreal, which advanced to the second round for the first time since 2015.

The Canadiens will take on Winnipeg after the Jets swept Edmonton in the Canadian-based North Division's other series. Game 1 is Wednesday at Winnipeg.

William Nylander had a late goal and Jack Campbell stopped 20 shots for Toronto, which hasn't advanced in the postseason since 2004. The Maple Leafs appeared in control of this series while taking a 3-1 lead, but Montreal forced a deciding Game 7 by winning two in a row in overtime.

Red-hot Rays keep Yankees reeling

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Rich Hill finished May with the lowest monthly ERA in 75 years of a pitcher in his 40s, and the Tampa Bay Rays won for the 16th time in 17 games by keeping up their domination of the reeling Yankees with a 3-1 victory Monday.

Hill (4-2), a 41-year-old left-hander who is the oldest player in Rays' history, improved to 3-0 against the Yankees this season. Hill was 3-1 with a 0.78 ERA in six May starts.

Miguel Andújar homered in the seventh, just his second since 2018. J.P. Feyereisen, acquired May 21 from Milwaukee for short-stop Willy Adames, finished a five-hitter for his third save.

Astros 11, Red Sox 2: Kyle Tucker had a season-best three hits and tied a career high with four RBIs as host Houston handed former bench coach Alex Cora and the Boston Red Sox their most lopsided loss of the season.

This was the first time Cora, now managing the Red Sox again, had faced the Astros since being suspended last year for his role in Houston's illegal sign-stealing scheme in 2017.

Cora helped the Astros win the 2017 World Series as bench coach, then managed Boston to the 2018 championship. He was let go by the Red Sox following Major League Baseball's investigation into Houston, then suspended by MLB through the 2020 postseason before getting rehired in Boston last November.

Dodgers 9, Cardinals 4: Chris Taylor drove in three runs with a tiebreaking double that capped a 14-pitch at-bat in the sixth inning, rallying host Los Angeles past St. Louis to snap a three-game skid.

Taylor fouled off nine pitches — four in a row twice — by Genesis Cabrera before delivering the two-out double for a 6-3 lead. Two batters earlier, Cabrera issued a bases-loaded walk to Will Smith that tied the game.

Cubs 7, Padres 2: Javier Báez and Patrick Wisdom each homered twice, helping Kohl Stewart and host Chicago beat San Diego.

Stewart pitched five innings of one-run ball in his first major league win since July 21, 2019, for Minnesota against Oakland. Stewart (1-0) opted out of last season because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mets 6, Diamondbacks 2: Pete Alonso homered and had four RBIs in his return from the injured list, Jacob deGrom pitched six shutout innings and New York won at Arizona for its fifth straight victory.

Making his second start since coming off the IL, deGrom (4-2) allowed two hits while striking out eight and walking none. He lowered his ERA to 0.71, the lowest for a qualifying starter through May since Phillies left-hander Curt Short was at 0.64 in 1964.

White Sox 8-1, Indians 6-3: José Ramírez's two-run homer and a solid start by reliever Cal Quantrill led host Cleveland over Chicago, giving the team its second straight doubleheader split in two days.

Ramírez connected in the third inning off Jimmy Lambert (0-1) to break a 1-all tie as the Indians, who rallied to win Game 2 on Sunday against Toronto, got back the game they dropped earlier to the AL Central-leading White Sox.

Reds 11, Phillies 1: Max Schrock homered, tripled and doubled before leaving with an apparent leg injury, Wade Miley pitched six solid innings and host Cincinnati cruised past Philadelphia.

Kyle Farmer homered and drove in five runs as Cincinnati sent the Phillies to their third straight loss.

Brewers 3, Tigers 2 (10): Luis Urías hit a drive that bounced over the wall and brought home Omar Narváez with the winning run in the 10th inning and Milwaukee edged visiting Detroit.

The Brewers won their fifth straight and snapped the Tigers' three-game winning streak.

Twins 3, Orioles 2 (10): Rob Refsnyder bounced back from a run-in with the center-field fence to score the go-ahead run in the 10th inning on a wild pitch and visiting Minnesota handed Baltimore its 14th consecutive loss.

The Orioles' skid ties for second-longest in team history — they also dropped 14 in a row in 1954, the season the club moved from St. Louis to Baltimore. The Orioles' worst losing streak came in 1988 when they lost their first 21 games of the year.

Giants 6, Angels 1: Evan Longoria hit a two-run homer before leaving with a sore muscle on his right side, and Johnny Cueto pitched seven stellar innings in San Francisco's victory over visiting Los Angeles.

Braves 5, Nationals 3: Ronald Acuña Jr. hit his 16th home run to tie for the big league lead in host Atlanta's win over Washington.

Mariners 6, Athletics 5 (10): Ty France hit a tying single and scored on Tom Murphy's sacrifice fly in the 10th inning as host Seattle rallied past Oakland for its fifth straight win.

Royals 7, Pirates 3: Adalberto Mondesi hit a two-run homer and Mike Minor pitched six solid innings to send Kansas City past visiting Pittsburgh.

Arkansas lands No. 1 seed in NCAA Tournament

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Arkansas was rewarded Monday for its dominant run through the Southeastern Conference, landing the No. 1 national seed in the NCAA baseball tournament.

The Razorbacks (46-10) won all 10 of their SEC series and wrapped up their first conference tournament championship on Sunday. After losing three straight games in March, the Hogs never again lost consecutive games.

This is the third tournament in a row that Arkansas has been a top-eight national seed.

"It's still really special just to sit there and see your name called," coach Dave Van Horn said after his team gathered to watch the selection show. "Such a good season up to this point."

The 64-team tournament opens Friday in 16 regionals. Winners advance to eight best-of-three super regionals. Those winners move on to the College World Series in Omaha.

The top eight national seeds are assured of hosting super regionals if they win their regionals.

The national seeds following Arkansas:

Texas (42-15); Tennessee (45-16); Vanderbilt (40-15); Arizona (40-15); TCU (40-17); Mississippi State (40-15); and Texas Tech.

Texas has its highest national seed since it was No. 2 in 2010, and the program will be making its NCAA-best 60th appearance in the tournament.

Tennessee, at No. 3, is hosting a regional for the first time since 2005, the year the Volunteers last advanced to the CWS. There was a more relaxed vibe around the team on Monday compared with in 2019, when the Vols barely made the tournament with a losing SEC record.