

Citizen intel analysts' role grows in war

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

Citizen intelligence analysts are spotlighting the Russian navy's role in its war on Ukraine, using publicly available information to report on missile launches, blockades and other actions in the Black and Mediterranean seas.

The information gathered using open-source intelligence, or OSINT, offers a glimpse into Russia's maritime war activities and sometimes challenges information released by government sources.

Dozens of private citizens are parlaying their prior military experience, specialized knowledge of the Russian navy and online information-mining skills into robust, almost-real-time coverage of Russia's full-scale invasion, which began Feb. 24.

OSINT relies on public information such as satellite images, video and photographs, documents, databases, news stories and social media posts about a particular event or topic.

It's painstaking work — usually unpaid — involving hourslong searches for information, verification of its authenticity and accuracy and then contextualization of events before analysis is posted on social media or a blog.

The work finds its roots in early govern-

ment efforts by the United States and other countries to monitor news and other reports as part of intelligence gathering.

Not everyone has the skill set to parse the meaning of all this information, but those who do now have relatively easy access to satellite images and quality imagery recorded by increasingly sophisticated phones, experts have said.

"What I bring here is (professional) knowledge that I try to bring to open source using primary and secondary sources to actually give you an idea of what's going on," said James Phillips, a naval historian whose Twitter account, @TheShipYard2, presents detailed maps showing the location of Russian ships and other information.

On Monday, Phillips posted on Twitter a map showing an amphibious assault group in the Sea of Azov near the Ukrainian port city of Berdyansk.

In the early days of the invasion, images and public data gathered by private OSINT analysts painted a different picture of what an unnamed senior Pentagon official said was happening near the port city of Mariupol on the Sea of Azov.

The unidentified official indicated that a nighttime amphibious assault potentially involving thousands of Russian troops was underway there. The assertion was tweeted out by several U.S. national security reporters

and almost immediately challenged online.

"I keep stressing: the Russian Navy never trained for nighttime amphibious assaults," said Frederik Van Lokeren, a Belgian former navy officer, in a Feb. 26 tweet. "They cannot do this as they lack expertise and equipment needed. Why U.S. officials keep claiming otherwise for the second night in a row is beyond understanding."

Van Lokeren's OSINT analysis found that a Russian amphibious assault group was in the Sea of Azov but he strongly disputed the number of sailors involved, which he estimated at 300 to 400 based on the number and size of the landing ships involved and their capacity.

He also expressed doubt that any naval landing had happened, citing a lack of evidence.

There were ample images in the days that followed of war damage and fighting in Ukraine, but none of a large-scale amphibious assault.

In other cases, OSINT analysts were among the first to break news later addressed through official channels.

On Thursday, several analysts were quick to provide details on how a Russian Alligator-class landing ship in port in Berdyansk had caught fire, potentially as the result of a strike by a Ukrainian missile.

Proposed Navy budget would cut 24 ships, add 9 more

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Navy wants to cut 24 ships and build nine more in its proposed \$180.5 billion budget for 2023, the service's top budget officer said Monday.

Included in the 24 ships on the chopping block are nine Freedom-class littoral combat ships, five Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruisers, four landing dock ships, two Los Angeles-class submarines, two oilers and two expeditionary transfer docks, said Rear Adm. John Gumbleton, the deputy assistant Navy secretary for budget.

The Navy also proposed reducing the service by about 620 active-duty sailors, bringing the force to about 346,300.

But the Navy wants to build two Virginia-

class attack submarines, two Arleigh Burke-class destroyers, one frigate, one amphibious assault ship, one amphibious transport dock, one fleet oiler and one towing, salvage and rescue ship. The new submarines, destroyers and oiler would replace their aging counterparts of earlier ship classes that the service offered up for divestment in 2023.

The proposed new submarines are especially needed because "detering strategic attacks" will be one of the key pillars of the upcoming new National Defense Strategy, Gumbleton said. The strategy, which typically changes with each new presidential administration, lays out the nation's top defense priorities and security challenges.

"[Submarines are] the most survivable

leg of the nuclear triad," Gumbleton said, referring to the three legs of the Defense Department's nuclear forces — land, air and sea.

The \$180.5 billion budget represents an increase of 5% in real growth over last year's enacted budget of \$172.3 billion, accounting for inflation, Gumbleton said.

The nine proposed new ships are part of the Navy's proposed \$27.8 billion shipbuilding budget, which also includes incremental funding for coming Ford-class aircraft carriers and Columbia-class submarines.

Also included in the shipbuilding budget is \$1.3 billion in "cost-to-complete" funding for ships purchased in the prior year's budget, the prices of which Gumbleton said grew due to inflation.

China-Solomons deal ups Pacific security stakes

By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

Great power competition in the Western Pacific is likely to intensify following the appearance of Chinese plans for a military presence in the Solomon Islands, according to security experts.

Leaders in Australia and New Zealand reacted with alarm this week after opponents of a security agreement between China and the Solomons leaked a draft of the agreement online, according to *The New York Times* on Thursday. Officials worry it

could allow China to base warships 1,200 miles off Australia's east coast.

For years, rumors circulated about Chinese efforts to establish a military presence throughout the South Pacific, according to David Capie, director of the Center for Strategic Studies in Wellington, New Zealand.

Vanuatu, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Samoa have been rumored as potential sites for future Chinese military facilities, he told *Stars and Stripes* by phone Tuesday.

"This is the first time we have something on paper," he said. "It's concerning that this is an explicit example of China wanting a bigger presence in the Southwest Pacific."

The leaked Solomons security agreement would facilitate the first non-western military presence in the region since Japanese occupation during World War II, Paul Buchanan, an American security expert based in Auckland, New Zealand, told *Stars and Stripes* by phone Tuesday.

"This is a golden opportunity for [China] to project power into Melanesia and beyond," he said. "What we are looking at is great power rivalry coming home to roost in Melanesia."

Chinese police are already in the Solomons, training locals on riot control and personal protection, Buchanan said.

"The fact that the Chinese are able to secure a deal, at least in principle, shows you that years of neglect on the part of traditional allies have given China room to maneuver," he said.

USS Lincoln back in Manila, recalling turbulent 1991 visit

By **ALEX WILSON**
Stars and Stripes

The USS Abraham Lincoln and its strike group arrived in Manila, the Philippines, on Friday, marking the first such visit to the nation's capital city in nearly three years, the Navy said.

The Lincoln Strike Group is the first to visit Manila since the USS Ronald Reagan made a port call in August 2019, but the Lincoln's arrival also bears historical significance, 7th Fleet spokesman Lt. Mark Langford told *Stars and Stripes* by email Tuesday.

"USS Abraham Lincoln's maiden deployment to the Western Pacific in 1991 included time in this region providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to assist with evacuating nearly 18,000 people across 10 days following an eruption of volcano Mount Pinatubo, coupled with a typhoon," he said.

The port call gives many of its Philippine crew members a chance to visit with their family and friends. About 10% of the Lincoln's crew are Filipinos, according to a Saturday report

from the official Philippine News Agency.

The Abraham Lincoln left San Diego, its homeport, on Jan. 3 and spent the interim sailing across the Pacific Ocean and participating in several exercises. The stop in Manila is an opportunity for the strike group and its crews to resupply, refuel and rest, Langford said.

He declined to comment on the Lincoln's next move, citing security concerns, but said the ship and its strike group will "continue to execute its routine deployment while working alongside allies and partners in the region."

The ship's arrival in Manila came just three days ahead of the launch of Balikatan 2022, a military drill by the U.S. and the Philippines that will run until April 8.

Neither the Abraham Lincoln nor any of its strike group will be participating in Balikatan, however, Marine 1st Lt. Stephanie Murphy, spokeswoman for Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group-Philippines, told *Stars and Stripes* by email Tuesday.

Marine proposal grows budget 2%, cuts active force by 1.5K

By **CAITLIN DOORNBOS**
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Marine Corps is asking for \$50.34 billion in fiscal year 2023, which would invest in multiple modernization projects but shrink the active-duty force by about 1,500, according to the proposed budget released Monday.

The proposed spending plan represents a growth of nearly 2% from the previous fiscal year, the Department of the Navy's top budget officer told reporters at the Pentagon on Monday. The Marine Corps is part of the department.

Coupled with a 5% growth in the Navy's budget, the Marine Corps' budget brings the department's total budget to about \$230.8 billion.

"I would admit [that is] a lot more money than we thought we were going to get at the beginning of this process," said Rear Adm. John Gumbleton, the deputy assistant Navy secretary for budget.

Still, the service's proposed budget calls for about 177,000 active-duty Marines — down from the service's 2022 request for 178,500 active-duty troops.

The budget also asks for about \$17.3 billion to support personnel, \$12.2 billion for procurement, \$16.3 billion for operations and maintenance and about \$3 billion for research and development.

The Marine Corps is also requesting nearly \$4.8 billion in modernized firing platforms — including \$4.3 billion for the F-35 Lightning II program, \$345 million for anti-ship missile systems and \$80 million for long-range fires.

The budget also calls for \$885 million in sensor and ship modernization, including \$484 million to support the MQ-9A Group 5 unmanned aircraft system program.

Gumbleton said those investments align with the service's Force Design 2030, a modernization effort announced in March 2020 that aims to transition the Marine Corps from a force focused on large-scale amphibious and sustained ashore operations to one optimized to support naval expeditionary campaigns.

The service is also asking for nearly \$1.5 billion for military housing projects, down about 35% from the previous year.

Russia vows to scale back as talks progress

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia announced Tuesday it will “fundamentally” scale back military operations near Ukraine’s capital and a northern city, as talks to end the grinding war brought the outlines of a possible deal into view.

Deputy Defense Minister Alexander Fomin said the change on the battlefield was meant to increase trust at the talks after several rounds of negotiations failed to halt what has devolved into a bloody campaign of attrition.

The announcement was met with skepticism from the U.S. and others.

While Moscow portrayed it as a goodwill gesture, its ground troops have become bogged down and taken heavy losses in their bid to seize Kyiv and other cities. Last week and again on Tuesday, the Kremlin seemed to lower its war aims, saying its “main goal” now is gaining control of the mostly Russian-speaking Donbas region in eastern Ukraine.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he had not seen anything indicating talks were progressing in a “constructive way,” and he suggested Russian indications of a pullback could be an at-

tempt by Moscow to “deceive people and deflect attention.”

“There is what Russia says and there is what Russia does, and we’re focused on the latter,” Blinken said in Morocco. “And what Russia is doing is the continued brutalization of Ukraine.”

He added, “If they somehow believe that an effort to subjugate only the eastern part of Ukraine or the southern part of Ukraine ... can succeed, then once again they are profoundly fooling themselves.”

Western officials say Moscow is reinforcing troops in the Donbas in an attempt to encircle Ukraine’s best-trained and best-equipped forces, which are concentrated in the east.

Even as negotiators from the two sides assembled in Istanbul, Russian President Vladimir Putin’s forces hit an oil depot in western Ukraine late Monday and blasted a gaping hole Tuesday in a nine-story government administration building in the southern port city of Mykolaiv. At least seven people were killed in that attack, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said.

Fomin said Moscow has decided to “fundamentally ... cut back

military activity in the direction of Kyiv and Chernihiv” to “increase mutual trust and create conditions for further negotiations.” He did not immediately spell out what that would mean in practical terms.

Ukraine’s military said it has noted withdrawals of some forces around Kyiv and Chernihiv. Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told CNN “we haven’t seen anything to corroborate” reports of Russia pulling back significant forces from around Kyiv. “But what we have seen over the last couple of days is they have stopped trying to advance on Kyiv.”

Rob Lee, a military expert at the U.S.-based Foreign Policy Research Institute, tweeted: “This sounds like more of an acknowledgment of the situation around Kyiv where Russia’s advance has been stalled for weeks and Ukrainian forces have had recent successes. Russia doesn’t have the forces to encircle the city.”

The meeting in Istanbul was the first time negotiators from Russia and Ukraine talked face-to-face in two weeks. Earlier talks, held in person in Belarus or by video, made no progress toward ending the more than mon-

thlong war that has killed thousands and driven over 10 million Ukrainians from their homes, including almost 4 million who have fled the country.

Ukraine’s delegation set out a detailed framework for a peace deal under which the nation would remain neutral but its security would be guaranteed by a group of third countries, including the U.S., Britain, France, Turkey, China and Poland, in an arrangement similar to NATO’s “an attack on one is an attack on all” principle.

Ukraine said it would also be willing to hold talks over a 15-year period on the future of the Crimean Peninsula, seized by Russia in 2014.

The Kremlin has demanded among other things that Ukraine drop any hope of joining NATO.

Vladimir Medinskiy, the head of the Russian delegation, said on Russian TV that the Ukrainian proposals are a “step to meet us halfway, a clearly positive fact.” He cautioned that the parties are still far from reaching an agreement, but said: “We know now how to move further toward compromise. We aren’t just marking time in talks.”

FDA OKs another COVID-19 booster for those 50 and up

Associated Press

U.S. regulators on Tuesday authorized another COVID-19 booster for people age 50 and older, a step to offer extra protection for the most vulnerable in case the coronavirus rebounds.

The Food and Drug Administration’s decision opens a fourth dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines to those people at least four months after their previous booster. Until now, the FDA had cleared fourth doses only for people 12 and older who have severely weakened immune systems. The agency said this especially fragile group also can get an addi-

tional booster, a fifth shot.

The latest expansion, regardless of people’s health, allows an extra shot to millions more Americans — and the question is whether everyone who’s eligible should rush out and get it. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is expected to weigh in.

There’s limited evidence to tell how much benefit another booster could offer right now. FDA made the decision without input from its independent panel of experts that has wrestled with how much data is required to expand shots.

3 killed on I-81 in Pa. in snowy pileup of dozens of vehicles

Associated Press

POTTSVILLE, Pa. — Tractor-trailers and other vehicles lost control and slammed into each other, people leaped away from careering trucks seconds before collision and at least three people were killed and more than a dozen others injured during a snow squall on a northeast Pennsylvania highway Monday.

The crash on Interstate 81 was captured in videos posted on social media that show drivers and passengers lining the snowy road and jumping out of the way as a cascade of crashes unfolds.

Dr. David J. Moylan, the Schuylkill County coroner, said

three fatalities had been confirmed by late afternoon, and that number could rise because fires were impeding rescuers.

The Schuylkill County Office of Emergency Management said the crash happened around 10:30 a.m. Monday. John Blickley, the agency’s deputy emergency management coordinator, said officials believe a snow squall clouded visibility and likely contributed to the crash.

Estimates of the number of vehicles involved from the emergency management agency and state police ranged between 40 and 60, including multiple tractor trailers.

Jan. 6 panel missing 8 hours of Trump's calls

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House panel investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol has identified a roughly eight-hour gap in official records of then-President Donald Trump's phone calls as the violence unfolded and his supporters stormed the building, according to a person familiar with the probe.

The gap extends from a little after 11 a.m. to about 7 p.m. on Jan. 6, 2021, and involves White House calls, according to the person, who was not authorized to speak publicly about the ongoing investigation and spoke to The Associated Press on Tuesday on the condition of anonymity. It's unclear if that gap includes White House cellphones.

It's widely known that Trump had conversations on Jan. 6 with Republican lawmakers. House investigators are looking at whether the president was communicating during that time through other means, possibly through personal cellphones, or some other type of communication — like a phone passed to him by an aide or a burner phone. The committee has subpoenaed cellphone companies for records and is awaiting data. Trump had no im-

mediate comment Tuesday, but he has previously disparaged the investigation.

The committee also is continuing to receive records from the National Archives and other sources, which could produce additional information.

But the lack of information about Trump's calls is a frustrating challenge to investigators as they work to create the most comprehensive record yet of the attack, with a particular focus on what the president was doing in the White House as hundreds of his supporters violently beat police, broke into the Capitol and interrupted the certification of Democrat Joe Biden's 2020 presidential election victory. It also raises questions of whether Trump purposefully circumvented official channels to avoid records.

During the missing hours, Trump went to a rally at the Ellipse, spoke, then watched as the violent mob of his supporters broke into the Capitol, overwhelming police and marauded through the building for hours before they were finally kicked out and the building was declared secure at about 5:30 p.m. More than 700 people have been arrested.

The gap in records was previously reported by the AP. The exact length of time of the gap was first reported by The Washington Post.

Committee members voted unanimously on Monday to hold former Trump advisers Peter Navarro and Dan Scavino in contempt of Congress for their monthslong refusal to comply with subpoenas.

Ahead of the House committee's vote, the panel scored a big legal victory in its quest for information from Trump lawyer John Eastman when a federal judge in California asserted Monday morning that it is "more likely than not" that Trump committed crimes in his attempt to stop the certification of the 2020 election.

With that argument, U.S. District Court Judge David Carter, a Clinton appointee, ordered the release of more than 100 emails from Eastman to the committee.

Charles Burnham, an attorney representing Eastman, said in a statement Monday that his client has a responsibility to his attorney-client privilege and his lawsuit against the committee "seeks to fulfill this responsibility."

Agent: Whitmer kidnap plotters were 'excited' about bomb, asked about IOU

Associated Press

Two men described as leaders of a plot to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer were thrilled as they watched videos of powerful explosives, a few hours before driving north to scout her vacation home, an FBI agent testified Monday.

In summer 2020, Tim Bates was working undercover as "Red" when he fooled the group into believing that he knew someone in the mining industry who could get high-grade explosives. A bomb is a key part of the government's case against Adam Fox, Barry Croft Jr., Daniel Harris and Brandon Caserta, who are charged with conspiring to kidnap Whitmer because of her tough COVID-19 policies and their broad disgust with government.

Prosecutors say Fox especially wanted to blow up a bridge near Whitmer's second home in northern Michigan to thwart any police response to a kidnapping.

Bates, who was secretly recording conversations, said he showed up for a training weekend in Luther, Mich., and shared videos of explosives blowing up an SUV.

"Mr. Fox was excited about what he saw in the video," Bates told the jury, adding that Croft "was also excited."

Traveling in three vehicles, Bates said he, Fox, Croft and others drove to Elk Rapids to look at Whitmer's house on Birch Lake and inspect a nearby bridge.

Why? asked Assistant U.S. Attorney Nils Kessler.

"To kidnap her," Bates testified.

Croft told the group that he "needed to take a nap ... to have energy" if they were going to abduct Whitmer that night, but that wasn't the plan, Bates said.

Later, after returning to the Luther camp, Fox asked Bates if he would "take an IOU" for the \$4,000 explosive, according to a recording.

Prosecutors said they could finish presenting evidence Tuesday or Wednesday.

Defense attorneys deny there was an actual plan to snatch Whitmer, claiming the men were improperly influenced by undercover agents and informants, and exchanged wild talk while smoking marijuana.

Separately, a lawyer for an informant said Steve Robeson would invoke his right to remain silent if called as a witness by the defense. Robeson's secret recordings were used by prosecutors, but he was not a witness for the government. He pleaded guilty in 2021 to a gun charge in a case in Wisconsin.

UK police fine 20 over Johnson's lockdown parties

Associated Press

LONDON — British police said Tuesday that they were fining 20 people over parties held by Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his staff during coronavirus lockdowns, and that more people could face penalties.

The Metropolitan Police force said it wouldn't identify recipients of the fixed penalty notices, though Johnson's office has said it will reveal it if he gets one. The force said officers were working through a "significant amount of investigative material" and more people could face fines later.

Opponents, and some members of the governing Conservative Party, have said Johnson should resign if he is issued a fine for breaking rules he imposed on the rest of the country during the pandemic.

Dozens of politicians and officials have been investigated over allegations that the government flouted its own pandemic restrictions.

Johnson has denied any wrongdoing, but he is alleged to have been at several of the dozen events in his office and other government buildings that are being investigated.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Trucker was streaming Netflix at time of crash

ME PORTLAND — A trucker was streaming Netflix when his tractor-trailer struck a car, killing a retired couple in Maine, according to a police report.

The truck driver acknowledged streaming a Netflix show on his cellphone, but said he was only listening through the truck's audio system before the crash that killed Geoff and Elizabeth "Betsy" Gattis, of Falmouth.

The truck driver was not distracted by Netflix, but by a vehicle directly in front of him that abruptly slowed and exited the Maine Turnpike in January 2021 near the Kittery-York town line, defense attorney Robert Andrews said. The trucker then saw other vehicles had slowed, but it was too late to stop, he said.

Gator hunts possible in 2023 as population up

MS JACKSON — The number of alligators in Pelahatchie Bay is becoming a problem, so the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks has proposed a hunting season to help reduce the population.

Ricky Flynt, the department's Alligator Program coordinator, described the proposed hunt on the Ross Barnett Reservoir as a "population reduction effort."

"We're trying to control the adult breeding population," Flynt said. "The adult females are what we're trying to get out. This is not a recreational hunt, but we want to offer an opportunity and allow recreational hunters to help us."

Flynt said the department has removed more than 300 alligators from the area since 2006, but the calls from area residents keep coming, The Clarion-Ledger reported.

Man admits using ghost gun on Secret Service

MD GREENBELT — A Maryland man has pleaded guilty to assault on a federal officer with a deadly weapon after using a ghost gun to shoot at Secret Service security guards, federal prosecutors said.

Jeremiah Peter Watson, 24, drove to the entrance of a U.S. Secret Service facility and positioned his vehicle to block the driveway in February of last year, the U.S. attorney's office said in a news release.

Watson became combative with security officers when they asked him to move. An officer who thought he was armed sprayed pepper spray at Watson after he reached into his pocket. Watson then retreated and drove away.

Watson returned, however, and officers saw a flash of a gunshot come from the driver-side window toward them. Watson fired at least four additional shots before he drove away, authorities said.

Anti-venom rushed to man bitten by pet viper

VA RICHMOND — State police helped rush an anti-venom treatment to a Virginia hospital after a man was bitten by his pet African Pit Viper, authorities said.

Police helped deliver the anti-venom treatment from the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science

Center in Virginia Beach to Richmond's VCU Health, officials said.

The man who was bitten was reportedly still alive, but a state police spokeswoman had no details on his status.

The African Pit Viper, also known as the Gaboon Viper, is one of the most venomous snakes in the world.

3 people injured after 3 tractor-trailers crash

AZ PARKS — Three people were injured after three semi tractor-trailers were involved in a crash on Interstate 40 near Flagstaff, authorities said.

Ponderosa Fire Department officials said three people had to be extricated from the big rigs, and one person was airlifted to a hospital with the other two transported by ground.

Photos from the crash scene showed one big rig tipped on its side and the other semi-trucks with extensive front damage.

The cause of the crash wasn't immediately clear and authorities didn't release the names and conditions of the three people pulled from the wreck, which closed one lane of I-40 for several hours.

Fears of 2nd avalanche prompt evacuation order

AK ANCHORAGE — Some residents living near an Anchorage suburb were ordered to evacuate over fears of another avalanche after a slide last week cut off about 100 homes from a main road.

Anchorage Mayor Dave Bronson issued the evacuation order for an area near the community

of Eagle River, which is within the municipality of Anchorage, the Anchorage Daily News reported.

About half a mountain's snowpack came down in an avalanche. The Anchorage Office of Emergency Management said the slide is up to 450 feet wide and up to 80 feet deep. Officials said it appears no one was trapped in the slide and no homes were destroyed.

The mountain's remaining snow was in danger of also coming down, and officials were trying to get residents along a 1-mile stretch to evacuate so the city could begin mitigation efforts to bring down the rest of the snowpack.

Nonprofit places therapy dogs in some schools

WV CHARLESTON — Some West Virginia schools will have a new face joining students this year: therapy dogs to offer companionship and comfort.

Friends With Paws will be a partnership between the governor's office, West Virginia Communities in Schools Nonprofit and the state Department of Education.

The dogs will be placed in schools in counties where students are disproportionately affected by poverty, substance misuse or other at-risk situations, Gov. Jim Justice's office said.

A black Labrador retriever named Coal will be placed at Welch Elementary School in McDowell County. More dogs will be placed throughout the year, with an initial goal of at least 10 dogs in schools in 2022.

— From wire reports



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UConn women outlast NC State in 20T

Associated Press

BRIDGEPORT, Conn. — UConn's players were visibly shaken Monday night when teammate Dorka Juhasz suffered a horrific injury to her left arm during the first half of the Huskies' regional final win over North Carolina State.

But in what has become a team hallmark this season, Connecticut shook off that adversity and beat the Wolfpack 91-87 in two overtimes to advance to a 14th straight Final Four.

It also was the team's 14th straight win.

"I think having been through all the things that we have been through and knowing that we're in the middle of a game right now, I think they refocused pretty well, considering," coach Geno Auriemma said.

The Huskies were led by 27 points from Paige Bueckers, who was playing just her ninth

game back after missing almost three months with a fracture and torn meniscus in her left knee, an injury suffered during the last minute of a win over Notre Dame on Dec. 5.

"She's still a kid and she still did miss two months of basketball," Auriemma said. "And not just the games, she missed two months of practice. It was going to take time. Who knew? I had no expectation this would come, this kind of moment that she had. But you know, Paige is different."

The Huskies also got 19 points from freshman Azzi Fudd, the nation's top-rated recruit this fall, who also missed two months of the season and 11 games between Nov. 22 and Jan. 25 with a stress injury in her right foot.

In fact, eight UConn players had to sit out at least two games this season with injury or ill-

ness, setbacks that led to 10 different starting lineups and the Huskies' first five-loss season in a decade.

"A lot of us have gone down at one point or another in the season, so we've kind of learned how to sub in and just keep rolling with the punches," said senior guard Christyn Williams (21 points), who worked her way back from a bout with COVID-19 in January. "Yeah, we always find a way to get it done."

Juhasz, a senior transfer from Ohio State, went down in the first half when she was fouled on a layup attempt and tried to brace her fall.

Auriemma said there was a clean fracture and dislocation just above her left wrist. Juhasz was on the floor in tears and was helped to the locker room with her team up by seven points.

"One shining moment? Well, one moment that ain't that shiny

and your season is over," Auriemma said. "That's how fragile this is and that's why you've got to appreciate it and you've got to enjoy it."

That is a lesson Bueckers said she and her teammates have had to learn the hard way this season, but has served them well in the NCAA Tournament.

"We're not looking into the future," she said. "We're being where our feet are and staying in the present."

UConn will go into the Final Four looking for a record 12th national title, with a rotation of eight players, all of whom have had to step up at one point or another this season. First up is defending champion Stanford.

"You know when everybody is healthy they've got a shot to win it all," North Carolina State coach Wes Moore said.

Engstler, Louisville roll into women's Final Four

Associated Press

WICHITA, Kan. — Emily Engstler's shot wouldn't drop, yet her dominant performance helped Louisville reach the women's Final Four.

The versatile All-ACC forward made just 1 of 9 field goals against Michigan in the Wichita Region final on Monday night. She missed all five of her three-point tries and was held to five points. But she also had 16 rebounds, six steals and four assists and played a key role in helping the top-seeded Cardinals defeat No. 3 seed Michigan 62-50 in the Elite Eight.

Aside from the shooting, it was a typical effort for the 6-foot-1 senior. She has averaged 13.5 points, 11.0 rebounds and 4.8 steals per game during the NCAA Tournament while helping Louisville limit opponents to 56 points per game.

"She has always had that type

of impact on the game," Cardinals coach Jeff Walz said. "It doesn't matter how she shoots the basketball."

She had been hitting shots lately. She was coming off a 20-point performance on 7-for-12 shooting in a 76-64 win over Tennessee in the Sweet 16 on Saturday. She had averaged 12 points per game for the season, second-best on the team.

On Monday, she missed all three shots she took in the first half, then went 1-for-6 in the second half. Still, she had five rebounds and three steals in the fourth quarter. She had numerous deflections and caused several jump balls throughout the game.

"She just does things you don't teach," Walz said. "It's who she is."

Engstler said she'd heard enough about how Louisville doesn't finish games and noted

that it handled business against Tennessee, too.

"Everybody likes to bring up how we've lost in the fourth quarter this year," Engstler said. "Well, we've just won two huge games in the fourth quarter when it mattered, so we're obviously capable of it. We just hit a little bit of a bump throughout the year, and we are back where we're supposed to be and we're locked in with the coaches and with the team, and I think we did an amazing job lifting each other up."

The Cardinals held the Wolverines scoreless for more than five minutes to start the game, then held them without a field goal for nearly seven minutes at the end. Overall, Engstler spearheaded a defense that forced Michigan into 22 turnovers and turned them into 24 points. As a result, Louisville will play South Carolina in a national semifinal

on Friday. The Cardinals are in the Final Four for the fourth time and still have a shot at their first national title.

Louisville survived Engstler's poor shooting, in part, because her teammates stepped up. Hailley Van Lith had 22 points on 9-for-15 shooting, the final touch on her run to being the Wichita Region's Most Outstanding Player. Chelsie Hall scored 15 points in one of her better shooting efforts of the season.

Engstler also made the region's All-Tournament Team. She saved an extra-special performance for the regional final, missing her career highs in both rebounds and steals by one.

"She is obviously really disruptive," Wolverines coach Kim Barnes Arico said. "Her length is incredible and she gets in the passing lanes, and it seemed like every big play they made she was involved in."

Heat defeat Kings, snap 4-game slide

Associated Press

MIAMI — Jimmy Butler scored 27 points, Bam Adebayo added 22 points and 15 rebounds, and the Miami Heat stopped a four-game skid with a 123-100 win Monday over the Sacramento Kings.

Tyler Herro had 20 for the Heat, who improved to 36-5 when scoring at least 110 points.

Davion Mitchell scored 21 for the Kings, who got 17 from Harrison Barnes. Miami snapped its longest losing streak of the season, and the 23-point margin was the largest for the Heat since a 24-point win at Atlanta on Jan. 12.

Raptors 115, Celtics 112 (OT): Pascal Siakam had a season-high 40 points and 13 rebounds before fouling out, and host Toronto beat short-handed Boston in overtime.

Fred VanVleet and OG Anunoby scored 14 points apiece, Thad Young and Gary Trent Jr. each had 12, and Scottie Barnes scored 10 before fouling out as the Raptors snapped a four-game home losing streak against the Celtics.

Playing without forwards Jaylen Brown and Jason Tatum (sore knees) and centers Al Horford and Robert Williams III, Boston lost for the fifth time in 29 games.

Knicks 109, Bulls 104: RJ Barrett scored 28 points, Alec Burks had 27 and host New York extended its winning streak to four games by beating Chicago.

Obi Toppin had 17 points for the Knicks, who remained 4½ games behind Atlanta for 10th place in the Eastern Conference and the final play-in spot with only six games remaining.

DeMar DeRozan scored 37 for the Bulls, including 15 in the fourth quarter. But he missed a jumper and was then called for an offensive foul in the final 45 seconds, cutting short Chicago's comeback attempt.

Nuggets 113, Hornets 109: Nikola Jokic had 26 points, 19 rebounds and 11 assists for his 19th triple-double of the season, and Denver held on to win at Charlotte.

Aaron Gordon added 21 points and Will Barton scored 18 for the Nuggets, who earned a split of the season series.

Cavaliers 107, Magic 101: Darius Garland had 25 points and 12 assists, leading his team to a victory over Orlando in a game in which host Cleveland lost rookie big man Evan Mobley to a sprained left ankle.

Mobley, the No. 3 overall pick, landed on the foot of Franz Wagner while defending under the basket in the second quarter. He limped to the locker room after briefly laying on the court and did not return to the game.

Lauri Markkanen scored 20 points, Kevin Love had 19 points and seven rebounds, and Isaac Okoro added 11 points for the Cavaliers, who snapped a three-game losing streak.

Hawks 132, Pacers 123: Bogdan Bogda-

novic scored 29 points to lead Atlanta to a win at Indiana.

Clint Capela and Kevin Huerter each contributed 22 points, and Capela added 15 rebounds for the Hawks, who are 10th in the Eastern Conference. Trae Young had 14 points and 16 assists.

Grizzlies 123, Warriors 95: Desmond Bane scored 22 points, De'Anthony Melton and Dillon Brooks added 21 points each and host Memphis solidified its hold on second place in the Western Conference with a win over short-handed Golden State.

Kyle Anderson added 13 points for the Grizzlies, who hold a five-game lead over the third-place Warriors in the conference. Memphis won its fifth straight and for the ninth time in 10 games.

Spurs 123, Rockets 120: Dejounte Murray scored a career-high 33 points and San Antonio held on for a win at Houston to inch closer to the final play-in spot in the Western Conference.

It was the fourth straight victory for the Spurs, who moved within a half-game of the Los Angeles Lakers for the 10th spot in the West.

Thunder 134, Trail Blazers 131 (OT): Isaiah Roby scored a career-high 30 points on 11-for-13 shooting and Oklahoma City rallied in overtime to win at Portland.

Aaron Wiggins added a career-best 28 points for the Thunder.

Kershaw looks ready to be key piece in Los Angeles

Associated Press

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — The Los Angeles Dodgers have so many stars this season that Clayton Kershaw is just one of the guys.

But there's little doubt the three-time NL Cy Young Award winner is still an extremely important piece to one of MLB's best teams.

Kershaw threw four scoreless innings against the Diamondbacks on Monday in the Cactus League, facing the minimum 12 batters. He gave up a leadoff single to Carson Kelly before coaxing a double-play groundout and retiring 11 straight hitters.

"I think overall the fastball

command was a lot better today," Kershaw said. "If I can get ahead of hitters, it's a good thing. For the most part, another good step forward."

Much has been made of the Dodgers' powerful lineup, and rightfully so. They made one of the splashiest offseason moves by signing free-agent first baseman Freddie Freeman, who joins a batting order that includes Justin Turner, Trea Turner, Mookie Betts, Cody Bellinger, Will Smith and Max Muncy.

But the Dodgers look slightly more vulnerable on the mound. They have three stars atop the rotation in Kershaw, Walker Buehler and Julio Urias, but might have to use several differ-

ent pitchers for the final few spots, including Andrew Heaney, David Price and Tony Gonsolin.

Kershaw signed a one-year, \$17 million deal to stay with the franchise he's played with his entire career. The eight-time All-Star might not be the pitcher he was from 2011 to 2014 when he won three NL Cy Young Awards in a four-year stretch, but he's still been very effective over the past few years and figures to be an important part of the starting rotation.

Brewers' Burnes goes 5

PHOENIX — Somewhere in the second inning on Monday, Corbin Burnes found his cutter

he'd been looking for throughout spring training.

It's bad news for National League batters if that's true.

Burnes allowed just one hit in five innings in tuning up for a possible opening day start for Milwaukee. Facing the San Francisco Giants at the Brewers' complex, the NL Cy Young Award winner struck out eight and walked one.

The only hit came from the first Giants batter, LaMonte Wade Jr., who doubled and eventually scored on an infield out.

"I threw one (cutter) and it's like, yeah that's it. And that translated to every other pitch as well," Burnes said.

Canes rip Caps in potential playoff preview

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Carolina Hurricanes gave the Washington Capitals something to think about if the division rivals meet in the playoffs, though it came at the cost of a potentially serious injury in the final seconds.

Martin Necas scored twice, Sebastian Aho added his 29th goal and the Hurricanes routed the Capitals 6-1 on Monday night in a potential first-round preview. Carolina center Jesperi Kotkaniemi put no weight on his left leg after getting injured on a penalized hit by Lars Eller with 1.8 seconds left, and his uncertain status overshadowed a big victory.

"I don't know the extent, but it's not good," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said during a somber postgame news conference. "He's injured. I don't know how bad, but he's definitely going to be out. The game was over. Let's just get it over with. Two seconds left. I don't like it. But nothing you can do about it."

Kotkaniemi's injury could linger long after a game that should have been remem-

bered for the Hurricanes' domination and a heavy-weight fight between teammate Brendan Smith and Washington's Tom Wilson.

Tensions had been simmering between them since Wilson rocked Vincent Trocheck with a big shoulder-to-chest hit at center ice in the second period, and he wanted to fight Smith early in the third before officials intervened. Wilson and Smith finally dropped the gloves midway through the third, with each landing multiple punches in a bout that fired up a crowd that had been dormant much of the game.

If the fireworks were a sign of things to come, a playoff series between the teams would be must-see entertainment. This result moved that one step closer to reality.

Carolina, which leads the Metropolitan Division, moved one point ahead of Florida in the back-and-forth race for the top seed in the Eastern Conference, which would likely mean a series against the Capitals instead of Boston, Toronto or two-time de-

fending Stanley Cup champion Tampa Bay.

Blues 4, Canucks 1: Vladimir Tarasenko had two goals and an assist to lead host St. Louis over Vancouver.

Tarasenko has 23 goals this season and 500 points in his NHL career.

David Perron and Marco Scandella also scored for the Blues, who had lost three of four. Robert Thomas had two assists.

Ville Husso rebounded after allowing five goals Saturday and made 35 saves.

Kraken 6, Kings 1: Alex Wennberg scored 14 seconds into the game, Jared McCann got his team-leading 24th goal and Seattle romped at Los Angeles.

Chris Driedger stopped 36 shots for the expansion Kraken, who have won four of six.

Seattle had 14 of its 18 skaters record a point. Adam Larsson, Victor Rask, Jordan Eberle and Daniel Sprong also scored, and Vince Dunn had two assists.

Arthur Kaliyev scored and Cal Petersen made 32 saves for the Kings. It was the

1,000th regular-season NHL game for Todd McLellan, making him the seventh active coach to reach the milestone.

Sabres 6, Blackhawks 5: Tage Thompson scored the tiebreaking goal on a fortunate bounce with 10.6 seconds left and Buffalo rallied from four down to win at Chicago.

Victor Olofsson had two goals and an assist to help the Sabres win for the first time in three games. Kyle Okposo, Vinnie Hinostroza and Alex Tuch also scored for Buffalo.

Thompson, the team leader with 28 goals, broke his stick on a shot from left wing. The puck caromed off the boards behind the net and hit Chicago goaltender Kevin Lankinen's left skate before going in.

Oilers 6, Coyotes 1: Ryan McLeod had two goals and an assist as host Edmonton beat Arizona.

Connor McDavid, Warren Foegele, Zach Hyman and Leon Draisaitl also scored for the Oilers, who have won seven straight home games. Mikko Koskinen made 31 saves.

NFL owners OK new rules for playoff overtimes

Associated Press

PALM BEACH, Fla. — The NFL is changing its sometimes controversial overtime rules to guarantee each side gets the ball in the playoffs.

Concerned that the coin toss to begin the extra period has too much impact on post-season game results, the owners voted Tuesday to approve a proposal presented by the Colts and Eagles.

Beginning this season, if the team possessing the ball first in overtime scores a touchdown on that series, the opponent still gets a possession. In recent seasons, that touchdown would have ended the game.

The Titans had recommended that both teams possess the ball in overtime unless the team receiving the kickoff scores a touchdown and a two-point conversion. That would end the game.

But the owners, perhaps believing the Tennessee suggestion was too gimmicky, went with the other proposal.

Under previous rules, the 10-minute overtime in the regular season only continued if the team getting the ball first failed to score or kicked a field goal. Should the side receiving the kickoff make a field goal, the team that first played defense would get a possession in which it can score a touchdown and win, or kick a field goal and play would continue — if time allowed.

In the postseason, when there are no ties, overtimes continue until someone has more points.

Since the previous overtime rule was instituted for the regular season in 2012, the team that wins the coin toss has won the game half of the time (76 of 152 games). However, both teams have had at least one

possession in 82% of the games (124 of 152).

Those numbers change a bit in the post-season. Since 2010, when that rule was instituted for the playoffs, seven of the 12 overtime games have been won on an opening-possession touchdown, and 10 of 12 have been won by the team that won the coin toss.

In other news from the meetings:

■ To ensure more opportunities for diverse candidates, the NFL has added requirements on the hiring of offensive assistant coaches, and women in general.

Beginning this season, all 32 clubs must employ a female or a member of an ethnic or racial minority to serve as an offensive assistant coach. The person will receive a one-year contract and work closely with the head coach and offensive staff to gain experience.