

Russia pummels Ukraine's No. 2 city

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian forces stepped up their attacks on crowded urban areas Tuesday, bombarding the central square in Ukraine's second-biggest city and Kyiv's main TV tower in what the country's president called a blatant campaign of terror.

"Nobody will forgive. Nobody will forget," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy vowed after the bloodshed on the square in Kharkiv.

Ukrainian authorities said five people were killed in the attack on the TV tower, which is a couple of miles from central Kyiv and a short walk from numerous apartment buildings. A TV control room and a power substation were hit, and at least some Ukrainian channels briefly stopped broadcasting, officials said.

Zelenskyy's office also reported a powerful missile attack on the site of the Babyn Yar Holocaust memorial, near the tower.

At the same time, a 40-mile convoy of hundreds of Russian tanks and other vehicles advanced slowly on Kyiv in what the West feared was a bid by Russian President Vladimir Putin to topple Ukraine's government and install a Kremlin-friendly regime.

Russian forces also pressed their attack on other towns and cities across the country, including the strategic ports of Odesa and Mariupol in the south.

Day 6 of the biggest ground war in Europe since World War II found Russia increasingly isolated, beset by tough sanctions that have thrown its economy into turmoil and left the country practically friendless, apart from a few countries like China, Belarus and North Korea.

Many military experts worry that Russia may be shifting tactics. Moscow's strategy in Chechnya and Syria was to use artillery and air bombardments to pulverize cities and crush fighters' resolve.

The attack on the TV tower came after Russia's Defense Ministry announced it would target transmission facilities in the capital used by Ukraine's intelligence agency. It urged people living near such places to leave their homes.

Overall death tolls from the fighting remained unclear, but a senior Western intelligence official estimated Tuesday that more than 5,000 Russian soldiers had been captured or killed.

Britain's Ministry of Defense said it had seen an increase in Russian air and artillery strikes on populated urban areas over the past two days. The ministry also said three cities — Kharkiv, Kherson and Mariupol — were encircled by Russian forces.

In Kharkiv, with a population of about 1.5 million, at least six people were killed when the region's Soviet-era administrative building on Freedom Square was hit with what was believed to be a missile.

The attack on Freedom Square — Ukraine's largest plaza, and the nucleus of public life in the city — was seen by many Ukrainians as brazen evidence that the Russian invasion wasn't just about hitting military targets but also about breaking their spirits.

The bombardment blew out windows and walls of buildings that ring the massive square, which was piled high with debris and dust. Inside one building, chunks of plaster were scattered, and doors, ripped from their hinges, lay across hallways.

"People are under the ruins. We have pulled out bodies," said Yevhen Vasylenko, an emergency official.

Zelenskyy pronounced the attack on the main square "frank, undisguised terror" and a war crime. "This is state terrorism of the Russian Federation," he said.

In an emotional appeal to the European Parliament later, Zelenskyy said: "We are fighting also to be equal members of Europe. I believe that today we are showing everybody that is what we are."

He said 16 children had been killed around Ukraine on Monday, and he mocked Russia's claim that it is going after only military targets.

"Where are the children? What kind of military factories do they work at? What tanks are they going at?" Zelenskyy said.

Human Rights Watch said it documented a cluster bomb attack outside a hospital in Ukraine's east in recent days. Local residents also reported the use of the weapons in Kharkiv and the village of Kiyanka. The Kremlin denied using cluster bombs.

If the allegations are confirmed, that would represent a new level of brutality in the war and could lead to even further isolation of Russia.

Unbowed by Western condemnation, Russian officials upped their threats of escalation,

days after raising the specter of nuclear war. A top Kremlin official warned that the West's "economic war" against Russia could turn into a "real one."

Across the country, many Ukrainian civilians spent another night huddled in shelters, basements or corridors.

More than a half-million people have fled the country, and the U.N. human rights office said it has recorded the deaths of 136 civilians. The real toll is believed to be far higher.

"It is a nightmare, and it seizes you from the inside very strongly. This cannot be explained with words," said Kharkiv resident Ekaterina Babenko, taking shelter in a basement with neighbors for a fifth straight day. "We have small children, elderly people, and frankly speaking it is very frightening."

U.N. humanitarian coordinator Martin Griffiths said the bombings had damaged water pipes and electrical lines. "Hundreds of thousands of families are without drinking water," he said.

A Ukrainian military official said Belarusian troops joined the war Tuesday in the Chernihiv region in the north, without providing details. But just before that, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said his country had no plans to join the fight.

In Kharkiv, explosions burst one after another through a residential area in a video verified by the AP. In the background, a man pleaded with a woman to leave, and a woman cried.

Hospital workers moved a Kharkiv maternity ward to a bomb shelter. Amid mattresses piled up against the walls, pregnant women paced the crowded space, accompanied by the cries of dozens of newborns.

Russia's goals in hitting central Kharkiv were not immediately clear. Western officials speculated that it is trying to pull in Ukrainian forces to defend the city while a larger Russian force encircles Kyiv.

Russian troops continued to press toward the capital, a city of nearly 3 million. The leading edge of the convoy was 17 miles from the center of the city, according to satellite imagery from Maxar Technologies.

A senior U.S. defense official described the long convoy as "bogged down," saying Russia appeared to be pausing and regrouping to re-evaluate how to retake the momentum in the fighting.

Reading Putin: Unbalanced or exploiting fears?

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — For two decades, Vladimir Putin has struck rivals as reckless and impulsive. But his behavior in ordering an invasion of Ukraine — and now putting Russia's nuclear forces on high alert — has some in the West questioning whether the Russian president has become dangerously unstable.

In recent days, Putin has rambled on television about Ukraine, repeated conspiracy theories about neo-Nazism and Western aggression, and berated his own foreign intelligence chief on camera from the other side of a high-domed Kremlin hall where he sat alone. Now, with the West's sanctions threatening to cripple Russia's already hobbled economy, Putin has ordered the higher state of readiness for nuclear weapons, blaming the sanctions and what he called "aggressive statements against our country."

The uncertainty over his thinking adds a wild card to Russia's war on Ukraine. Western officials must confront Putin as they also wonder whether he comprehends or cares about cataclysmic consequences — or perhaps is intentionally preying on the long-held suspicions about him.

An aide to French President

Emmanuel Macron, who spoke with Putin on Monday, said the Russian leader answered Macron "without showing irritation, in a very clinical and a very determined manner."

"We can see that with President Putin's state of mind, there is a risk of escalation," added the aide, who spoke anonymously in line with the French presidency's practice on sensitive talks. "There is a risk of manipulation from President Putin to justify what is unjustifiable."

Foreign leaders have long tried to get inside Putin's head and have been wrong before. And Putin in this crisis is showing many of the same traits that he has displayed since becoming Russia's leader. Putin has unspooled conspiracy theories and outright falsehoods, directed invasions of neighbors and ordered audacious operations like interfering in the past two U.S. presidential elections.

He single-handedly made landmark decisions like the 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula, consulting only his narrow inner circle of KGB veterans and keeping everyone else in the dark. He has long been surrounded by lieutenants reluctant to risk their careers by urging caution, let alone voicing adverse opinions.

He has also talked about nuclear war and once mused that

such a conflict would end in Russians going "to heaven as martyrs."

Experts have said Putin could be using the specter of nuclear conflict to fracture the growing support for Ukraine's defense and to force concessions. His latest comments also suggest the sanctions are working.

"We have to know this is a sign that we're getting to him," said Jim Townsend, a former deputy assistant secretary of defense and a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security. "We just have to take that into account. We have to be cool."

Officials in the United States were alarmed by a 5,000-word essay published under Putin's name in July that argued Russians and Ukrainians are one people and blamed any divisions on foreign plots. One Biden administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the U.S. government's internal thinking, said the intelligence community was concerned Putin was operating from "an emotional place" and driven by long-simmering grievances.

More recently, Macron went to meet with Putin and had several long phone calls before the invasion. A top official in Macron's office said last week that Putin was "no longer the same," had become "more stiff, more

isolated," and at his core had veered into the approach now playing out.

During a five-hour dinner between the two leaders, Putin spent more time railing about NATO expansion and the 2014 revolution in Ukraine than discussing the immediate crisis.

Putin's perceived self-insulation was highlighted in recent official meetings broadcast by state television. He faced foreign leaders and close aides from the opposite end of a long table. No Russian official who spoke gave a dissenting view.

"He's not had that many people having direct inputs to him," said Sen. Mark Warner, a Virginia Democrat who chairs the Senate Intelligence Committee. "So we're concerned that this isolated individual (has) become a megalomaniac in terms of his notion of himself being the only historic figure that can rebuild old Russia or re-create the notion of the Soviet sphere."

Rep. Chris Stewart, a Utah Republican who sits on the House Intelligence Committee, said he had not seen evidence prior to the Ukraine invasion to suggest Putin was behaving irrationally, and he noted that other world leaders in history have been dismissed by outsiders as irrational. Putin, he said, has "an incredible appetite for risk when it comes to Ukraine."

Ukrainian navy: Snake Island border guards still alive

The Charlotte (N.C.) Observer

Defiant defenders of Ukraine's Snake Island — who told a Russian warship to "go f--- yourself" — are alive after reports of their deaths, the Ukrainian navy says.

The 13 Snake Island soldiers "were taken captive by Russian occupiers," Ukraine confirmed Monday. Russia launched an invasion of Ukraine on three fronts early Thursday, "bombarding cities, towns and

villages."

"We are very happy to learn that our brothers are alive and well," the Ukrainian navy wrote of its marines and border guards stationed on the island, also known as Zmii-nyi.

Initially, they were believed to have been killed by Russian forces on Thursday, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, according to CNN.

Connection with the island was cut off, however, since the invading Russians "completely destroyed the island's infrastructure: lighthouse, carnations, antennas, etc.," the Ukrainian navy said, and attempts to contact those on the island "were futile."

"Russian propaganda tries to twist the 'news' about the fact that the Ukrainian authorities 'forgotten,' 'buried' their fellows," the navy added.

Vaccine mandate for SEALs remains blocked

Fort Worth Star-Telegram

FORT WORTH, Texas — A federal appeals court denied the Biden administration's attempt to reinstate the U.S. Navy's COVID-19 vaccine requirement Monday, more than a month after a federal judge in Fort Worth initially halted the mandate.

The mandate, which required all active-duty Navy service members to be fully vaccinated by Nov. 28, is being challenged by a group of Navy SEALs and other

naval special warfare personnel. The group says the mandate violates their religious freedom and that they have unjustly been denied religious exemptions from receiving the vaccine.

Their lawsuit is against President Joe Biden, the Department of Defense, the secretary of defense and the secretary of the Navy.

In early January, U.S. District Judge Reed O'Connor of the Northern District of Texas signed

a preliminary injunction blocking the mandate while the case reaches a final judgment.

On Monday, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit denied the Department of Defense's emergency stay request, which would have allowed the mandate to go into effect as the case goes through courts.

"[Evidence] suggests that the Navy has effectively stacked the deck against even those exemptions supported by Plaintiffs' im-

mediate commanding officers and military chaplains," the three-judge panel said.

First Liberty Institute, a non-profit interest law firm based in Plano, Texas, is representing the SEALs and other personnel in the suit.

"Our military should be welcoming service members, not forcing them out because of their religious beliefs," said Mike Berry, director of military affairs for First Liberty Institute.

Full Mardi Gras is back on New Orleans streets

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — People are out to party as New Orleans' first full-dress Mardi Gras since 2020 dawns Tuesday, with a day of back-to-back parades through the city and masks against COVID-19 required only in indoor public spaces.

Parade routes are shorter than usual, because there aren't enough police for the standard ones, even with officers working 12-hour shifts as they always do on Mardi Gras and the end of the Carnival season leading up to it.

But with COVID-19 hospitalizations and case numbers falling worldwide and 92% of the city's adults at least partly vaccinated, parades are back on after a season without them. And people are ready to let the good times roll.

The crowd Sunday, when the huge Krewe of Bacchus paraded, "was a record for us in the 10 years we've been open," said Thomas Houston, bar manager at Superior Seafood and Oyster Bar, located at the start of the truncated parade route. He expected similar crowds on Fat Tuesday — a state holiday — if the weather is good. Not to mention Ash Wednesday, when people following the Catholic tradition of meatless Lenten fare are out for seafood.

"It's not just a fun money-making time, but you get to see people

who've been around for 10 years," he said.

Hotel occupancy, though, is expected to be about 66%, down about 19.5% from 2020, said Kelly Schultz, spokesperson for New Orleans & Co., the official sales and marketing organization for New Orleans' tourism industry.

Parades were canceled last year because officials realized that tightly packed crowds in 2020 had created a superspreader event, making the city an early Southern hot spot for COVID-19.

But "2020 was weird," Houston said, because two people were hit by floats and killed in the week leading up to Mardi Gras, and the mayor suspended use of multiple floats hitched behind one tractor.

"Also the coronavirus was sort of looming over us," even though its presence wasn't yet known in New Orleans, Houston said.

As it has for years, the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club will open Fat Tuesday with a parade that started as a mockery of white festivities, with Black float riders in blackface and grass skirts. Next come the elaborate and fantastical floats of Rex, the self-styled king of Carnival, chosen by a group of old-money businessmen. After that are the Krewe of Elks and the Krewe of Orleans, a stretch of homemade floats on long flatbed trailers.

3 West Coast governors to end school mask mandates

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Schoolchildren along the West Coast will no longer be required to wear masks as part of new indoor mask policies the Democratic governors of California, Oregon and Washington announced jointly on Monday.

"With declining case rates and hospitalizations across the West, California, Oregon and Washington are moving together to update their masking guidance," the governors said in a statement. There are more than 7.5 million school-age children across the three states, which have had some of the strictest coronavirus safety measures during the pandemic.

The new guidance will make face coverings strongly recommended rather than a requirement at most indoor places in California starting Tuesday and at schools on March 12, regardless of vaccination status. In Washington and Oregon, all the requirements will lift on March 12. In all three states, the decision of whether to follow state guidance will rest with school districts.

The milestone, two years in the making, comes as much of the country relaxes public health orders, including school mask mandates, in an effort to

restore normalcy and boost economic recovery. The changes reflect a growing sense the virus is not going away and that Americans need to learn to live with it. New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, a Democrat, announced Sunday that the state's masking requirements in schools would be lifted by March 2. New Jersey, Delaware, Massachusetts and others recently made similar adjustments to ease restrictions for schools.

The announcements signal a turning point that is poignant in its timing, coming almost exactly two years after American cities began shutting down to prevent COVID-19s spread. California was the first state to announce a shutdown with stay-at-home orders in March 2020.

The California Teachers Association said it expected a mixed reaction to the announcement.

"While some students are ready to immediately remove their masks, others remain very afraid," CTA President E. Toby Boyd said in a statement. The union has more than 300,000 members. "Change is never easy, and today's announcement is bound to disrupt and destabilize school communities."

Former top US defense officials visit Taiwan

Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan — A delegation of former U.S. defense officials arrived in Taiwan on Tuesday in a sign of stepped-up communication between the sides amid a looming threat from China.

Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mike Mullen is leading the five-person delegation that is to meet with President Tsai Ing-wen and other top officials during the two-day visit. They were greeted at Taipei's Songshan Airport by Taiwanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Wu.

Tsai's office said the delegation had been appointed by U.S. President Joe Biden and the visit

would permit "an in-depth exchange of views on Taiwan-U.S. cooperation issues in various fields."

Taiwan hopes the sides will "continue to deepen the steady development of Taiwan-U.S. relations, continue to jointly maintain regional peace and stability, and continue to jointly contribute to global peace and prosperity," it said in a statement.

Separately, former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is to arrive in Taiwan on Wednesday. Pompeo will also meet with Tsai and address a forum, according to the Foreign Ministry.

"Former Secretary of State Pompeo's visit displays fully U.S. bipartisan backing for its 'rock

solid' support" for Taiwan, the ministry said.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has drawn fresh attention to China's threat to use force to annex self-governing democratic Taiwan, which it claims as its own territory. Circumstances are very different, however. Taiwan lies 100 miles across the Taiwan Strait from mainland China and enjoys strong support from the U.S., which is legally bound to ensure the island can defend itself and to treat all threats to it as matters of "grave concern."

China has not condemned Russia's war against Ukraine and its criticism of sanctions leveled against Moscow is widely seen as a sign of commitment to

the two countries' mutual defiance of Washington and the West, despite Beijing's longstanding defense of the principle of national sovereignty.

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin dismissed the U.S. delegation's visit, saying it was "futile for the U.S. to send anyone to demonstrate its so-called support for Taiwan."

China has been sending military aircraft into Taiwan's air defense identification zone on a near-daily basis, and on Saturday, its Defense Ministry protested as provocative the passage of the guided-missile destroyer USS Ralph Johnson through the Taiwan Strait.

Trump appeals ruling forcing him to testify in NY civil case

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Former President Donald Trump has appealed a judge's decision requiring he answer questions under oath in New York state's civil investigation into his business practices — a widely expected move that's likely to prolong the fight over his testimony by months.

Lawyers for Trump and his two eldest children filed papers on Monday with the appellate division of the state's trial court, seeking to overturn Manhattan Judge Arthur Engoron's Feb. 17 ruling. They argue ordering the Trumps to testify violates their constitutional rights because their answers could be used in a parallel criminal investigation.

In an eight-page ruling, Engoron set a March 10 deadline for Trump and his children, Ivanka and Donald Trump Jr., to sit for depositions. Lawyers for the Trumps asked the appellate court for a stay to spare them from questioning while it considers the matter.

The court did not set a date for arguments. It typically issues decisions several months after that,

but could be inclined to rule on an expedited basis given the urgency of New York Attorney General Letitia James' investigation and the Trumps' desire to swiftly overturn Engoron's ruling. In a statement on Friday, James signaled she was ready for a long fight.

"Donald J. Trump, Donald Trump, Jr., and Ivanka Trump were ordered by the court to comply with our lawful investigation into Mr. Trump and the Trump Organization's financial dealings," James said in the statement. "While they have the right to seek a delay, they cannot deter us from following the facts and the law wherever they may lead."

Trump did not immediately comment on the appeal. In a statement following Engoron's decision, he called the ruling "a continuation of the greatest Witch Hunt in history."

James, a Democrat, has said her investigation has uncovered evidence Trump's company, The Trump Organization, used "fraudulent or misleading" valuations of assets to get loans and tax benefits.

Man kills 3 daughters, chaperone, himself at a supervised visit in Calif.

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — A man shot and killed his three daughters, their chaperone and himself during a supervised visit with the girls Monday at a church in Sacramento, Calif., authorities said.

Deputies responding to reports of gunfire around 5 p.m. found five people dead, including the shooter, at the church in the Arden-Arcade neighborhood, said Sgt. Rod Grassmann with the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office.

The victims included three girls ages 9, 10 and 13, Grassmann said.

The shooter was estranged from his daughters' mother, who had a restraining order against him, Sheriff Scott Jones said.

Investigators believe the shooting happened during a supervised visit with the children and that the fourth victim was their chaperone, Jones said.

The shooter's name wasn't im-

mediately released, but officials said he was 39 years old.

An employee of The Church In Sacramento heard the gunshots and called 911, Grassmann said.

Sheriff's officials are investigating it as a domestic violence incident, he said.

Officials didn't know if the family members belonged to the church, which sits on a mostly residential block near a commercial area east of downtown Sacramento. The Church In Sacramento caters to English, Chinese and Spanish-speaking worshippers, according to its website. No events for Monday were listed on its online calendar.

Gov. Gavin Newsom said his office was working with local law enforcement.

"Another senseless act of gun violence in America — this time in our backyard. In a church with kids inside. Absolutely devastating," Newsom said on Twitter.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man breaks beer bottle on head, deputy shoots

FL WINTER HAVEN — A man suspected in a series of central Florida crimes broke a beer bottle over his head and was shot by a sheriff's deputy who thought the sound was a gunshot, officials said.

Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd said deputies were trying to arrest the 27-year-old man when he stood up through the sunroof of a pickup truck holding a rifle in one hand and a bottle of Busch Light beer in the other.

The sergeant fired one shot, hitting the man in the neck. The man was taken to a hospital with injuries that were not thought to be life threatening.

The man, who was with a female companion, stole a red Toyota pickup truck from a supermarket parking lot in Winter Haven, officials said.

A short time later, the pair went into a tire store and asked an employee for money, officials said. When told there was no money, the man took a rifle from a duffel bag and pointed it at the employee. He left when a customer arrived.

Felony charges filed in rare Bonsai tree theft

MN MINNEAPOLIS — A Brooklyn Park man is accused of stealing rare and expensive Bonsai trees from Hopkins and St. Paul in multiple incidents over the last year, authorities said.

Phong Yang, 36, is charged with felony counts of theft, damage to property, possessing a firearm, possession of burglary tools and fifth-degree possession of marijuana.

Investigators said Yang stole rare and unusual Bonsai trees worth tens of thousands of dollars. One of them was believed to be more than 250 years old and valued at \$14,000.

Police said none of the trees have been recovered.

Driver flees traffic stop, drags officer 50 feet

VT ST. JOHNSBURY — A Newport woman fleeing a traffic stop dragged a police officer with her vehicle about 50 feet on Interstate 91 in St. Johnsbury, Vermont State Police said.

Vermont State Police Sgt. Matthew Tarricone had pulled the woman over for minor motor vehicle infractions. After stopping on I-91, she drove away and dragged Tarricone at about 20 mph before he was able to break free from the vehicle, police said. He received minor injuries and declined medical attention, police said.

After fleeing the stop, the woman failed to yield to troopers' blue lights and sirens and drove at high speeds, passing several vehicles and weaving through traffic, police said.

A judge issued a warrant for the driver.

Bomb tech's warnings ignored before explosion

CA LOS ANGELES — A senior Los Angeles bomb technician raised serious concerns about overloading a containment chamber with homemade fireworks last year before the detonation caused a catastrophic explosion, injuring 27 people and rocking a neighborhood, according to an inspec-

tor general's report released.

The vessel exploded, and debris rained down on scores of residences, businesses and vehicles in South LA, just days before July Fourth. Dozens were displaced and some still have not returned to their neighborhood.

Multiple times, "Bomb Technician C" told his squad about his worries ahead of the detonation. "I said, 'uh, this is too much to do one shot, we're gonna break them up, right?'" he recalled saying to his colleagues. "I have a bad feeling ... this is not good ... this is too big."

The bomb technicians made major miscalculations, federal investigators found, and loaded the containment chamber above the equipment's safety rating. The U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives estimates that the catastrophic blast caused more than \$1 million in damage to the area.

Suspect arrested after tent cut, theft from men

NC ASHEVILLE — Police arrested a North Carolina man who they said sliced open a tent where two men were sleeping and threatened to kill them before one of the victims gave the suspect a jacket.

A news release from Asheville police said officers responded to a campsite behind a local business. The victim told the officers that while he and another man were sleeping in their tent, the suspect used a knife to cut it open and told them he would kill them and to give him everything they had, according to the news release.

Officers tracked down the suspect and arrested him, police said. The suspect is charged with

armed robbery with a dangerous weapon, assault with a deadly weapon and damage to personal property.

Ohio town takes title for top tap water in country

WV BERKELEY SPRINGS — An Ohio water district has won the top prize for U.S. tap water at an international tasting contest.

Montpelier, Ohio, took home first place for Best Municipal Water at the 32nd annual Berkeley Springs International Water Tasting in West Virginia. It beat out last year's winner, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, which placed second. Another California entry, the Mission Springs Water District, was third.

All three have won the gold medal previously. Judges based their rankings on taste, odor, mouth feel and aftertaste.

Driver rescued after trailer plunges into river

MA WESTON — A tractor-trailer veered off the road and plunged into a river in Massachusetts, state police said.

The truck went down a long embankment near an exit from Interstate 95 to the Massachusetts Turnpike and ended up in the Charles River. The driver, who police said can't swim, was standing atop the truck when first responders arrived.

Weston Fire Department firefighters brought the tractor-trailer driver to safety and he was taken to Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston by a Newton Fire Department unit.

— From wire reports

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and Military News

Boxers return to fight for Ukraine

Associated Press

The two big men standing shoulder to shoulder in The Associated Press photo taken Sunday in the mayor's office in beleaguered Kyiv, Ukraine, were instantly recognizable to most boxing fans. Vitali and Wladimir Klitschko, the sons of a Soviet major general, are both former heavyweight champions and whenever one was in the ring, the other was always helping from the corner.

Now they're in a fight unlike any they ever imagined. The prize for this one isn't a gaudy championship belt but the survival of their country.

Vitali Klitschko is helping lead it as mayor of Kyiv. His younger brother plays the role of chief second.

They're a formidable pair, ready to do whatever it takes to defend their country against invading Russians. So far that hasn't included armed combat, but both have made it clear they will fight in the streets if it comes to that.

And, in a rich Ukrainian boxing community, they're not alone.

Vasiliy Lomachenko, a two-time Olympic gold medalist who some consider the best

pound-for-pound fighter in the world, hastily flew home from Greece to don combat fatigues as a member of a defense battalion. He was pictured on his official Facebook page over the weekend with an assault rifle slung over his shoulder near Odesa.

"The Belgorod-Dnestrovsky Territorial Defence Battalion has been formed and armed," the caption read. "In the territorial defence, boxer Vasiliy Lomachenko informed the mayor."

The current heavyweight champion is also in on the fight. Oleksandr Usyk returned home from London when Russia invaded his country and, instead of preparing for a possible rematch against Anthony Joshua this spring, he is getting ready to fight against Russians in his native land.

Both are potentially losing million-dollar paydays — in Usyk's case, the biggest purse of his career in a rematch with Joshua. But defending a belt and defending a country are two very different things.

On Sunday, Usyk posed not with gloves but an automatic rifle, flanked by three other armed men in the Kyiv Territorial

Defense force.

They're all great fighters with proud legacies in the ring. When Wladimir Klitschko last fought in 2017, he and Joshua engaged in a thrilling knockdown bout before 90,000 at Wembley Stadium in London. Klitschko came off the canvas that night to deck the British champion before ultimately being stopped by the younger fighter.

And people in boxing still talk about Vitali Klitschko nearly getting the upper hand on Lennox Lewis in their heavyweight clash in Los Angeles in 2003 that ended only because the ring doctor stopped it when there was so much blood flowing down Klitschko's face he couldn't see.

None of the Ukrainian prizefighters ever backed down with gloves on.

And they show no sign of backing down now, even with so much stacked up against them.

"Go back home," Vitali said when asked what he would tell Russian soldiers. "You have nothing to find here."

Usyk was even more blunt with his message.

"You are not at war with our government, our army," he said in a video posted on Twitter.

"You are at war with the people. This is our land. We are at home."

Vitali Klitschko has been mayor of Kyiv since 2014, two years after he finally called it quits on a boxing career that earned him an Olympic gold medal and a world title. His brother was arguably even more successful, holding pieces of the heavyweight title while going 11 years without a defeat.

They grew up fighting in the Soviet amateur system and, while their technical styles didn't endear them to boxing fans everywhere, they were extremely popular in Germany where they sold out arenas and stadiums for big fights.

They're also very smart. Both have advanced college degrees and speak four languages.

On the Boxrec.com website that is the closest thing boxing has to a record book, the home page on Monday featured a picture of Vitali Klitschko holding an automatic rifle above the ratings.

"#1 — Vitali Klitschko," the caption read.

Sadly, this is war, not sport. There is no referee, very few rules and extremely deadly weapons.

More Russian athletes excluded from various sports

Associated Press

GENEVA — More and more sports are following the appeal of the International Olympic Committee and banning Russian athletes from competing in the wake of the country's invasion of Ukraine.

Russia was barred from competing in international ice skating, skiing, basketball and track on Tuesday, a day after being kicked out of soccer competitions and hockey — Vladimir Putin's favorite team sport. The decisions follow the IOC's request to international sports federations to keep Russian athletes out of events they organize.

The International Skating Union, the body that runs the sport around the world, said no athletes from Russia or Belarus

"shall be invited or allowed to participate" in events until further notice.

Belarus has been a key ally of Russia in its attack on Ukraine.

The world figure skating championships are scheduled for later this month in Montpellier, France. The ISU decision means Olympic champion Anna Shcherbakova and 15-year-old teammate Kamila Valieva, who was the focus of a still-unresolved doping dispute at last month's Winter Olympics, will be excluded from the competition.

The sports restrictions have drawn sharp criticism from Russia.

"Our country has always adhered to the principle that sport is beyond politics, but we are constantly drawn into the politics,

because they understand the importance of sport in the lives of our Russian people," Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Chernyshenko, who was stripped of an IOC honor for organizing the 2014 Sochi Olympics, said Tuesday at a Sports Ministry meeting.

In Norway, Russian cross-country skiers — who won 11 medals at the Beijing Olympics — were heading home after being excluded from competition by the International Ski Federation, known as FIS.

The decision came after a three-day standoff with Norwegian ski officials, who said they would refuse to let Russians and Belarusians race even if the governing body maintained its previous policy of allowing them to compete as neutral athletes.

Morant dunks over 7-footer, scores 52

Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Ja Morant threw down a massive dunk over 7-footer Jakob Poeltl and scored a career-high 52 points, lifting the Memphis Grizzlies over the San Antonio Spurs 118-105 Monday night.

The arena was still buzzing from Morant's fast-break slam late in the second quarter when Steven Adams delivered a length-of-the-court pass to Morant, who caught it mid-air and flipped in a buzzer-beater from the left baseline for a 68-58 half-time lead.

Morant also hit a three-pointer from near the logo with the shot clock running down, creating a load of highlights from a memorable night.

"It's got to be the 50 (points)," Morant said when asked what was most memorable, adding: "I'm thankful for my teammates, my coaches. They believe in me and have all the confidence in the world that I'll make the right plays."

Morant added 13 consecutive points during the fourth quarter to break the game open, following up a career-best 46 points in a win Saturday at Chicago by

connecting on 22 of 30 from the field. He hit all four three-point tries as Memphis won its second straight.

De'Anthony Melton added 15 points for Memphis, while Tyus Jones scored 13.

Morant's performance was the first 50-point game in Grizzlies franchise history. He said teammates began feeding him the ball in the fourth quarter when the 50-point target was in sight.

"He's at the rim every night, but the way he put it together tonight, he was just in attack mode from the jump," Melton said. "He got whatever he wanted, and it looked easy out there. It was just special to be out there and watch that."

Heat 112, Bulls 99: Gabe Vincent and Tyler Herro each scored 20 points, and host Miami improved its standing atop the Eastern Conference by topping Chicago.

Jimmy Butler and Bam Adebayo each had 15 points for Miami, which has won nine of its last 10 games. Max Strus had all 13 of his points in the fourth quarter for the Heat.

Bulls guard DeMar DeRo-

zan's streak of 10 consecutive games with at least 30 points ended; he finished with 18. Zach LaVine led Chicago with 22 points, while Ayo Dosunmu had 18 and Nikola Vucevic added 14 for the Bulls.

Timberwolves 127, Cavaliers 122: Karl-Anthony Towns hit a three-pointer with 11.8 seconds left and visiting Minnesota survived Cleveland's comeback try.

Towns' first three of the game helped the Timberwolves hang on after blowing a 23-point third-quarter lead.

D'Angelo Russell scored 25 points and Towns had 17 as Minnesota handed Cleveland its first home loss in nearly two months.

Raptors 133, Nets 97: Scottie Barnes made his first 11 shots and had 28 points and a season-high 16 rebounds, leading Toronto to a win at Brooklyn in the opener of a home-and-home series.

Barnes was 10-for-10 at half-time, the first rookie to be perfect on 10 or more shots in a half since Derrick Rose on March 18, 2009, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

Precious Achiuwa had 20 points and eight rebounds for the Raptors, who played without All-Star guard Fred VanVleet because he has a sore right knee.

Magic 119, Pacers 103: Wendell Carter Jr. had 21 points and 12 rebounds, and eight Orlando players scored in double figures in the win over visiting Indiana. Mo Bamba and Franz Wagner had 15 points apiece for the Magic.

Kings 131, Thunder 110: DeAaron Fox had 29 points and 10 assists, and Sacramento won at Oklahoma City to snap a four-game losing streak.

Trey Lyles scored 24 points and Harrison Barnes scored 23 for the Kings. Domantas Sabonis added 14 points, 16 rebounds and seven assists.

Bucks 130, Hornets 106: Giannis Antetokounmpo had 26 points and 16 rebounds and host Milwaukee scored a season-high 44 points in the second quarter on the way to beating Charlotte.

Jrue Holiday had 21 points and eight assists, and Bobby Portis added 20 points and 10 rebounds for the Bucks.

No. 3 Baylor takes big road win over No. 21 Texas

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Adam Flagler and James Akinjo each scored 19 points to send No. 3 Baylor over No. 21 Texas 68-61 on Monday night, as the Bears spoiled the final Longhorns men's game in the 45-year-old Frank Erwin Center.

Flagler scored 16 in the second half and made four three-pointers after halftime, while Akinjo provided the scoring punch late for the Bears (25-5, 13-4 Big 12).

Baylor also got 13 points from Kendall Brown and 12 from Flo Thamba.

Christian Bishop and Marcus Carr each scored 13 points to lead Texas (21-9, 10-7).

No. 12 Texas Tech 73, Kansas State 68: Davion Warren had 23 points and made the go-ahead basket with 1:05 left as the host Red Raiders finished undefeated at home.

Texas Tech (23-7, 12-5 Big 12) has won 21

consecutive home games, including all 18 this season. Bryson Williams added 19 points for the Red Raiders, and Adonis Arms had 10.

The Wildcats (14-15, 6-11) missed two three-pointers in the final minute.

No. 17 UCLA 77, Washington 66: Jaime Jaquez Jr. scored a career-high 30 points, and the visiting Bruins rallied after a sluggish first half and beat the Huskies.

Jaquez was nearly unstoppable on the interior in the second half, scoring 17 points after halftime and hitting 11 of 17 shots in the game.

Jules Bernard added 12 points and UCLA (22-6, 14-5 Pac-12) won for the fifth time in six games.

Pac-12 scoring leader Terrell Brown Jr. led Washington (14-14, 9-9) with 20 points, and was limited to 9-for-20 shooting. Jamal

Bey added 14 points and Langston Wilson scored 11, including a pair of late threes that trimmed the final margin.

No. 24 Iowa 82, Northwestern 61: Keegan Murray had 26 points and 18 rebounds, and Jordan Bohannon added 18 points in his final home game as the host Hawkeyes defeated the Wildcats.

Bohannon, the Big Ten's all-time leader in three-pointers and Iowa's career leader in assists, had four three-pointers.

Connor McCaffery had a season-high 17 points for the Hawkeyes (21-8, 11-7 Big Ten).

North Carolina 88, Syracuse 79 (OT): Brady Manek scored 22 points, Caleb Love hit three clutch three-pointers and the host Tar Heels defeated the Orange.

The win assures North Carolina (22-8, 14-5 ACC) of a top-four finish in the ACC and a double-bye in the conference tournament.

Leafs hand Caps 6th straight home loss

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Rasmus Sandin scored the go-ahead goal with 3:23 left and the Toronto Maple Leafs beat Washington 5-3 on Monday night, handing the Capitals their sixth consecutive loss at home.

The Capitals bounced back after falling behind less than three minutes in, and dug out of a 3-1 hole to tie it in the third period on Tom Wilson's second goal of the game. Vitek Vanecsek stopped the first 16 shots he faced in relief of Ilya Samsonov, but couldn't make a save on Sandin's shot after young defenseman Martin Fehervary was stripped of the puck in the corner.

Pierre Engvall added an empty-netter with 1:01 left to seal Washington's 10th loss in its last 13 home games and third in a row overall.

Goaltending and defensive

miscues were to blame for the latest defeat. Fehervary wiped out in the corner on Michael Bunting's goal 2:35 in, William Nylander beat Samsonov five-hole and Justin Holl scored on a net-front scramble with 1.6 seconds left in the first period. The Leafs have won three straight.

Conor Sheary also scored for the Capitals.

Bruins 7, Kings 0: Jake DeBrusk got his first career hat trick early in his first four-point game, and Patrice Bergeron added a goal and two assists as visiting Boston routed Los Angeles.

Erik Haula scored two goals and Jeremy Swayman made 34 saves in his fifth career shutout for the Bruins, whose fifth straight victory matched their longest winning streak of the season. Boston has earned a point in seven of its last eight

games.

DeBrusk scored his three goals in the first 21 minutes, and Bruins fans littered the LA ice with hats after his tip-in was upheld by video review.

Taylor Hall also scored as Boston snapped a five-game winning streak by the previously streaking Kings, who lost in regulation for only the second time in 13 games since Jan. 20. That was also the most recent time Jonathan Quick lost in regulation for Los Angeles before the Bruins blasted him for five goals on 19 shots.

Cal Petersen replaced Quick in the second period and allowed both of Haula's goals in the third. The Kings were shut out for the first time in 30 games since Dec. 6, while Swayman got his second shut-out of February.

Devils 7, Canucks 2: Jack Hughes had a goal and an assist

to win a showdown with his older brother as host New Jersey routed Vancouver.

Nico Daws made 36 saves and the Devils scored three times in each of the first two periods, chasing goaltender Jaroslav Halak with six goals on 14 shots.

Yegor Sharangovich, Dawson Mercer, Jesper Boqvist, Ryan Graves, Jesper Bratt and Dougie Hamilton also scored for New Jersey, which put up seven goals for the third time in seven games. Nico Hischier had two assists.

Quinn Hughes, a defenseman for the Canucks, was held off the scoresheet. Vasily Podkolzin and Tanner Pearson scored for Vancouver.

The Devils have a 12-game winning streak against Vancouver. The last time they lost to the Canucks was November 2014.

Major League Baseball extends deadline for labor deal

Associated Press

JUPITER, Fla. — Major League Baseball and the players' association resumed negotiations Tuesday just 3½ hours before the owners' deadline for a deal that would end the lockout and salvage opening day.

After a marathon of 13 bargaining sessions over 16½ hours produced progress toward a labor deal but left the sides still far apart, MLB extended its deadline to Tuesday at 5 p.m.

Commissioner Rob Manfred had said Monday was the last possible day to reach an agreement that would allow the minimum time needed for spring training in order to play openers as scheduled on March 31. The union said it didn't necessarily agree to the timeframe and just as the sides agreed to recess at 2:30 a.m., MLB gave players the new deadline.

"We want to exhaust every possibility to get a deal done," an

MLB spokesman said.

The players' association planned to analyze the latest proposals and prepare a response for when talks resume at Roger Dean Stadium, the vacant spring training home of the Miami Marlins and St. Louis Cardinals.

The sides agreed, subject to an overall deal, to expand the post-season from 10 to 12 teams, rather than the 14 MLB had hoped for.

On central economics, the sides were still searching for agreement. Management's proposals included:

■ Raising the luxury tax threshold from \$210 million to \$220 million this year, rising to \$230 million.

■ Setting the new bonus pool for pre-arbitration players at \$25 million annually.

■ Raising the minimum salary from \$570,500 to \$675,000 this year, with increases of

\$10,000 annually.

Players took the stance that all those figures were insufficient. Their start figures were \$245 million for the luxury tax threshold, \$115 million for the bonus pool and \$775,000 for the minimum salary.

The union believed there was an understanding on luxury tax rates, which management had been proposing to substantially steepen while eliminating higher penalties for recidivist high spenders.

Players' latest proposals contemplated giving up on expanding salary arbitration from the top 22% to 35% by service time of the players with at least two seasons of service and less than three.

Manfred, who attended a bargaining session for the first time on Friday, sat in on two of Monday's meetings, both two-on-two sessions that included union head Tony Clark, Deputy Com-

missioner Dan Halem and union chief negotiator Bruce Meyer. At the first meeting, which began at 2:45 p.m. and lasted 40 minutes, Manfred told players he wanted to make a deal.

The pace then quickened, with management's bargaining team repeatedly walking from their area in the main part of the stadium to the union in the building beyond the right-field corner that includes the Cardinals clubhouse.

"We're working at it," Manfred said around 6 p.m. after his second session of the day with the union.

The union said MLB kept giving it pieces of paper with new proposals.

Yankees managing general partner Hal Steinbrenner didn't leave the ballpark until 1:30 a.m. Mets pitcher Max Scherzer and free agent reliever Andrew Miller, the two players present, drove away at 2:30 a.m.