

Zelenskyy pleads with Congress for aid

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy made an emotional appeal to Congress on Wednesday for air cover against invading Russian forces as the United States readies to unleash a new wave of military support for his embattled country.

“Russia has turned the Ukrainian sky into a source of death for thousands of people,” Zelenskyy told U.S. lawmakers in a historic address by a wartime leader. “This is a terror that Europe has not seen for 80 years and we are asking for a reply, for an answer.”

President Joe Biden announced later Wednesday that the U.S. would send an additional \$800 million in additional security assistance to Ukraine, including more anti-tank weapons, air-defense systems and anti-aircraft batteries that would enable the Ukrainian military to shoot down Russian planes. Combined with the new aid, the U.S. has sent \$2 billion in military support to the war-torn country in the past year, roughly \$1 billion in the last week.

Zelenskyy’s most urgent demand, however, is a no-fly zone over Ukraine. President Joe Biden has refused to protect Ukrainian air space because it would put the U.S. military and NATO in direct conflict with Rus-

sian forces and possibly lead to a world war.

Zelenskyy has stayed persistent in asking for a no-fly zone, repeating the request to the Canadian Parliament, Britain’s House of Commons and the European Parliament this month. To convince U.S. lawmakers to “close the sky,” Zelenskyy played a graphic video showing the human toll of the war, including shelled cities, mass graves and bloodied civilians.

Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., urged every mother and father to watch the video with their families.

“Everybody knows who Zelenskyy is. The man has the courage of his convictions,” he said. “Everybody knows who [Russian President Vladimir] Putin is. He believes in murdering women and children — you can see it in the video.”

Zelenskyy asked lawmakers on Wednesday to remember Pearl Harbor and the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and he said Ukraine is experiencing that same carnage “every day, right now at this moment.”

If the U.S. cannot close the skies to Russian bombardment, Zelenskyy offered an alternative: send Ukraine air-defense systems and aircraft. He told lawmakers to pursue sanctions against every Russian politician who has not denounced the war and pressure companies in their districts and

states to leave the Russian market.

Invoking Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, Zelenskyy said, “I have a need.”

Zelenskyy addressed lawmakers in Ukrainian, sitting in his trademark military green T-shirt beside a Ukrainian flag. But he made his last appeal in English, speaking directly to Biden and referencing the historic standing of the U.S. as the leader of the free world.

“To be the leader of the world means to be the leader of peace,” he said.

Zelenskyy’s virtual speech to lawmakers came amid backlash in Congress to the White House’s decision last week to nix a delivery of fighter jets from NATO ally Poland to Ukraine. Poland offered to provide its neighbor with the Soviet-era MiG-29 jets if the U.S. acted as a middleman for the transfer — a proposal U.S. officials feared Russia would interpret as an escalation of the war.

Democratic and Republican lawmakers have shown strong support for pouring military and humanitarian aid into Ukraine, approving a \$14 billion assistance package last week for the battered country. They rallied around Zelenskyy on Wednesday, visibly moved by Ukraine’s fight for democracy and survival.

NATO tasked to ‘reset’ for long-term Russia challenge

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — NATO’s top commander was tasked Wednesday with developing a plan to add military force within alliance territory in response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, following a day of high-level talks in Brussels.

The planning to be headed by U.S. Air Force Gen. Tod Wolters is expected to be ready within weeks and address the long-term security challenges of Russia’s unpredictability, officials said following a meeting of the alliance’s defense chiefs.

“We face a new reality for our security. So we must reset our collective defense and deterrence for the longer term,” NATO Secre-

tary-General Jens Stoltenberg said. “Today we have tasked our military commanders to develop options across all domains — land, air, sea, cyber and space.”

President Joe Biden and other allied heads of state, who are set to meet in Brussels next week for emergency talks, are expected to approve plans for more troops along NATO’s eastern flank at a separate summit in June.

Since Russia’s Feb. 24 attack on Ukraine, allies have ramped up operations in Europe, where 100,000 U.S. troops are now positioned and hundreds of thousands of other alliance troops are on heightened alert, Stoltenberg said.

“Moscow should be in no doubt, NATO

will not tolerate any attack on allied sovereignty or territorial integrity,” Stoltenberg said.

For the U.S.-led NATO alliance, Russia’s initial intervention in Ukraine in 2014 was the spark that prompted more military spending in Europe and a larger allied presence in countries like Poland and the Baltics. Before Russia’s annexation of Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula, there were no allied battlegroups in NATO’s east and members were settled in a pattern of downward defense spending.

Now, Russia’s full-fledged invasion of Ukraine demands a more robust response from allies, which will “require major investments,” he said.

S. Korea: North's projectile 'failed immediately'

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

North Korea fired a projectile Wednesday that appeared to have "failed immediately" after it was launched, according to South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The projectile was fired at around 9:30 a.m., the South Korean military said in a text message to reporters.

Japan's Ministry of Defense also announced the launch of a "possible ballistic missile," according to public broadcaster NHK.

"The Ministry of Defense is collecting information on whether it will affect Japan," said the report, which cited an unnamed

ministry official.

If confirmed, Wednesday's launch would mark North Korea's 10th missile test so far this year. On March 9, the communist regime fired what it claimed to be a reconnaissance satellite.

North Korea indicated several times it would conduct another launch in the days leading up to Wednesday.

Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said in a statement March 10 that North Korea would likely be "conducting a test at full range in the future."

North Korea's previous launches on Feb. 26 and March 5, which the regime claimed were related to its satellite program, involved "a new intercontinental

ballistic missile system," Kirby said.

"The United States strongly condemns these launches, which are a brazen violation of multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions, needlessly raise tensions and risk destabilizing the security situation in the region," Kirby said.

South Korea's military echoed Kirby's remarks in its statement Friday and said North Korea's latest tests appear to be a trial run of a future test "disguised" as a space launch.

The state-run Korean Central News Agency reported Friday that regime leader Kim Jong Un inspected a satellite testing site and called for the expansion and

modernization of nearby facilities.

Wednesday's launch comes one day after U.S. Forces Korea issued a news release about its air defense training. The command said the 35th Air Defense Artillery Brigade "increased the intensity of their certification exercise recently to demonstrate USFK's capabilities and commitment to defend the [South Korea] against any threat or adversary."

USFK, which is responsible for roughly 28,500 troops on the peninsula, cited North Korea's "recent increase of missile launch frequency" and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's directive for the "increased intensity" of its routine training.

Senators look at military needs in Africa, Mideast

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Russian mercenaries, Chinese investments and Iranian weaponry are challenging U.S. security interests in Africa and the Middle East, commanders told senators on Tuesday as lawmakers shifted their attention to regions coming under the increasing influence of adversaries.

The small U.S. military footprint in Africa, which was diminished in 2020 with the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Somalia, is grappling with local extremist groups as well as the rising presence of Russian paramilitary organizations such as the Wagner Group, Army Gen. Stephen Townsend, the commander of U.S. Africa Command, told the Senate Armed Services Committee during a hearing on the posture of U.S. forces in the region.

In the Middle East, the United States is eyeing the advancement of Iran's missile capabilities and

looking to the Taliban in Afghanistan to help counter Islamic State, said Marine Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, commander of U.S. Central Command.

McKenzie emphasized the need to restore the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement despite concerns from Sens. Angus King, I-Maine; Kevin Cramer, R-N.D.; and Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn., that lifting sanctions to facilitate the deal would give Iran more money to pour into weaponry.

McKenzie called the brewing deal a "less than perfect solution" but he said it was necessary to halt Iran's nuclear program.

The top nuclear threat in Africa and the Middle East for now is Russia, both commanders said.

Russia is most noticeably flexing its power in Africa, where mercenaries with the Wagner Group are infiltrating governments to protect authoritarian regimes, exploit vast natural resources and exact violence, Townsend said.

Navy extends its probe of tainted water in Hawaii

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — Almost four months since the Navy began an investigation into the causes of the widespread well-water contamination in Hawaii, the service is hitting reset.

The level of detail in that investigation was deemed inadequate by Adm. William Lescher, vice chief of naval operations, and he has ordered further review into how the Navy responded to two separate fuel leaks last year, according to a Navy statement released Tuesday.

In November, Adm. Samuel Paparo, the head of U.S. Pacific Fleet, ordered a command investigation into fuel leaks from the underground Red Hill storage facility near Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam after jet fuel turned up in one of three wells the Navy uses for its water distribution system. Paparo ordered the probe to specifically review the causes of leaks on Nov. 20 and May 6.

The investigation results were eagerly awaited by state officials, Hawaii's congressional delegation and thousands of residents of military communities who were displaced this winter by the tainted water. Many were relocated to hotels, with some suffering from headaches, nausea, diarrhea, rashes and other maladies.

"Adm. Lescher directed the supplemental investigation because the initial command investigation, while sound in many respects, did not include a sufficient review of actions the Navy took in response to the May and November releases," Rear Adm. Charlie Brown, the Navy's chief of information, said in a statement Tuesday.

Lescher appointed Rear Adm. James Waters to oversee the extended investigation, Brown said.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced on March 7 that the Red Hill storage facility would be permanently closed before the end of next year.

Senate: Make daylight saving time permanent

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Senate unanimously approved a measure Tuesday that would make daylight saving time permanent across the United States next year.

The bipartisan bill, named the Sunshine Protection Act, would ensure Americans would no longer have to change their clocks twice a year. But the bill still needs approval from the House, and the signature of President Joe Biden, to become law.

“No more switching clocks, more daylight hours to spend outside after school and after

work, and more smiles — that is what we get with permanent Daylight Saving Time,” Sen. Ed Markey of Massachusetts, the original co-sponsor of the legislation, said in a statement.

Markey was joined on the chamber floor by senators from both parties as they made the case for how making daylight saving time permanent would have positive effects on public health and the economy and even cut energy consumption.

“Changing the clock twice a year is outdated and unnecessary,” Republican Sen. Rick Scott of Florida said.

“I’ve said it before and I’ll say

it again: Americans want more sunshine and less depression — people in this country, all the way from Seattle to Miami, want the Sunshine Protection Act,” said Sen. Patty Murray of Washington.

Nearly a dozen states across the U.S. have already standardized daylight saving time.

Daylight saving time is defined as a period between spring and fall when clocks in most parts of the country are set one hour ahead of standard time. Americans last changed their clocks on Sunday. Standard time lasts for roughly four months in most of the country.

Members of Congress have long been interested in the potential benefits and costs of daylight saving time since it was first adopted as a wartime measure in 1942. The proposal will now go to the House, where the Energy and Commerce Committee had a hearing to discuss possible legislation last week.

Rep. Frank Pallone, the chairman of the committee, agreed in his opening statement at the hearing that it is “time we stop changing our clocks.” But he said he was undecided about whether daylight saving time or standard time is the way to go.

No charges for 2 Chicago officers in fatal shootings

Associated Press

CHICAGO — No charges will be filed against the Chicago police officers who chased and fatally shot 13-year-old Adam Toledo and 22-year-old Anthony Alvarez within days of each other last year, prompting sharp criticism of how the department handles foot pursuits, a prosecutor announced Tuesday.

Cook County State’s Attorney Kim Foxx said there was insufficient evidence to charge the officers in the deaths, which were captured on video that showed both suspects appeared to have handguns prior to the shootings.

The public release of the videos in April 2021 renewed calls for reform of the Chicago Police Department, which has had a reputation for brutality, misconduct and racism for decades.

And it came as videos of police confrontations put departments around the country under heavy scrutiny, especially after the footage from 2020 that helped lead to a murder conviction in the death of George Floyd.

In both Chicago shootings, officers chased suspects on foot — a highly unpredictable situation

that critics, including the U.S. Department of Justice, have said is dangerous for both officers and suspects and leads to too many unnecessary shootings.

The deaths led to protests and calls for Chicago to adopt clear guidelines for officers on pursuits, though a policy still has not been finalized.

In February, Alvarez’s family sued the city of Chicago, saying it is partly responsible for his death because of the lack of a foot pursuit policy.

The prosecutor said she met with families of both Toledo and Alvarez earlier Tuesday.

In meeting with the Alvarez family and their attorney, Foxx said the family was “unmistakably heartbroken” and had “many, many questions” about how officers approached him, including why they didn’t come to their house if they knew they were looking for him.

In a statement, attorneys for the family said they are “profoundly disappointed” that Stillman will not face criminal charges and that they are pursuing a civil case against Stillman and the city.

Pfizer wants US to allow 4th virus vaccine dose for seniors

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Pfizer and its partner BioNTech asked U.S. regulators Tuesday to authorize an additional booster dose of their COVID-19 vaccine for seniors, saying data from Israel suggests older adults would benefit.

The United States currently urges two primary shots followed months later by a booster dose for everyone age 12 and older. The new application seeks to add a fourth shot only for the over-65 population that has been hit hardest by the pandemic.

The Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control would have to approve the request. If so, a key question would be how soon seniors would be advised to roll up their sleeves.

While authorities have said the vaccinations continue to offer strong protection against severe illness, they haven’t held up as well against milder infections, especially those due to the omicron mutant. With COVID-19 cases finally plummeting after the intense omicron surge, public health experts are starting to look ahead to what next steps

might be needed — if a new variant crops up or, barring that, whether to try shoring up coronavirus protection in the fall at the same time people get flu vaccinations.

Speaking to CBS’ “Face the Nation” on Sunday, Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla signaled the company’s plans.

“The protection that you are getting from the third, it is good enough, actually quite good for hospitalizations and deaths. It’s not that good against infections,” he said. “But we are just submitting those data to the FDA and then we will see what the experts also will say outside Pfizer.”

Pfizer based its new application on data from Israel, which was already offering a second booster to people age 60 and older and health care workers. Pfizer also cited an ongoing study of health care workers that tracked a jump in virus-fighting antibodies after getting the additional booster.

In the U.S. so far, a fourth dose is recommended only for people with severely weakened immune systems, who need three doses to begin with for the best chance at any protection.

Tenn. lawmakers introduce abortion bill

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Despite already enacting one of the strictest abortion bans in the United States, Tennessee Republicans on Tuesday began advancing yet another anti-abortion measure strategically written to sidestep federal court challenges.

The proposal is almost a direct copycat of legislation currently enacted in Texas, which not only prohibits doctors from performing abortions before most people know they're pregnant but also allows private citizens to file civil lawsuits against anyone who helps someone else get the procedure after six weeks into pregnancy.

The Tennessee version introduced Tuesday would ban all abortions rather than allowing a patient to have a six-week window. But similar to the Texas model, it still would make legal challenges difficult because the

government would not be the enforcer.

"This bill is modeled directly after the legislation passed in Texas last year. Abortions since that bill has been passed have dropped 60% in Texas," said GOP Rep. Rebecca Alexander, the legislation's sponsor, while addressing a House subcommittee.

The proposed abortion ban does not have an exception for rape or incest, but those who impregnated a patient "through an act of rape, sexual assault, or incest" would not be allowed to sue an abortion provider. A rapist's relatives, however, could each bring a civil action.

"I think you may not understand what your bill does ... this allows people who have no knowledge, no standing, that have not been harmed to bring a lawsuit against any doctor that they believe has performed an abortion," said Democratic Rep. Bob Freeman.

"My intent is to bring a bill that protects the unborn life in this state," Alexander responded.

The House panel agreed to advance the bill, but it would still have to clear the full House and Senate chambers before it could get before Gov. Bill Lee's desk for his signature.

For decades, Republicans across the U.S. have sought to chip away the constitutional right to abortion, which is protected under the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling. Yet the Texas law has been one of the rare strict measures to continue to be implemented even as it faces court challenges.

While at least seven states introduced bills mimicking the Texas anti-abortion law earlier this year, to date only Idaho's GOP-controlled Statehouse has sent a version to the state's governor for approval.

Slight increase seen in February retail sales in US

Associated Press

NEW YORK — After beginning the year in a buying mood, Americans slowed their spending in February on gadgets, home furnishings and other discretionary items as higher prices for food, gasoline and shelter are eating up more of their wallet.

Retail sales increased 0.3% after registering a revised 4.9% jump from December to January, fueled by wage gains, solid hiring and more money in banking accounts, according to the Commerce Department. January's increase was the biggest jump in spending since last March, when American households received a final federal stimulus check of \$1,400.

Business at furniture and home furnishing stores fell 1% in February, while sales at electronic and appliance stores slipped 0.6%. General merchandise stores saw business down 0.2%, while online sales fell 3.7%.

Restaurant sales rose 2.5% as shoppers shift more of their spending to services as the threat of COVID-19 fades.

And there are new pressures that could send prices even higher, namely the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Western companies have pulled out of Russia after it sent tank columns toward the capital of Kyiv and heavily shelled the southern seaport of Mariupol and other urban centers.

Earlier this month, the Labor Department reported that consumer inflation, propelled by surging costs for gas, food and housing, jumped 7.9% over the past year, the sharpest spike since 1982. That 12-month period ended in February, meaning it does not include most of the oil and gas price increases that followed the start of Russia's war on Feb. 24.

Crude and natural gas have spiked about 30% this year, though energy futures did re-

treat this week.

Many retailers are bracing for how the war will worsen supply shortages, with reports already surfacing of limited supplies of wheat, vegetable oils, metals, and electronic components like chips.

In addition to the Russian invasion, rising COVID-19 cases and renewed restrictions in China could intensify supply chain issues.

"The current surge in non-discretionary inflation — particularly food, energy and shelter — will pressure households' budgets and lead them to pare back their discretionary purchases, while supply chain issues will continue to constrain sales growth," wrote Lydia Boussour, lead U.S. Economist at Oxford Economics. But she noted that wage gains and ample excess savings should sustain consumer spending in the months ahead.

7.3 magnitude earthquake strikes in northern Japan

Associated Press

TOKYO — A powerful 7.3 magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of Fukushima in northern Japan on Wednesday evening, triggering a tsunami advisory and plunging more than 2 million homes in the Tokyo area into darkness.

The region is part of northern Japan

that was devastated by a deadly 9.0 quake and tsunami 11 years ago.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center said there was no longer a tsunami threat, though the Japan Meteorological Agency kept its low risk advisory in place. NHK national television said that tsunami waves of 8 inches already reached shore

in one area.

The Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, which operates the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant where the cooling systems failed after the 2011 disaster, said workers found no abnormalities at the site, which was in the process of being decommissioned.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man pleads guilty to importing live scorpions

OR EUGENE — An Oregon man has pleaded guilty in federal court to illegally importing and exporting hundreds of live scorpions.

Darren Drake, 39, of Eugene, pleaded guilty to conspiring with others to commit Lacey Act violations, a federal misdemeanor, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. The Lacey Act makes it illegal to trade wildlife and plants that have been illegally stolen or sold.

According to court documents, from September 2017 into March 2018, Drake imported and exported dozens of live scorpions from and to contacts in Germany without obtaining an import-export license from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Drake also mailed or received several hundred live scorpions from other U.S. states in violation of federal mailing laws, according to prosecutors.

Students steer bus after driver collapses

ME TOPSHAM — Students steered a Maine school bus to safety after the vehicle's driver suffered a fatal medical event.

The interim superintendent of Maine School Administrative District 75 said driver Arthur McDougall, 77, of Lisbon was transported to a hospital and died. The bus was carrying 14 middle and high school students when McDougall collapsed at the wheel, Topsham police told the Portland Press Herald.

Two students helped steer the bus to the side of the road and applied brakes as another stu-

dent tried to administer first aid, the Press Herald reported. No students were injured.

Dad faces charge after boy, 3, shoots mom

IL CHICAGO — The father of a 3-year-old boy who accidentally shot his mother to death in a Chicago suburb over the weekend is facing a misdemeanor gun charge, the community's police chief said.

Dolton Police Chief Robert Collins Jr. said Romell Watson, 23, who was detained after the shooting, will be charged with unlawful use of a weapon.

Collins said earlier that investigators were working with Cook County prosecutors to determine the exact charges against Watson but that there was no indication that he fired the weapon or even knew the boy was holding the weapon at the time of the shooting.

Collins said investigators have already determined that the father legally owned the weapon but did not have a concealed carry permit he would have needed to carry it in the vehicle.

Police said the family was sitting inside their car — the father in the driver's seat, the mother in the passenger seat and the boy in a car seat in the back — outside a Food 4 Less store in the community about 20 miles south of Chicago when the boy found the weapon.

Invasive ant that can deliver painful sting found

IN INDIANAPOLIS — An invasive ant that can deliver a painful sting was found in Indiana for the first time, a Purdue University insect expert

said.

The Asian needle ant has traveled southern states like Florida and Georgia for several years. But it was recently discovered in the Evansville area — the furthest north the ant has ventured, said Timothy Gibb, a Purdue University entomologist.

The Asian needle ant is the first ant in Indiana that has a stinger and venom sac, Gibb said.

Gibb said people should be aware of the dangers the insect can pose. "It can be lethal," he said. "In most cases, it's just going to hurt like crazy."

Bid underway to refloat cargo ship aground in bay

MD BALTIMORE — Efforts were underway to refloat a container vessel that ran aground in the Maryland portion of the Chesapeake Bay, the U.S. Coast Guard said.

There were no reports of injuries, pollution or damage to the 1,000-foot ship, the agency said.

The ship, called the Ever Forward, also isn't obstructing traffic in a nearby navigational channel. But nearby ships are reducing their speed and taking other precautions.

The Baltimore Sun reported that the ship had left the Port of Baltimore and was headed for Norfolk, Va.

UPS driver hospitalized after attack by dogs

MS ESCATAWPA — A delivery driver with UPS who was trying to deliver a package was attacked by two pit bulls in southeastern Mississippi, said a local sheriff.

Sheriff Mike Ezell told WLOX

that the incident happened at a home in Escatawpa in Jackson County.

The driver was hospitalized with severe injuries. Both dogs were handed over to the local animal control authorities.

The sheriff told the station that a worker with the electric company was driving by and saw the driver being attacked. The worker helped get the dogs away from the driver and also called emergency services.

Authorities are investigating further; no charges have been filed so far.

Suit alleges malpractice led to patient's paralysis

OR BEND — An Oregon man is seeking \$43.5M in a lawsuit against St. Charles Health System after complications from brain surgery left him paralyzed.

The lawsuit alleges medical malpractice and also names Bend-based surgery provider Northwest Brain and Spine.

Jackie Dale Yeley, of La Pine, underwent a neurological procedure Jan. 8, 2020, for numbness in his left foot and "vague left leg pain." During the procedure, Yeley suffered an accidental dural tear, which Dr. Kent Yundt repaired, according to the lawsuit.

The next day, Yeley's condition worsened and he complained of severe pain, according to the lawsuit. Another surgeon performed emergency procedures to drain fluid and relieve pressure on Yeley's brain. Yeley never recovered sensation in his lower extremities or the use of his legs.

— From wire reports

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Indiana tops Wyoming in First Four

Associated Press

DAYTON, Ohio — University of Dayton Arena was rocking, thanks to hordes of Indiana fans who made the drive to the First Four to see the Hoosiers play in the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2016.

The 13,400-seat newly renovated venue just got louder as Indiana pulled away late to cap a 66-58 win over turnover-prone Wyoming on Tuesday night, sending the 12th-seeded Hoosiers (21-13) to a first-round East regional game to face fifth-seeded St. Mary's on Thursday.

Trayce Jackson-Davis had 29 points and nine rebounds, Jordan Geromino — who averaged 3.9 points this season — scored a career-high 15.

"I thought our defense was really the key when we were struggling offensively to make shots," Indiana coach Mike Woodson said. "But we just kept grinding, and I found another

player tonight off the bench and that was Geronimo, who gave us a major, major lift tonight. And Trayce was who he's been pretty much all year."

The Hoosiers opened a 10-point lead over the Cowboys (25-9) with less than two minutes left. Wyoming's Drake Jeffries hit a pair of foul shots to get the Cowboys within six with 14 seconds to go, but Jeffries had to foul Indiana's Xavier Johnson, who hit a pair from the stripe to put it out of reach.

Hunter Maldonado paced Wyoming with 21 points but turned the ball over 10 times. Graham Ike had 17 to go along with nine rebounds. The Cowboys had 19 turnovers leading to 17 points.

"We were a team for most of the year up until the last two or three weeks where we were in the top 25 in the country in turnover percentage, but you know, (we) give that team 19 empty

possessions when I thought for the most part we were getting the shots we wanted to get," Wyoming coach Jeff Linder said.

Both teams were firing away from the outside early on but not much was falling. The Hoosiers led 30-25 at the half despite shooting just 32% and hitting 1-for-8 from three-point range.

The Cowboys couldn't keep the handle, turning the ball over 13 times in the opening half, including seven by Maldonado. Wyoming didn't shoot much better in the half, either, just 39%.

"I've seen traps and doubles all year, it wasn't anything too special, but I tried to force it a little more than I probably should have," Maldonado said.

Big picture

Wyoming: With an at-large bid from the Mountain West, the Cowboys hurt themselves with

turnovers and shot 43.5%.

Indiana: Showed typical Big Ten aggressiveness in wearing down Wyoming as the second half went on and taking control despite less-than-stellar shooting. The Hoosiers shot 41.9%, but scored 46 points in the paint.

Quotable

"Now they know what it feels like, what it feels like to play a Big Ten team," Linder said. "They made a run in the Big Ten tournament and got some big players. But I'm really excited what the future has in store for us because we have most these guys coming back."

Back to Dayton

The First Four returned to Dayton for the first time since 2019 with all the March Madness trimmings. UD Arena was filled to the rafters, mostly with the boisterous Indiana fans, but there was good representation by Wyoming fans also.

Tigers outlast Islanders for a First Four victory

Associated Press

DAYTON, Ohio — Bryson Etienne scored 21 points and Texas Southern beat Texas A&M-Corpus Christi 76-67 on Tuesday night in the First Four of the NCAA Tournament.

The Tigers earned their third NCAA Tournament win in five seasons and will play top-seeded Kansas in the Midwest first round.

"I feel like anybody can go to any big school," Etienne said. "We're men just like them. We put our shoes on like them, pants, shirt. It's March Madness, so madness can happen."

PJ Henry hit a go-ahead free throw to highlight a 7-0 run in which Texas Southern (19-12) took the lead and never surrendered. He finished with 14 points and shot 10-for-13 at the free-throw line.

"One of the things we talked about was playing extremely hard every second, every play," Tigers coach Johnny Jones said. "It took that against that team to be able to finish down the stretch."

John Walker III added 16 points. Brison Gresham grabbed 13 rebounds and scored six points as the First Four returned to the University of Dayton Arena for the first time in three seasons.

The Islanders (23-12) led by as many as eight points in the opening period and four in the second half. Texas A&M-Corpus Christi's season ended after it won the Southland Conference tournament Saturday.

"We weren't going to be able to finish things at the rim because they've got really good shot blockers," Islanders coach

Steve Lutz said. "At times we did that, but at times we really didn't make good decisions at the rim."

Trevian Tennyson led Texas A&M-Corpus Christi with 18 points on 7-for-13 shooting while Simeon Fryer scored 12 and Terrion Murdix added 10.

The Tigers led 32-30 at half-time after trailing for over 10 minutes in the first half. Both teams shot below 40% from the field in the opening period, combining for 15 turnovers and seven steals.

Late defense

Texas Southern held the advantage on the glass 45-37, including a commanding 25-13 edge in the second half. The Islanders made just one of their last 11 shots as the Tigers held them to seven points in the final

6:04. Beginning the second half 5-for-7 from three-point range, Texas A&M-Corpus Christi went 1-for-8 in the final 8:58.

Gresham, who transferred last offseason from Houston, grabbed his most rebounds in 14 games.

"He came in with zero ego and has shown a great deal of leadership with their basketball team and he's a very impactful player defensively," Jones said. "He's one of those guys that gives you what is needed."

Big picture

Texas A&M-CC: The Islanders shot 47.4% at the free-throw line. They entered with a season average of 74.4%.

Texas Southern: The Tigers forced nine turnovers and had four steals.

Ovechkin reaches 3rd on NHL goals list

Associated Press

WASHINGTON—Alex Ovechkin danced around in the middle of the ice by himself after shooting the puck into the net once again.

He was not alone for long.

Seconds after Ovechkin scored his 767th goal to pass Jaromir Jagr for third on the NHL career list, he was surrounded by his Washington Capitals teammates while fans roared in approval. Chants of “Ovi! Ovi!” filled what has been his home arena for almost two decades, and they returned after a 4-3 victory against the New York Islanders that will be remembered more for Ovechkin’s latest milestone than the eight-round shootout that followed.

“I think everybody wants me to score that goal,” Ovechkin said. “Everybody involved with this milestone. I would say I’m very happy and thankful to be on this team for such a long time, especially with those guys.”

Ovechkin’s goal to move behind only legends Wayne Gretzky and Gordie Howe capped a turbulent stretch for the longtime Russia-born captain and the face of the Stanley Cup-winning hockey franchise in the U.S. capital. Amid his home country’s invasion of Ukraine ordered by Vladimir Putin, whom he has long supported, and with his

wife and children stuck back home in Russia, Ovechkin got a brief chance on the ice to soak in the biggest individual accomplishment of his career.

“It’s been tough, but we’re athletes and we just have to do our job and focus in on the thing what we’re doing best,” Ovechkin said. “We just play hockey and enjoy our moment.”

Ovechkin’s moment came with 4:58 left in the third period when countryman Evgeny Kuznetsov won a faceoff to put the puck on his good friend’s stick. Ovechkin beat another good friend in Islanders goaltender Semyon Varlamov to finally break a tie with Jagr, whose unproductive Capitals tenure from 2001-04 made him unpopular among Washington fans.

The 36-year-old from Moscow has had no such issues at home, even since Putin invaded Ukraine last month. Boored at times during a trip across western Canada, Ovechkin got a standing ovation from Capitals fans who have cheered for him and chanted his name throughout his 17-year career in North America.

Ovechkin was quick to point out his sad reality that wife Anastasia and sons Sergei and Ilya Aleksandrovich were not among the

crowd of 18,000-plus there to witness this goal.

“Obviously, it sucks when my kids didn’t see it, my wife didn’t see it, my parents, but they’re watching at home,” he said. “They’re happy, and that’s the most important thing.”

The next important milestone for Ovechkin is No. 800—a plateau only Gretzky and Howe have reached in hockey history. Ovechkin needs 35 goals to pass Howe and 128 to break Gretzky’s record of 894 that was long thought to be unapproachable.

“You never know what’s going to happen in the future,” Ovechkin said. “You never know what’s going to happen tomorrow. I’m happy I did it and we did it as a team. Now it’s just a period of time, and if I can do it, I will.”

Ovechkin scored in the shadow of the Capitals’ 2018 Stanley Cup banner with Barry Trotz standing on the visiting bench. Trotz coached Washington to their first title in franchise history, and Ovechkin was playoff MVP.

There have been plenty of doubters over the years that Ovechkin could keep scoring like this in his mid-30s and catch Gretzky.

“The one thing that I’ve learned about Ovi over my time is that when you doubt Ovi or you say he can’t do it, he digs in,” Trotz said.

Juuse right: Saros leads Preds past Penguins

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Juuse Saros made 35 saves to lead the Nashville Predators to a 4-1 win Tuesday over the Pittsburgh Penguins.

Mattias Ekholm, Tanner Jeannot, Eeli Tolvanen and Yakov Trenin scored for the Predators, who have won five of six. Roman Josi had three assists and Colton Sissons added two.

“It’s obviously fun. It’s a tight race to the playoffs,” Saros said. “Every point matters. It’s exciting, but it’s also fun.”

Jake Guentzel had the lone goal and Casey DeSmith stopped 21 shots for the Penguins, who had won their previous two games.

Rangers 4, Ducks 3 (OT): Adam Fox scored 55 seconds into overtime and host New York beat Anaheim.

Chris Kreider, Mika Zibane-

jad and Jonny Brodzinski also scored for the Rangers, who have won five of seven. Artemi Panarin had three assists and Fox added two to help New York improve to 12-2-1 in its last 15 home games. Alexandar Georgiev made 20 saves.

Bruins 2, Blackhawks 1 (OT): Matt Grzelcyk scored at 1:40 of overtime and surging Boston won at Chicago.

After taking a cross-ice feed from Taylor Hall, Grzelcyk whipped a shot past goalie Marc-Andre Fleury to end it on the Bruins’ 48th shot. Hall had two assists as Boston won its third straight to start a four-game trip and improved to 10-1-1 in its last 12 overall.

Avalanche 3, Kings 0: Darcy Kuemper made 23 saves for his second consecutive shutout in Colorado’s win at Los Angeles.

Valeri Nichushkin and J.T.

Compher scored on the power play. Mikko Rantanen had a goal and an assist, and the Avalanche continued their push for a second straight Presidents’ Trophy by becoming the first team this season to pass the 90-point mark.

Panthers 3, Sharks 2 (OT): Frank Vatrano tied the game early in the third period and scored the winner 1:11 into overtime to lead Florida to a win at San Jose for its sixth victory in seven games.

Vatrano beat goalie James Reimer with a slapshot from the high slot to give the Panthers their seventh win this season when trailing after two periods. They also did it in January in an overtime win at home against the Sharks. Those are San Jose’s only losses this season when leading after two.

Maple Leafs 4, Stars 0: Erik Kallgren made 35 saves to earn a

shutout in his first NHL start as host Toronto blanked Dallas.

John Tavares had a goal and an assist for the Maple Leafs (38-17-5). Rasmus Sandin and Ondrej Kase also scored, and Mitch Marner and Morgan Rielly had two assists apiece.

Jets 7, Golden Knights 3: Kyle Connor extended his goal streak to five games and host Winnipeg downed Vegas.

Coyotes 6, Canadiens 3: Clayton Keller and Lawson Crouse each had a goal and an assist as Arizona beat Montreal to finish a five-game road trip with four wins.

Oilers 7, Red Wings 5: Evannder Kane had two goals to lead host Edmonton past skidding Detroit.

Canucks 6, Devils 3: Bo Horvat had two goals and an assist to lead host Vancouver past New Jersey.

Grizzlies roll minus Morant, top Pacers

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Desmond Bane scored 21 points, Jaren Jackson Jr. had 19 and the Memphis Grizzlies rolled without All-Star Ja Morant, beating the Indiana Pacers 135-102 on Tuesday night.

De'Anthony Melton added 18 points while Morant sat out with back soreness. The Grizzlies made the decision to hold him out after he went through pre-game warmups.

It was the fourth consecutive victory for Memphis. The Pacers have lost two in a row and five of their past six games.

"We played great," Bane said. "Everybody contributed. We had 38 assists, not a lot of teams do that."

Bane, who grew up about 75 miles away in Richmond, Ind., said it was great to have so many family and friends at the game.

Nets 150, Magic 108: Kyrie Irving scored a career-high 60 points, most in the Nets' NBA history, to lead Brooklyn to a win at Orlando.

Irving shot 20 for 31, including 8-for-12 on three-pointers, in 35 minutes. He made 12 of 13 free throws in matching the highest-scoring game in the NBA this season, done just a night earlier by Minnesota's Karl-Anthony Towns against San Antonio.

Irving scored 41 points in the first half, the most in the first two quarters since Kobe Bryant had 42 against Washington on March 28, 2003.

The guard left the game after hitting a long three-pointer with 8:33 remaining and Brooklyn leading 128-94. He gave the Nets consecutive 50-point performances, after Kevin Durant had 53 on Sunday against the

New York Knicks.

Heat 105, Pistons 98: Max Strus scored all of his 16 points in the fourth quarter, Tyler Herro finished with a game-high 29 off the bench and host Miami escaped with a win over Detroit.

Strus, playing in the second half after Jimmy Butler left the game with a sprained ankle, scored 13 points in a span of 2:55 of the final quarter to help the Heat rally. Bam Adebayo finished with 16 for Miami.

Herro hit the biggest shot of the night for the Heat — a three-pointer for a five-point lead with 1:59 left.

Jerami Grant led the Pistons with 22 points. Isaiah Livers scored 16, while Marvin Bagley III and Saddiq Bey each had 13 for the Pistons, who closed the third quarter on a 19-0 run to put a serious scare into the Eastern Conference leaders.

Suns 131, Pelicans 115: Devin Booker had 27 points and eight assists in 30 minutes in a win at New Orleans before Phoenix coach Monty Williams gave him the rest of the night off.

Mikal Bridges went 4-for-5 from deep and scored 20 for the Suns, whose accurate shooting and ability to capitalize on virtually every Pelicans mistake helped them secure their fourth victory in five games despite star guard Chris Paul's extended absence with his fractured right thumb.

Phoenix shot 53% (18-for-34) from the three-point range and converted 17 New Orleans turnovers into 33 points.

Reserve center JaVale McGee scored 19 and Deandre Ayton added 18 for the Suns, who shot 55% (49-for-89) overall.

AP source: Browns make pitch to QB Watson

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — The Cleveland Browns made their sales pitch to Deshaun Watson, who, despite ongoing legal entanglements, is getting to choose where he plays next.

A Cleveland contingent met with the controversial quarterback in Houston on Tuesday, a person familiar with the meeting told The Associated Press. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the situation. It's not known who from the Browns attended the meeting.

Twenty-two women filed lawsuits alleging sexual assault and harassment against Watson, after which he didn't play for the Texans last season. But once a grand jury declined to indict him on criminal charges last week, the Browns and several other teams began pursuing the three-time Pro Bowler.

Watson still faces civil lawsuits and he was questioned at

his lawyer's office for four hours on Tuesday before his meeting with Cleveland. And he might face disciplinary action from the NFL under the personal conduct policy.

The person who spoke with the AP said the Browns, who passed on taking Watson in the 2017 draft, are doing their due diligence and wanted to get to know him better.

Watson, 27, met with New Orleans and Carolina on Monday, and he's set to visit with Atlanta on Wednesday, according to reports.

He has a no-trade clause built into his four-year, \$156 million contract and would have to agree to a deal with Cleveland. The Texans are believed to be seeking at least three first-round picks for one of the league's most talented QBs.

The Browns' visit with Watson seems to signal the end of Baker Mayfield's time as their franchise quarterback. The No.

1 overall pick in 2018, Mayfield ended the team's long playoff drought before an injury-altered 2021 season.

It wasn't a certainty that Mayfield would hang onto the starting job. Now, it appears to belong to Watson — or someone else.

Knowing he's probably done with the Browns, Mayfield posted a long note on social media, thanking Cleveland and its fans for embracing he and his wife, Emily.

"We have made many memories and shared growing in this process through all the ups and downs," Mayfield wrote. "I have no clue what happens next, which is the meaning behind the silence I have had during the duration of this process. I can only control what I can, which is trusting in God's plan throughout this process."

"I have given this franchise everything I have. That is something I've always done at every stage, and at every level. And

that will not change wherever I take my next snap. Whatever happens. I just want to say thank you to the fans who truly embraced who I am and the mentality that aligned so well with this city's hard working people."

"Cleveland will always be a part of Emily and my story. And we will always be thankful for the impact it has had and will have in our lives. Sincerely, Baker Reagan Mayfield."

Any trade involving Watson would certainly trigger backlash, and the Browns are weighing all those factors. Cleveland received widespread criticism in 2019 when the team signed running back Kareem Hunt, who was seen on video shoving a woman and was suspended six games by the NFL.

The Browns were again busy on Day 2 of the NFL's legal free agency tampering period.

The team released center JC Trette and traded linebacker Mack Wilson to New England.