

US plans for how to aid an occupied Ukraine

The Washington Post

The Ukrainian military has mounted an unexpectedly fierce defense against invading Russian forces, which have been dogged by logistical problems and flagging morale. But the war is barely 2 weeks old, and in Washington and European capitals, officials anticipate that the Russian military will reverse its early losses, setting the stage for a long, bloody insurgency.

The ways that Western countries would support a Ukrainian resistance are beginning to take shape. Officials have been reluctant to discuss detailed plans, since they're premised on a Russian military victory that, however likely, hasn't happened yet. But as a first step, Ukraine's allies are planning for how to help establish and support a government-in-exile, which could direct guerrilla operations against Russian occupiers, according to several U.S. and European officials.

The weapons the United States have provided to Ukraine's military, and that continue to flow into the country, would be crucial to the success of an insurgent movement, officials said. The Biden administration has asked Congress, infused with a rare bipartisan spirit in defense of Ukraine, to take up a \$10 billion humanitarian aid and military package that includes funding to replenish the stocks of weapons that have already been sent.

Should the United States and its allies choose to back an insurgency, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy would be the pivotal force, officials said, maintaining morale and rallying Ukrainians living under Russian occupation to resist their powerful and well-equipped foe.

The possible Russian takeover of Kyiv has prompted a flurry of planning at the State Department, Pentagon and other U.S. agencies in the event that the Ze-

lenskyy government has to flee the capital or the country itself.

"We're doing contingency planning now for every possibility," including a scenario in which Zelenskyy establishes a government-in-exile in Poland, said a U.S. administration official, who, like others, spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive security matter.

Zelenskyy, who has called himself Russia's "target No. 1," remains in Kyiv and has assured his citizens he's not leaving. He has had discussions with U.S. officials about whether he should move west to a safer position in the city of Lviv, closer to the Polish border. Zelenskyy's security detail has plans ready to swiftly relocate him and members of his Cabinet, a senior Ukrainian official said. "So far, he has refused to go."

Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Zelenskyy, declined to describe any contingency plans Uk-

raine was making in the event that Russian forces capture the capital.

"One can only say that Ukraine is preparing for the defense of Kyiv as purposefully as Russia is preparing for its attack on Kyiv," Podolyak said.

"This war has become a people's war for Ukrainians," he continued. "We must win the war. There are no other options."

Nevertheless, European diplomats, like their American counterparts, are starting to prepare for how to support the Ukrainian government if Kyiv falls or the country is entirely occupied by Russia. A United Nations resolution this past week condemning the invasion, which drew 141 votes, is one element of "laying the groundwork" to recognize Zelenskyy's administration as Ukraine's legitimate government and to keep it afloat even if it no longer controls territory, said a senior European diplomat.

Ukraine condemns Russia over its 'medieval' tactics

Associated Press

LVIV, Ukraine — The humanitarian crisis in Ukraine deepened Monday as Russian forces intensified their shelling and food, water, heat and medicine grew increasingly scarce, in what the country condemned as a medieval-style siege by Moscow to batter it into submission.

A third round of talks between the two sides ended with a top Ukrainian official saying there had been minor, unspecified progress toward establishing safe corridors that would allow civilians to escape the fighting. Russia's top negotiator said he expects those corridors to start functioning Tuesday.

But that remained to be seen,

given the failure of previous attempts to lead civilians to safety amid the biggest ground war in Europe since World War II.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's forces continued to pummel cities with rockets, and fierce fighting raged in places.

In one of the most desperate cities, the encircled southern port of Mariupol, an estimated 200,000 people were hoping to flee, and Red Cross officials waited to hear when a corridor would be established. The city is short on water, food and power, and cellphone networks are down. Stores have been looted as residents search for essential goods.

Russian forces also continued their offensive in Mykolaiv, open-

ing fire on the city some 300 miles south of Kyiv, according to Ukraine's military. Rescuers said they were putting out fires caused by rocket attacks in residential areas.

At The Hague, Netherlands, Ukraine pleaded with the International Court of Justice to order a halt to Russia's invasion, saying Moscow is committing widespread war crimes.

Russia "is resorting to tactics reminiscent of medieval siege warfare, encircling cities, cutting off escape routes and pounding the civilian population with heavy ordnance," said Jonathan Gimmblett, a member of Ukraine's legal team.

Russia snubbed the court pro-

ceedings, leaving its seats in the Great Hall of Justice empty.

Efforts to set up safe passage for civilians over the weekend fell apart amid continued Russian shelling. Before Monday's talks began, Russia announced a new plan, saying civilians would be allowed to leave Kyiv, Mariupol, Kharkiv and Sumy. But that offer was quickly dismissed by Ukraine and others as an empty and cynical gesture, since most of the evacuation routes headed toward Russia or its ally Belarus, which has served as a launching pad for the invasion. Ukraine instead proposed eight routes allowing civilians to travel to western regions of the country where there is no shelling.

Russian war raises stakes with China

The San Diego Union-Tribune

SAN DIEGO — For much of the past year, U.S. Navy and Marine Corps in the Pacific have trained for a conflict with the Pentagon's most powerful potential adversary, China.

Now the invasion of Ukraine by Russia — another “near peer” nation and newly aligned partner of China — has raised the stakes of such exercises and stoked fears among some that a Pacific confrontation might be closer than expected if China makes a similar move against Taiwan.

But national security experts cautioned against drawing too broad an association based on Cold War comparisons and the “unlimited” partnership that China and Russia announced upon the start of the Beijing Winter Olympics. In that agreement, the two nations signaled support for each other's stated policy goals toward their neighbors, with China stating its opposition to NATO expansion into Ukraine and Russia saying it opposes Taiwanese independence.

That is not a military alliance akin to the U.S.-led NATO alliance in Europe, analysts pointed out. And the two Asian superpowers have a complex relationship with different priorities.

The united response of the worldwide democratic economic order to Russia's invasion of Ukraine presents a monumental challenge for China, said Elizabeth Wishnick, an expert in Chinese and Russian foreign policy at the Center for Naval Analysis.

Wishnick said there are indications Chinese officials were surprised at the support Ukraine received from countries around the world, even though it is not a member of NATO. The swift international reaction, as well as Russia's difficulty in achieving its military objectives, are a lesson for China, she said.

“I think China's in a very difficult spot here,” Wishnick said. Chinese President Xi Jinping “is very connected to this partnership with Russia, which is showing itself to be extremely troublesome.”

China has undergone a decade-long buildup of its military — especially its Navy. That new threat is reflected in recent activity of the 7th Fleet, including two aircraft carriers and other ships.

Navy leaders pointed to the recent deployment of the San Diego-based Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group to the region as an example of shifting American military priorities. For the first time in almost 20 years, a U.S.-based

Pacific carrier deployment did not conduct operations in the Middle East, instead focusing on the international shipping corridors of the South China Sea, which China claims as its own territorial waters.

Last summer, the U.S. military held a global “Large Scale Exercise,” which Adm. Mike Gilday, the chief of naval operations, called the biggest such exercise in “a generation.”

The exercise spanned 17 time zones, included dozens of units at sea and more than 50 ashore.

Just a few months later, military leaders were again testing U.S. military capabilities in the Pacific, this time during a classified tabletop war game called “Global 14.”

Navy commanders — including Gilday and the civilian head of the Navy department, Secretary Carlos Del Toro — led the classified game with U.S. allies in November to assess the service's future needs should a conflict erupt. While the details of the game were classified, Gilday and Del Toro told reporters when it ended that the game gave them a “good sense” of how the United States would fare in a fight with its new types of naval ships, such as littoral combat ships, and new unmanned ships and aircraft.

Blinken assures Baltics of NATO protection amid war

Associated Press

RIGA, Latvia — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday assured Lithuania and Latvia of NATO protection and American support as he made quick visits to two of the three Baltic states that are increasingly on edge as Russia presses ahead with its invasion of Ukraine.

Along with Estonia, which Blinken will visit on Tuesday, the former Soviet republics are NATO members, and the Biden administration is aiming to calm any fears they have about their security in the event Russia chooses to expand its military operations.

In the Latvian capital of Riga, Blinken said the Baltics

have “formed a democratic wall that now stands against the tide of autocracy” that Russia is pushing in Europe. “The United States is more committed than ever to standing with you as our democracies rise to the challenge,” he said.

“We are bolstering our shared defense so that we and our allies are prepared,” Blinken said. He stressed that the U.S. commitment to NATO's mutual defense pact is “sacrosanct” and that NATO and the U.S. were discussing the permanent basing of troops in the Baltics.

“We will defend every inch of NATO territory if it comes under attack,” he said. “No one should doubt our readiness. No

one should doubt our resolve.”

Leaders in both countries expressed grave concerns about Russian President Vladimir Putin's intentions as it relates to former Soviet bloc countries that are now allied or otherwise linked to the West.

“We have no illusions about Putin's Russia anymore,” Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics said after meeting Blinken in Riga. “We don't really see any good reason to assume that Russia might change its policy.”

Rinkevics said that the Russian invasion of Ukraine had shown the Baltic countries in particular the need to bolster air and coastal defenses, and that Latvia would like its secu-

rity cooperation with NATO to be “more efficient.”

“Unfortunately, the worsening security situation in the Baltic region is of great concern for all of us and around the world,” Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda told Blinken earlier in Vilnius. “Russia's reckless aggression against Ukraine once again proves that it is a long-term threat to European security, the security of our alliance.”

Blinken arrived in the Baltics late Sunday from non-aligned Moldova, which is also warily watching the war on its doorstep, and Poland, where he visited the Polish-Ukrainian border and met with refugees from Ukraine.

Navy-led exercise held on floating ice chunk

By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. military has begun a three-week exercise in the Arctic Ocean and has built a temporary camp on a large chunk of floating ice to make it possible.

The Navy-led Ice Exercise began Friday and aims to boost knowledge and skills in the high north, the Navy said in a statement Sunday. The region is assuming growing importance as countries compete for resources and eye new potential Arctic shipping routes.

The Army, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard are also participating in the biennial exercise north of the Arctic Circle, as are members of the Canadian and British militaries.

More than 200 participants are taking part in activities that include research and tests of submarine systems, the Navy said. About 60 people can operate from the temporary camp, known as Camp Queenfish, at any given time.

The camp was built within days on a 3.5-mile-long chunk of ice floating more than 160 nautical miles offshore in the

Beaufort Sea.

"At Ice Camp Queenfish, our teams can test equipment in a very harsh and demanding environment," said Howard Reese, director of the Arctic Submarine Laboratory, a research facility of the Navy's Undersea Warfighting Development Center, which is leading the exercise. "It's important that all the technology we're testing can perform in all of the oceans of the world, including the Arctic."

The camp is also equipped with sleeping quarters, a cafeteria, restrooms, internet and a 2,500-foot-long runway supporting multiple daily flights, the Navy said.

As recently as 2014, when the ice camp was made up of wooden-framed tents, it took about two weeks to construct once a sturdy-enough ice floe was discovered, according to a separate Navy statement Sunday.

By using smaller huts held up by aluminum, carbon fiber or inflated beams, the camp can now be built in about five days and be quickly moved if necessary.

In addition to Ice Camp Queenfish, participants are stationed in Prudhoe Bay,

Alaska, and are operating two submarines, the USS Pasadena and the USS Illinois, the Navy said.

The exercise comes days before Norway is set to hold its largest multinational Arctic exercises since the end of the Cold War. Various NATO countries, including the United States, will take part.

Economic opportunities in the far north made possible by a reduction in Arctic sea ice, which scientists have said is the result of global warming, are creating growing security concerns for the U.S. and its allies.

Russia created its Northern Fleet Joint Strategic Command in 2014 and has gradually strengthened its presence in the Arctic by creating new units, refurbishing old airfields and infrastructure and establishing military bases along its Arctic Ocean coast, the Pentagon said in a 2019 report to Congress.

Meanwhile, China, which has no permanent military presence in the Arctic, has shown interest in new regional shipping routes from eastern Asia to northern Europe, the same report said.

Cold War-era CNO Hayward dies at 97

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

Retired Adm. Thomas B. Hayward, a former chief of operations who is credited with restoring Navy pride in a post-Vietnam era that saw the transition to a volunteer force and the re-emergence of the Soviet naval threat, has died. He was 97.

Hayward died Thursday, but the Navy's announcement of his death did not say where he had been living. The Navy also did not provide a cause of death for Hayward, nor did it announce any funeral services for him.

Hayward served for 39 years, enlisting in the Navy's V-5 aviation program in 1943 and retiring in 1982 after four years as chief of naval operations. He was the 21st person to occupy that role. He led the Navy during a period of intense competition and challenge, including heightened tensions in the Middle East, the Navy said in a statement Thursday. Hayward also focused on sailors' health and well-being and delivering a fleet that played a significant role in ending the Cold War, the Navy said.

"Facing both the 1979 Iranian hostage crisis and renewed Soviet competition in the midst of the Cold War, he rebuilt the combat readiness of the Navy through significant personnel

and material investments," Adm. Michael M. Gilday, Navy chief of operations, said in the statement.

Hayward was born May 3, 1924, in Glendale, Calif. He enlisted as a reservist, expecting to be sent into combat in the South Pacific. Partway through the program, Hayward earned an appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy and graduated in 1947, the Navy said.

His naval career saw combat deployments during the Korean and Vietnam wars. In Korea, he flew 146 sorties, earning a Distinguished Flying Cross, among other medals.

As Carrier Air Wing 10 commander, Hayward flew 36 combat missions in Vietnam and was awarded a Legion of Merit with Combat "V" and three Air Medals, according to the Navy. In 1970, Hayward commanded the 14th Naval District and, later, U.S. 7th Fleet. In August 1976, he assumed the duty of commander-in-chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, with additional duty as the naval component commander for U.S. Pacific Command. He took over as chief of naval operations on July 1, 1978.

In retirement, Hayward helped establish several Navy-related museums, such as the Military Aviation Museum in Virginia Beach, Va.

Gas tops \$4 per gallon average in US, 1st since '08

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The price of regular gasoline broke \$4 per gallon on average across the U.S. on Sunday for the first time since 2008.

During the first full week of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the price of regular gas rose by almost 41 cents, according to the AAA motor club.

That represents the second largest jump in average national prices in a week, GasBuddy reported.

The all-time high for average gasoline prices was set July 17, 2008, at \$4.10 per gallon.

Neither President Joe Biden nor Congress has moved to ban the import of Russian oil or place energy sanctions on the country, which could have major global economic repercussions. The U.S. and major governments last week authorized the release of 60 million barrels of oil from their strategic stockpiles to increase supply.

1,100 homes evacuated amid Fla. wildfires

Associated Press

PANAMA CITY, Fla. — Huge wildfires in the Florida Panhandle forced veterans in a nursing home to evacuate Sunday alongside residents of more than 1,000 homes in an area still recovering from a Category 5 hurricane three years ago.

Firefighters battled the 9,000-acre Bertha Swamp Road fire and the 841-acre Adkins Avenue fire, which have threatened homes and forced residents of at least 1,100 houses in Bay County, Fla., to flee over the weekend. The Adkins Avenue fire destroyed two structures and damaged another 12 homes late Friday.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis called the larger Bertha Swamp Road fire “a big boy,” at a news

conference in Panama City on Sunday afternoon. “It’s moving very quickly.”

On Sunday, a third fire developed, forcing the evacuation of a 120-bed, state-operated nursing home in Panama City. Public transit was being used to move the residents at the Clifford Chester Sims State Veterans’ Nursing Home. Buses also were on standby in case the 1,300 inmates at the nearby Bay County Jail needed to be evacuated to other facilities.

Hurricane Michael in 2018 left behind 72 million tons of destroyed trees that have provided fuel for the Bay County wildfires, according to the Florida Forest Service. The hurricane was directly responsible for 16 deaths and about \$25 billion in

damage in the United States.

Local authorities have said they don’t know when residents will be able to return to their homes. The county opened a shelter at the Bay County Fairgrounds for displaced residents.

“I know there has been frustration with people not being able to get back into their homes,” said Bay County Sheriff Tommy Ford. “But we have had things that have popped up on a minute’s notice and really caused problems. As soon as we can, we will let people go back.”

The Adkins Avenue fire has been burning in Bay County since Friday, forcing the evacuation of at least 600 homes, and it was 35% contained Sunday. Fire officials initially said it was 1,400 acres, but adjusted the size

downward Sunday afternoon.

The much-larger Bertha Swamp Fire started in neighboring Gulf County on Friday but spread to Bay and Calhoun counties Saturday, forcing the evacuation of scores of more homes. It was 10% contained as of Sunday.

“It’s just hard to believe that something could be that big,” said Brad Monroe, chief of Bay County Emergency Services. “If you fly around it, it’s just incredible. It’s hard to comprehend how big, strong and fierce this fire is.”

Florida Forest Service helicopters had dropped more than 103,000 gallons of water on the Adkins Avenue fire since Friday, and 25 bulldozers had been deployed to plow fire lines.

Death toll passes 6M for pandemic now in 3rd year

Associated Press

BANGKOK — The official global death toll from COVID-19 eclipsed 6 million on Monday — underscoring that the pandemic, now entering its third year, is far from over.

The milestone, recorded by Johns Hopkins University, is the latest tragic reminder of the unrelenting nature of the pandemic even as people are shedding masks, travel is resuming and businesses are reopening around the globe.

Remote Pacific islands, whose isolation had protected them for more than two years, are just now grappling with their first outbreaks and deaths, fueled by the highly contagious omicron variant.

Hong Kong, which is seeing deaths soar, is testing its entire population of 7.5 million three times this month as it clings to mainland China’s “zero-COVID” strategy.

As death rates remain high in Poland, Hungary, Romania and

other Eastern European countries, the region has seen over 1.5 million refugees arrive from war-torn Ukraine, a country with poor vaccination coverage and high rates of cases and deaths.

And despite its wealth and vaccine availability, the United States is nearing 1 million reported deaths on its own.

Death rates worldwide are still highest among people unvaccinated against the virus, said Tikki Pang, a visiting professor at the National University of Singapore’s medical school and co-chair of the Asia Pacific Immunization Coalition.

“This is a disease of the unvaccinated — look what is happening in Hong Kong right now, the health system is being overwhelmed,” said Pang, the former director of research policy and cooperation with the World Health Organization. “The large majority of the deaths and the severe cases are in the unvaccinated, vulnerable segment of the population.”

National Guard extends DC mission for ‘People’s Convoy’

By COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Monday extended the deployment of National Guard troops throughout the Washington, D.C., area as a caravan of anti-mask and anti-vaccination truckers and others vowed to stall traffic along the Capital Beltway that encircles the city.

Austin extended the deployment of about 700 troops through Wednesday, after the mission initially approved Feb. 23 was set to expire Monday, said John Kirby, the Pentagon’s top spokesman. The troops — some 400 from the District of Columbia National Guard and another about 300 from neighboring states — have been assisting local law enforcement largely with traffic control, according to the Pentagon.

Austin’s decision followed a request from U.S. Capitol Police and the D.C. Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency to extend the deployment. The so-called “Peo-

ple’s Convoy” arrived in the D.C. region during the weekend after driving from California. They have vowed to slow traffic on I-495, the interstate in Virginia and Maryland that encircles the national capital, in an attempt to convince officials to end pandemic-related health measures.

The group vowed in a statement posted on its website that the convoy will not enter Washington. It describes itself as a “peaceful movement” meant to protest coronavirus mitigation directives, including government mandated mask usage and vaccinations.

On Sunday, the convoy drove about 45 mph along the Beltway in a single-file line, according to The Washington Post. The newspaper reported Sunday that it caused few disruptions, as the convoy vehicles spread out — at times in lines stretching 35 miles — allowing other vehicles to move easily in between and around the protesters.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police seize handguns, long guns from 3 homes

MI DETROIT — Six handguns, two shotguns, a rifle and ammunition have been recovered after Detroit police served search warrants on three homes.

Special operations officers seized a 9 mm semiautomatic pistol and a 12-gauge shotgun from a house on the city's east side, Detroit police said Friday.

A reported domestic abuse case Monday led police to another eastside home where they recovered two handguns, a bullet-proof vest and ammunition. One of the handguns had been stolen.

Police investigate stolen box full of human heads

CO DENVER — Denver police are investigating the theft of a box containing human heads from a parked freight company truck, officials said Saturday.

The box was being transported for medical research purposes, police said in an email.

Someone broke into the truck while it was parked between Wednesday afternoon and Thursday morning, Denver television station KDVR reported.

The blue-and-white box was marked with a label that said "Exempt Human Specimen," police said. A dolly was also stolen from the truck.

Town elects Elsa the baby goat as pet mayor

VT MONTPELIER — A Vermont town has a new pet mayor — Elsa, the baby goat.

The goat was elected Fair

Haven's pet mayor on Town Meeting Day last week, WCAX-TV reported.

"I feel like she'd be good for the town because she's a very good pet and she's very loving," said Elsa's owner Aleah Murray, who is a Fair Haven Grade School fifth grader.

Fair Haven started having an honorary pet mayor as a way to raise money to rehabilitate a community playground and to help get local children involved in civics. After the playground fundraiser, the town decided to pursue a dog park, which opened in November.

Man hit by car, killed walking to get pizza

MI ORION TOWNSHIP — A man possibly confused while walking to pick up a pizza was struck by a car and killed while carrying the box hours later, 10 miles from his home in southeastern Michigan, authorities said Saturday.

Ernie Fortson, 71, was wearing dark clothes when he was hit Friday night while on a road in Oakland County's Orion Township, the sheriff's office said.

It was roughly six hours after he had left his Pontiac home to pick up a pizza, Fortson's girlfriend told investigators. He was using a walker.

Fortson left home around 2:30 p.m. to get the pizza and "possibly became confused" after picking it up and "kept walking north," the sheriff's office said.

Pickleball will likely be new official state sport

WA OLYMPIA — Pickleball is one signature away from becoming Wash-

ington's official state sport.

With just a few minutes to spare before a legislative deadline Friday, the state House approved the measure on a bipartisan 83-15 vote. The Spokesman-Review reported that the bill — which passed the state Senate last month — now heads to Gov. Jay Inslee for his signature.

According to the USA Pickleball Association, the sport was created on Bainbridge Island in 1965 by Washington State Rep. Joel Pritchard, who would later go on to represent the state in Congress and serve as Washington's lieutenant governor.

Missing woman's body found in septic tank

FL JENSEN BEACH — The body of a Florida woman was found by deputies in a septic tank buried in her backyard, and her handyman has been charged with killing her, authorities said Saturday.

Investigators in Jensen Beach, Fla., found a body believed to be that of Cynthia Cole, submerged in the septic tank 4 feet underground after hours of excavating her backyard late Friday, the Martin County Sheriff's Office said in a Facebook post.

Shortly after finding the body, deputies arrested her handyman, Keoki Hilo Demich, who was charged with second-degree murder. Cole, 57, had been missing for more than a week.

Teenager arrested after 2 high-speed car chases

NC SMITHFIELD — A North Carolina teenager has been arrested and charged for leading law enforcement officers on two high speed

chases and reaching speeds in excess of 130 mph before crashing, a sheriff's office said.

The Johnston County Sheriff's Office said the 17-year-old driver was first seen by a sheriff's deputy in a 2006 Dodge Charger on U.S. Highway 70 driving at least 131 mph, news outlets reported. The deputy chased after the vehicle before losing sight of it.

A second sheriff's deputy spotted the car and chased it toward Smithfield before also losing sight of it. Deputies then responded to a call about a crash at the Interstate 40-Cleveland Road interchange before midnight. The N.C. State Highway Patrol said the car went off the Cleveland Road bridge onto I-40 below and landed on the back quarter of another vehicle.

The teenager faces multiple charges. He was treated and released from a local hospital before being jailed, the sheriff's office said.

'Scoop Dogg' snowplow name wins state contest

CT HARTFORD — "Scoop Dogg" and "Husky McSalty" were the top vote-getters among Connecticut residents participating in a contest to name four of the state's snowplows.

Gov. Ned Lamont on Friday announced the winning names that will be displayed on four Connecticut Department of Transportation snowplows.

Plow names inspired by rapper Snoop Dogg and the UConn Huskies came in at first and second place, respectively. The No. 3 vote-getter was "Buzz Iceclear," as in Buzz Lightyear, followed by "Plowzilla," an homage to the giant movie monster.

— From wire reports

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Heels solidify NCAA spot, Hoosiers slide

Associated Press

Two games involving two of college basketball's bluest bluebloods left North Carolina and Indiana heading into conference tournament week on opposite ends of the NCAA Tournament bubble spectrum.

The Tar Heels rolled into Cameron Indoor Stadium and handed fourth-ranked Duke a 94-81 loss Saturday night in the final home game for Hall of Fame coach Mike Krzyzewski. The win itself should be plenty to end any lingering doubt about where UNC sits heading into the Atlantic Coast Conference tourney.

"All week, we just talked about our competitive fight," said first-year North Carolina coach Hubert Davis, whose team improved to 23-8 overall and 15-5 in the ACC. "We had to do three things: We had to plant our feet, we had to stand our ground and we had to fight. ... I just felt like, as the game went on, we started to just gain more and more confidence."

That should bode well for the Tar Heels not only this week but heading into the NCAA Tournament.

Then there's Indiana, which had eighth-ranked Purdue on the ropes before suffering a heartbreaking 69-67 loss on Saturday night. That left the Hoosiers at 18-12 overall and 9-11 in the Big Ten as they prepare for their conference tournament. The loss in West Lafayette dropped Indiana to 4-8 away from home this season.

"I'm pleased, guys, with the way we competed," Hoosiers coach Mike Woodson said. "I mean, we gave ourselves an opportunity to win a game in a hostile situation. This is a tough building to win in. I thought we were very competitive."

Simply being competitive might not be enough for Indiana. It dropped a double-overtime game to Syracuse early in the season, and close losses to Penn State (61-58), Wisconsin (74-69) and Rutgers (66-63) that could have gone the other way have left Woodson's crew heading to the Big Ten Tournament needing a couple wins.

They aren't the only one: Michigan is also teetering on the bubble at 17-13 overall and 11-9 in the Big Ten, but the Wolverines — still without coach Juwan Howard — did pick up a big win over No. 23 Ohio State over the weekend.

"I'm just in awe of the players' character," fill-in coach Phil Martelli said. "I'm in awe of the support staff's knowledge."

Rising

Memphis: Remember that time Penny Hardaway got into a kerfuffle at a news conference over the performance of his talent-laden team? The Tigers have lost just once since Jan. 20, when a loss to SMU dropped them to 9-8 overall and 3-4 in the American Athletic Conference. The coup de grace heading into the league tournament was a 75-61 drubbing of No. 14 Houston on Sunday that showed just how potent Memphis can be in March.

Rutgers: After three straight losses began to tip the Scarlet Knights to the wrong side of the bubble, back-to-back wins over Indiana and Penn State have their NCAA Tournament picture trending up. But at 18-12 overall, they probably need at least one win during the Big Ten Tournament to feel good about Selection Sunday.

Florida: Yes, the Gators dropped a competitive regular-season finale to No. 7 Ken-

tucky, but they also beat then-No. 2 Auburn a couple weeks ago. Throw in must-have wins at Georgia and Vanderbilt and the Gators were 19-12 and 9-9 in Southeastern Conference play, giving them a good shot at making the 68-team field.

Loyola Chicago: So much for waiting for Selection Sunday. The Ramblers, who always seem to turn heads come March, did it again with a spirited run to the Missouri Valley tournament title. And while they are no longer a bubble team by virtue of the automatic bid, their play over the last month has them on the rise.

Fading Hopes

VCU: Any chance that the Rams had of earning an at-large bid probably evaporated last week with a 69-65 loss to Saint Louis. Now, they may have to play their way into the NCAA field through the Atlantic 10 tourney.

Virginia Tech: The Hokies were trending up until Saturday, when a trip to Clemson ended with a stumbling 63-59 loss. It doesn't help Virginia Tech's hopes that the Atlantic Coast Conference has been down all season, either.

Xavier: The Musketeers will head into the Big East tourney off a win over lowly Georgetown. But before that? Five straight losses and seven in a span of eight games. That monthlong stretch turned Xavier from a lock into a bubble dweller.

TCU: The same team that beat sixth-ranked Kansas last week also lost to the Jayhawks, then at West Virginia, putting its NCAA Tournament hopes in jeopardy. The Horned Frogs have lost six of their last nine games.

Owners react angrily to locked-out players' new offer

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Major League Baseball reacted angrily to the latest offer by locked-out players when bargaining resumed Sunday, accusing the union of backtracking and showing no sign of a breakthrough to get the derailed season back on track.

The squabbling sides talked for 95 minutes on the 95th day of the lockout, largely restating their positions to each other. Talks broke off Tuesday after nine days of negotiations in Jupiter, Fla.,

and Commissioner Rob Manfred canceled the first two series of the season for each team, a total of 91 games.

If Manfred cancels two additional series through April 13 and 14, he would wipe out 93 more games and increase the total to 184. That would move to the verge of threatening players with the loss of service time and delayed free agency.

This was the first meeting since Tuesday. Manfred was in the MLB offices Sunday but did not

attend the bargaining session, aimed at starting the first season delayed by labor strife since 1995.

The union followed the four-day recess by putting many of its proposals in writing.

"We were hoping to see movement in our direction to give us additional flexibility and get a deal done quickly," MLB spokesman Glen Caplin said. "The players' association chose to come back to us with a proposal that was worse than Monday night and was not designed to move the

process forward. On some issues, they even went backwards. Simply put, we are deadlocked. We will try to figure out how to respond, but nothing in this proposal makes it easy."

The sides remained far apart on luxury tax, minimum salaries and the proposed bonus pool for pre-arbitration eligible players. The union lowered its starting point for the bonus pool by \$5 million but left its proposals for the luxury tax and minimum salary unchanged.

Robertson's 2nd straight hat trick lifts Stars

Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Jason Robertson had his second hat trick of the weekend and the Dallas Stars beat the Minnesota Wild 6-3 on Sunday.

Robertson is up to 29 goals on the season, seven of which have come in the last three games. He's the first NHL player to record back-to-back hat tricks since Washington's Alex Ovechkin in January 2020.

Joe Pavelski and Jamie Benn also scored for Dallas, which has won four in a row and seven of the last nine. Riley Tufte added his first NHL goal, and Jake Oettinger had 32 saves.

For Minnesota, Kirill Kaprizov scored twice and Nico Sturm added a goal. Kaapo Kahkonen gave up four goals on 21 shots before being pulled midway through the second period. He was replaced by Cam Talbot, who stopped all three shots he faced.

The Wild have lost eight of their last 10 games, and are tied with the Stars for third place in the Central Division.

"We are a fragile group right now," Minnesota coach Dean Evason said. "Nobody else in the league feels sorry for us. So we're not going to feel sorry for ourselves."

Lightning 6, Blackhawks 3: Victor Hedman scored twice, Mikhail Sergachev had a goal and two assists and visiting Tampa Bay beat Chicago.

The two-time defending Stanley Cup champions came from behind with a five-goal outburst over seven minutes bridging the second and third periods. Hedman, Corey Perry and Sergachev scored the Lightning's last three goals in a 32-second span

in the third.

Cal Foote and Taylor Raddysh also scored for Tampa Bay. Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 24 shots and picked up his league-leading 30th victory of the season.

Dylan Strome, Patrick Kane and Alex DeBrincat scored for the Blackhawks. Marc-Andre Fleury made 26 saves.

Golden Knights 2, Senators 1: Jack Eichel scored a power-play goal with 5.2 seconds remaining to give host Vegas the win over Ottawa.

Jonathan Marchessault also scored for the Golden Knights and Robin Lehner made 39 saves.

Brady Tkachuk scored the lone goal for the Senators and Anton Forsberg made 40 saves.

Hurricanes 3, Kraken 2: Martin Necas scored with 9:38 remaining to give host Carolina its first lead of the game in a win over Seattle.

Nino Niederreiter and Tevuo Teravainen scored second-period goals on power plays for the Hurricanes, who stretched their home-ice points streak to 11 games. Antti Raanta made 28 saves.

Alex Wennberg and Calle Jarnkrok scored for the Kraken, who have lost on back-to-back nights to begin a five-game road trip. Philipp Grubauer stopped 30 shots, but lost his eighth straight (0-7-1).

Rangers 4, Jets 1: Chris Kreider scored twice and visiting New York beat Winnipeg.

Mike Zibanejad and Barclay Goodrow also scored for the Rangers, and Artemi Panarin and Jacob Trouba each had two assists. Igor Shesterkin stopped 45 shots.

Nikolaj Ehlers scored for the Jets and Connor Hellebuyck finished with 18 saves.

Kreider's second goal of the night tied him with Edmonton's Leon Draisaitl for second in the NHL in scoring, one behind Toronto's Auston Matthews.

Devils 3, Blues 2 (OT): Dougie Hamilton scored in overtime, rookie Nico Daws made 19 saves and host New Jersey edged St. Louis after blowing a 2-0 lead in the third period.

Hamilton scored his ninth goal of the season at the 1:12 of the extra session with a high shot to beat Ville Husso. Pavel Zacha and Jack Hughes assisted on the winning goal.

The Devils snapped a two-game losing streak, while the Blues lost their third straight.

Ducks 3, Sharks 2 (OT): Rickard Rakell scored 14 seconds into overtime, and Anaheim beat San Jose for its second win over the Sharks during a six-game homestand.

Adam Henrique had a goal and an assist, while Anthony Stolarz made 20 saves in the Ducks' fourth victory in 11 games.

Marc-Édouard Vlasic ended his 76-game goal drought and Logan Couture also scored for San Jose, which has lost 11 of 13.

Kings 3, Sabres 0: Andreas Athanasiou scored twice, including the 100th of his career, Cal Petersen stopped 19 shots and visiting Los Angeles defeated Buffalo.

After Athanasiou opened the scoring with 3:05 left in the second period, he and Dustin Brown sealed the win by scoring into an empty net in the final minute. Petersen earned his second shutout of the season and fourth of his career.

Bowman edges Larson in OT to win in Las Vegas

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — The racing rule is quite clear at Hendrick Motorsports, where the boss will let his drivers go door-to-door so long as they don't tear up his cars.

After two of his stars tangled last week in California, Hendrick gave his team a rules refresher.

Message delivered.

Alex Bowman and Larson went wheel-to-wheel Sunday in a two-lap overtime shootout at Las Vegas Motor Speedway. The

racing was clean from the restart to the checkered flag, and Bowman bested the reigning NASCAR champion for his first win of the season.

The win made it two straight for Hendrick through three Cup races. The winningest owner in NASCAR now has 281 victories.

Bowman took pride in scoring a seventh career victory with a clean 1-2 finish for Hendrick following the meeting with the boss.

"The talk was a big wake-up call," Bowman said. "When Mr. H calls a meeting like that, it gets

your attention."

Hendrick called the meeting after Larson and Chase Elliott collided racing for the lead at California. Larson said he didn't see Elliott when he squeezed him into the wall and apologized. Elliott was furious, and Hendrick put the matter to rest.

Just a week later, though, the Hendrick cars again had to race one another for the win and make sure to do it without any bumping or banging. The Hendrick chance came when a spin by Erik Jones with three laps re-

maining brought out the 12th caution of the race and shifted the fight from a pair of Joe Gibbs Racing cars to the Hendrick cars.

Las Vegas native Kyle Busch and teammate Martin Truex Jr. had been in a lap-by-lap chess match for the win until Jones' crash. Busch thought he'd inched ahead of Truex and had the win locked up until the caution.

"I don't know what it was," Busch said. "But anyways, wasn't meant to be. Not our day. See you next week."

Tatum's 54 points help Celtics push past Nets

Associated Press

BOSTON — Jayson Tatum scored a season-high 54 points — 34 of them in the second half — and the Boston Celtics overcame a rare appearance of both Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving in Brooklyn's lineup to beat the Nets 126-120 on Sunday.

Durant played in his second game since mid-January and scored 37 to become the 23rd player in NBA history to reach 25,000 points. Irving joined him for just the fourth time all season, scoring 19 in his first game in three weeks and his first in Boston since he was pelted with a water bottle during the playoffs.

"Those matchups — when you're playing one of the better teams in the league, two of the best guys — as a competitor, those are the kinds of moments that as a kid you looked forward to," Tatum said. "When those opportunities come, you try to make the most of it."

Jaylen Brown scored 21 points for the Celtics. He was cleared to return after testing his sprained ankle pregame.

Bucks 132, Suns 122: Khris Middleton scored a season-high 44 points, Jrue Holiday had 17 of his 24 points in the fourth quarter and host Milwaukee rallied to beat short-handed Phoenix.

The Bucks outscored the Suns 12-1 over the last three minutes to win in Phoenix's first visit since Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 50 points in a 105-98 Game 6 victory that gave Milwaukee its first NBA title in 50 years. In their only previous matchup this season, the Suns won 131-107 in Phoenix on Feb. 10.

The NBA-leading Suns were playing without their usual All-Star starting backcourt of Devin Booker and Chris Paul. Booker missed his third straight game due to the NBA's health and safety protocols. Paul broke his right thumb Feb. 16.

Rockets 123, Grizzlies 112: Kevin Porter Jr. scored 29 points, Christian Wood added 28 points and 13 rebounds and Houston beat visiting Memphis to end a 12-game losing streak.

Porter scored 19 of his 22 second-half points in the third quarter to help the Rockets overcome a 10-point halftime deficit. Wood has scored at least 20 points in three games.

Jalen Green added 24 points and eight rebounds, and Eric Gordon had 12 points in Houston's first victory since beating Cleveland on Feb. 2.

Nuggets 138, Pelicans 130 (OT): Nikola Jokic scored 30 of his 46 points in the fourth quarter and overtime, and host Denver rallied after squandering an early 21-point lead to beat New Orleans.

Jokic hit two free throws to tie it with 3.2 seconds remaining in regulation, and then sealed it in OT with a three-pointer with 1:30 left. His big night led to an improbable win in which coach Michael Malone was ejected late in the third quarter, the Nuggets completely unraveling and then regrouping down the stretch.

Jokic, the reigning NBA MVP, also had 12 rebounds and 11 assists for his league-leading 17th triple-double of the season.

Wizards 133, Pacers 123: Kristaps Porzingis scored 25 points in his first game for host Washington in a win over Indiana.

Porzingis returned from a right knee bone bruise and played for the first time since the Wizards acquired him from Dallas in a trade last month. It was his first game overall since Jan. 29.

Kyle Kuzma added 23 points for Washington. Malcolm Brogdon scored 27 points for the Pacers.

Jazz 116, Thunder 103: Bojan Bogdanovic made a franchise-record 11 three-pointers and scored 35 points to help Utah win at Oklahoma City.

Bogdanovic attempted 18 three-pointers. Donovan Mitchell had 24 points and 10 assists, and Jordan Clarkson added 20 points for the Jazz.

Cavaliers 104, Raptors 96: Rookie Evan Mobley had 20 points and 17 rebounds, Lauri Markkanen scored 22 points and host Cleveland widened its lead over Toronto in the Eastern Conference.

The Cavs won for just the second time in eight games.

Knicks 116, Clippers 93: RJ Barrett had 24 points and nine rebounds, and New York won at Los Angeles to snap a seven-game losing skid.

Immanuel Quickley added 21 points and Cam Reddish had 15 of his 17 points in the fourth for the Knicks, who used big scoring runs to open the second and fourth quarters of a game in which they led by 32 points. Amir Coffey scored 16 points off the bench to lead the Clippers, whose five-game winning streak ended at the hands of one of the East's worst teams.

Scheffler comes up clutch to win by 1 at Bay Hill

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Scottie Scheffler isn't sure he won the Arnold Palmer Invitational as much as he survived it.

Over the final four holes Sunday at Bay Hill, he had to get up-and-down from 149 yards in rough covering the tops of his shoes, and from 67 yards over the water to a back pin on the third-easiest hole.

The two conventional pars that followed were just as scary, one from 45 feet and the other from about 70 feet, on greens with barely enough grass to keep the ball from sliding, knowing a gust could send the ball an extra 8 feet.

Scheffler answered every challenge. He closed with a bogey-free back nine at Bay Hill and an even-par 72 for a one-shot victory, his second on the PGA Tour in a month. He moved to No. 5 in the world.

The average score was 75.48. Six players shot 80 or higher and only four players broke par.

Ko wins by 2 strokes in HSBC Women's World Championship

SINGAPORE — World No. 1 Jin Young Ko birdied the 18th hole on Sunday for a 6-under 66 to win the LPGA Tour's HSBC Women's World Championship in Singapore by two strokes over fellow South Korean player In Gee Chun and Australian Minjee Lee.

Ko has won six times in her last 10 starts, and her round set the LPGA Tour's all-time record for most consecutive rounds in the 60s (15) and most consecutive sub-par rounds (30).

"I am just proud of myself to record 60s, 15 rounds like straight. So I'm so happy," said Ko. "I feel amazing right now."

Goosen eagles, wins Hoag Classic by 4 strokes

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif. — Retief Goosen holed out for eagle from a green-side bunker on the short par-4 first hole, birdied the next two and cruised to an 8-under 63 and a four-stroke victory Sunday in the Hoag Classic.

A stroke behind fellow South African star Ernie Els entering the round, Goosen pulled away quickly at Newport Beach Country Club in breezy but overall calmer conditions than the players faced Saturday.