

DOD to review military drills in Europe

The Washington Post

The White House has asked the Pentagon to provide a rundown of exercises the U.S. military has taken in recent years in Europe to deter Russia, as well as the justification for each mission, as the Biden administration takes stock of military operations in the air, on land and at sea that are designed to check Kremlin power and reassure U.S. allies and partners in Europe.

The purpose of the request, according to a senior Biden administration official, is to give the White House full visibility into U.S. military exercises and other deterrence activities in Europe, so new missions can be evaluated and scheduled in the context of past actions. The bulk of the exercises in Europe focus on protecting against Russia, but the request, which hasn't been previously reported, also related to oth-

er U.S. military activities on the Continent, according to officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

U.S. military missions in Europe have grown in scope in recent years amid tensions with Moscow, leading to a slew of exercises, observation flights and maritime operations undertaken to ward off the Russian military from any further adventurism in Europe and reassure allies in the region that the United States takes seriously its commitments to their defense.

Some outside experts have raised concerns that some of the missions have become too provocative and should be reevaluated, even though the senior Biden administration official said the White House isn't seeking the information from the Pentagon with a view to curtailing the activ-

ities. In many cases, the missions have extended beyond NATO allies to include partner nations bordering Russia, such as Ukraine and Georgia. The United States doesn't have a treaty obligation to defend those nations but has backed their right to sovereignty and provided support to their militaries. Both countries have endured Kremlin-backed incursions into their territory.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has become increasingly vocal in recent months about military activities by the United States and its allies near Russia, particularly in Ukraine. In a speech on Thursday, Putin said NATO countries were crossing "certain limits" by flying strategic bombers about 12 miles off the coast of Russia over the Black Sea that carry "very serious weapons," a reference to the nuclear warheads the planes can hold.

U.S. allies on NATO's eastern flank, as well as partners in Ukraine and Georgia, have pushed for a continuation and expansion of military activities in Europe to send a clear message to Russia about unwavering U.S. support and prevent a replay of 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea from neighboring Ukraine and fueled a still-running conflict in the country's east.

U.S.-led exercises have taken on increased importance for European nations in recent months, as Russian forces massing near the Ukrainian border and a migrant crisis on Poland's border with Belarus have rattled leaders and underscored Russia's power to destabilize the Continent. The White House hasn't made any decision to modify or curtail the U.S. military's missions and exercises in Europe, the senior Biden administration official emphasized.

US seeks clarity as Russia flexes muscles on Ukraine

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The buildup of Russian troops near Ukraine has left U.S. officials perplexed, muddying the Biden administration's response.

Some Republican lawmakers have been pressing the U.S. to step up military support for Ukraine. But that risks turning what may be mere muscle-flexing by Russian President Vladimir Putin into a full-blown confrontation that only adds to the peril for Ukraine and could trigger an energy crisis in Europe.

But a weak U.S. response carries its own risks. It could embolden Putin to take more aggressive steps against Ukraine as fears grow he could try to seize more of its territory. And it could cause

political damage for President Joe Biden.

Knowing how to strike the right balance would be easier if the U.S. had a better understanding of what Putin was trying to accomplish. But top officials admit they don't know.

"We're not sure exactly what Mr. Putin is up to," Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said Wednesday. A week earlier, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said, "We don't have clarity into Moscow's intentions, but we do know its playbook."

Rep. Mike Quigley, an Illinois Democrat and member of the House Intelligence Committee, said better understanding Putin's intentions was critical "to avoid the mistakes that have started

great wars."

Any U.S. response must be calibrated to avoid being "an appeaser or a provocateur," he said.

"This is a tough, tough area to try to gain information," he said. "It's a challenge that's as tough or tougher than it's ever been. It has a pretty serious impact on our ability to make the correct decisions."

Russia seized Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and an ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine between Kyiv and Russian-backed rebels has left an estimated 14,000 dead. Now, Ukraine says an estimated 90,000 Russian troops have massed near the border.

The buildup could be a prelude to another Russian invasion.

Speaking to Ukraine's foreign minister this month, Blinken said Putin's "playbook" was for Russia to build up forces near the border and then invade, "claiming falsely that it was provoked."

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Friday that the alliance is seeing an "unusual concentration" of Russian forces along Ukraine's border, warning that the same type of forces was used by Moscow in the past to intervene in neighboring countries.

Though U.S. officials don't believe an invasion is imminent, Putin also has ramped up his dismissal of an independent Ukraine. But the moves could also be saber-rattling to prevent Ukraine from being admitted into NATO, which Putin strongly opposes.

USS Daniel Inouye at homeport ahead of commissioning

By **WYATT OLSON**
Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii — The U.S. Navy destroyer slated to be commissioned next month as the USS Daniel Inouye arrived Thursday at its homeport in Pearl Harbor.

The crew of roughly 300 sailors was greeted by hundreds of family members gathered pier-side at the joint base, along with hula dancers, ukulele players and soldiers of Oahu's 25th Infantry Division performing a traditional Hawaiian warrior dance.

The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer — designated DDG 118 by the Navy — began its 7,600-mile journey from the Bath Iron Works shipyard in Maine in early October. It reached Hawaiian waters last week and steamed around each of the state's islands.

It will be commissioned Dec. 8, the day after the commemoration at Pearl Harbor of the 80th anniversary of the Japanese surprise attack on Oahu on Dec. 7, 1941.

The ship's namesake is the late Daniel Inouye, a native Hawaiian, Medal of Honor recipient from World War II and a U.S. senator for almost 50 years.

The ship becomes the eighth guided-missile destroyer to be homeported at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

"DDGs are the workhorse of the Navy," Cmdr. DonAnn Gilmore, the ship's commander, told reporters on the pier after

the ship's docking. "They sometime refer to us as the greyhound. We are able to do anti-air, anti-surface, anti-subsurface [weapon launches] simultaneously, and we employ the Aegis weapons system.

The future Inouye is equipped with the Aegis Baseline 9 Combat System, which includes integrated air and missile defense capability and enhanced ballistic missile defense capabilities, according to Naval Sea Systems Command.

"And the most important part is I employ those 300 sailors that are on board," Gilmore said. "With the amount of training and the work and the effort that goes into them, they are truly remarkable."

During World War II, Inouye, the son of Japanese immigrants, served with the famed 442nd Regimental Combat Team made up of Japanese-American enlisted soldiers. Fighting in Italy and France, the regiment sustained substantial casualties, adopting for itself the slogan "Go for Broke."

Inouye earned the Medal of Honor leading his platoon against German machine guns in Italy, an assault that cost him his right arm to a grenade, according to the National WWII Museum website.

"When you take on a new ship, you learn about who the ship is named after and the legacy that goes with that," Gilmore said. "His is such a history and example of courage and service both to the state of Hawaii and to our country through the time of the 442nd."

Naval Academy brigade reaches 99.6% vaccinated

The (Annapolis, Md.) Capital
ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Of the more than 4,400 midshipmen who make up the Naval Academy brigade, 99.6% are vaccinated against the coronavirus and the few who aren't are seeking medical and religious exemptions as allowed by Navy policy.

Last week the Navy updated its guidance on how to handle sailors who refuse to vaccinate against COVID-19 without an approved or pending exemption, saying they will be separated from the service. The deadline to complete vaccination is Nov. 28.

USNA Public Information Officer Commander Alanas Garas said last week that the vast ma-

majority of the brigade is vaccinated, and the few students who are not are seeking religious or medical exemptions. If their exemption is denied, they will have five days to begin vaccination, according to a media release from the Navy.

Garas said decisions about separating midshipmen will be centralized under the COVID Consolidated Disposition Authority, which is the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs for midshipmen. Those who have incurred a service obligation for their education may be required to repay the cost of that education if separated, Garas said in an email.

Camp Humphreys gets taste of home with Krispy Kreme

By **DAVID CHOI**
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — The Army and Air Force Exchange Service celebrated the grand opening Friday of a new bakery that produces American-brand goods like Wonder Bread and Krispy Kreme doughnuts in South Korea.

The 255,800-square-foot Korea Distribution Center at Camp Humphreys, which actually began operating late last year, is AAFES' largest product center in the Pacific. It delivers goods to federal employees in South Korea, Japan, Guam, Saipan and American Samoa.

The project took nine years and cost \$20 million, according to data provided by AAFES corporate headquarters in Dallas. The center replaces an older one at Camp Market in Incheon composed of nine buildings, some of which dated to the 1930s. The relocated center will save \$225,000

in transportation costs over five years.

"This state-of-the-art distribution center and bakery stands as a testament to the exchange's longstanding commitment to troops and families living and serving on the peninsula," Eighth Army's commander, Gen. Willard Burleson, said during the ceremony.

In addition to storing and transporting products, the facility includes a 25,000-square-foot bakery that produces goods from American brands like Wonder Bread and Krispy Kreme. They are distributed to commissaries, restaurants and schools on military bases.

"Brands want to partner with the exchange to provide a taste of home to service members and their families stationed overseas," Donald Henson, the food plant operation manager and general manager, said in an email to Stars and Stripes on Friday.

Europe's rising cases pits the vaccinated against not

Associated Press

This was supposed to be the Christmas in Europe where family and friends could once again embrace holiday festivities and one another. Instead, the continent is the global epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic as cases soar to record levels in many countries.

With infections spiking again despite nearly two years of restrictions, the health crisis increasingly is pitting citizen against citizen — the vaccinated against the unvaccinated.

Governments desperate to shield overburdened health care systems are imposing rules that limit choices for the unvaccinated in the hope that doing so will drive up rates of vaccinations.

Austria on Friday went a step further, making vaccinations mandatory as of Feb. 1.

“For a long time, maybe too long, I and others thought that it must be possible to convince people in Austria, to convince them to get vaccinated voluntarily,” Austrian Chancellor Alexander Schallenberg said.

He called the move “our only way to break out of this vicious cycle of viral waves and lockdown discussions for good.”

While Austria so far stands alone in the European Union in making vaccinations mandatory, more and more governments are clamping down.

Starting Monday, Slovakia is banning people who haven't been vaccinated from all nonessential stores and shopping malls. They will also not be allowed to attend any public event or gathering and will be required to test twice a week just to go to work.

“A merry Christmas does not mean a Christmas without COVID-19,” warned Prime Minister Eduard Heger. “For that to happen, Slovakia would need to have a completely different vaccination rate.”

He called the measures “a lockdown for the unvaccinated.”

Slovakia, where just 45.3% of the 5.5 million population is fully vaccinated, reported a record 8,342 new virus cases on Tuesday.

It is not only nations of central and eastern Europe that are suffering anew. Wealthy nations in the west are also being hit hard and imposing restrictions on their populations once again.

“It is really, absolutely, time to take action,” German Chancellor Angela Merkel said. With a vaccination rate of 67.5%, her nation is considering mandatory vaccines for many health professionals.

GOP embracing natural immunity over vaccinations

Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Republicans fighting President Joe Biden's coronavirus vaccine mandates are wielding a new weapon against the White House rules: natural immunity.

They contend that people who have recovered from the virus have enough immunity and antibodies to not need COVID-19 vaccines, and the concept has been invoked by Republicans as a sort of stand-in for vaccines.

Florida wrote natural immunity into state law last week as GOP lawmakers elsewhere are pushing similar measures to sidestep vaccine mandates. Lawsuits over the mandates have also begun leaning on the idea. Conservative federal lawmakers have implored regulators to consider it when formulating mandates.

Scientists acknowledge that people previously infected with COVID-19 have some level of immunity, but that vaccines offer a more consistent level of protection. Natural immunity is also far from a one-size-fits-all scenario, making it complicated to enact sweeping exemptions to vaccines.

That's because how much immunity COVID-19 survivors have depends on how long ago they were infected, how sick they were and if the virus variant they had is different from mutants circulating now. For example, a person who had a minor case one year ago is much different than a person who had a severe case over the summer when the delta variant was raging through the country.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported in August that COVID-19 survivors who ignored advice to get vaccinated were more than twice as likely to get infected again. A more recent study from the CDC, looking at data from nearly 190 hospitals in nine states, determined that unvaccinated people who had been infected months earlier were five times more likely to get COVID-19 than fully vaccinated people who didn't have a prior infection.

“Infection with this virus, if you survive, you do have some level of protection against getting infected in the future and particularly against getting serious infection in the future,” said Dr. David Dowdy of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. “It's important to note, though, that even those who have been infected in the past get additional protection from being vaccinated.”

Senate pushes action on defense bill to after Thanksgiving holiday

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — The Senate on Friday pushed off further action on its annual defense policy bill until after the Thanksgiving break, having failed to strike a deal on which amendments will get votes.

Armed Services Chairman Jack Reed, D-R.I., filed cloture Friday on the underlying bill and his substitute placeholder amendment to the fiscal 2022 National Defense Authorization Act, teeing up procedural votes for Nov. 29.

CQ Roll Call obtained a list of 57 amendments that Reed plans to include in the manager's package, a group of noncontroversial proposals that can be adopted without objection. Of the amendments, 27 are sponsored by Democrats and 27 by Republicans, and three are bipartisan.

These include an amendment from Illinois Democrat Tammy Duckworth to create an Independent Afghanistan Commission to scrutinize two decades of government decisions over the course of the Afghanistan War.

Others that made the cut were the entirety of the intelligence authorization bill, introduced by Intelligence Committee Chairman Mark Warner, D-Va.

Georgia Democrat Raphael Warnock's amendment that aims to improve maternal health outcomes was also included.

Almost 20 other amendments appear poised for debate and individual votes, but Democrats and Republicans could not reach an agreement on that group, so it remains unclear exactly how the Senate will handle them.

Biden, aides tell allies he is running in 2024

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden and members of his inner circle have reassured allies in recent days that he plans to run for reelection in 2024, as they take steps to deflect concern about the 79-year-old president's commitment to another campaign and growing Democratic fears of a possible Republican return to power.

The efforts come as the broader Democratic community has become increasingly anxious after a bruising six-month stretch that has seen Biden's national approval rating plummet more than a dozen points, into the low 40s, amid growing concerns

about inflation, Democratic infighting in Washington and faltering public health efforts to move beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

The message is aimed in part at tamping down the assumption among many Democrats that Biden may not seek reelection given his age and waning popularity, while also effectively freezing the field for Vice President Kamala Harris and other potential presidential hopefuls.

"The only thing I've heard him say is he's planning on running again," said former Sen. Chris Dodd, D-Conn., a Biden friend. "And I'm glad he is."

At a virtual fundraiser this

month, Biden told a small group of donors that he plans to seek a second term, underscoring the message he gave the nation in March at his first White House news conference before cautioning that he had "never been able to plan three-and-a-half, four years ahead, for certain."

But interviews with 28 Democratic strategists and officials, many of whom requested anonymity to speak more frankly, show that the assurances have not stopped the internal debate over whether Biden will appear on the ticket.

Florida trial lawyer John Morgan, who was a top 2020 Biden donor, said he was unsure wheth-

er Biden would seek reelection.

"What is his health going to be in the next three years?" he wondered aloud. "All you have to do is look at the mortality tables in America to understand what I'm saying."

Biden received a health check-up Friday — a day before his 79th birthday Saturday — at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center that found the president to be "healthy," "vigorous" and working out five days a week. His doctor described a stiffer walking gait in recent years, which he attributed to spinal arthritis, and some acid reflux that has caused him to repeatedly clear his throat.

Gun goes off at Atlanta airport, causing chaos

Associated Press

ATLANTA — A passenger awaiting a search at the Atlanta airport's main security checkpoint reached in his bag and grabbed a firearm, and it went off, causing chaos among travelers and prompting a temporary FAA ground stop on flights Saturday afternoon, officials said. The man fled.

The man, later identified as a convicted felon, ran with the gun from the checkpoint and escaped out an airport exit, the Transportation Security Administration said. Authorities said it was not an active shooter incident and described the discharge as accidental.

Police said later they had issued a warrant for the arrest of the passenger, 42-year-old Keny Wells.

The airport's police commander, Maj. Reginald Moorman, said Wells was being sought on charges including carrying a concealed weapon at a commercial airport, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, discharging a firearm and reckless conduct.

"We are actively pursuing this individual as we speak," Moorman said at a news briefing Saturday evening with TSA and airport officials.

The discharge caused a frenzy on social media as alarmed travelers posted videos to Twitter and other sites showing and describing moments of chaos and confusion at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, one of the nation's busiest.

Authorities said three people suffered minor injuries, including one person who fell in the airport's atrium area away from the checkpoint, and two complaining of shortness of breath. Police said they had to work crowd control until things calmed.

A TSA official said no one was shot.

"We were fortunate that when the firearm went off, no one was seriously injured," Robert Spinden, the TSA's director of federal security for Georgia, said at the airport briefing. Officials didn't immediately disclose the type of weapon involved.

Sudan's ousted PM signs deal with military to be reinstated

Associated Press

CAIRO — Sudan's deposed Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok signed a deal with the military on Sunday that will see him reinstated, almost a month after a military coup put him under house arrest. A key pro-democracy group that has mobilized dozens of protests had dismissed the deal as "a form of betrayal."

The deal, announced in a ceremony broadcast live on Sudan state TV, envisages an independent technocratic Cabinet to be led by Hamdok until elections can be held. It remains unclear how much power the government would hold. It would still remain under military oversight. It also remains unclear whether any political parties or pro-democracy groups have signed off on the agreement.

The deal expects the military to release government officials and politicians arrested since the Oct. 25 coup. The coup, more than two years after a popular uprising forced the removal of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir and his Islamist govern-

ment, has drawn international criticism.

"The signing of this deal opens the door wide enough to address all the challenges of the transitional period," said Hamdok, speaking at the signing ceremony.

Sudanese have been taking to the streets since the military takeover. The agreement comes just days after doctors said at least 15 people were killed by live fire during anti-coup demonstrations. Hamdok has been under house arrest by military leaders for weeks.

The deal also stipulates that an investigation shall be conducted to identify those responsible for the killing and injuring of civilians and troops that marred protests following the coup.

Hamdok thanked Sudan's "regional and global friends" who helped in reaching this agreement, but he did not name the countries.

The 14-clause deal also stressed that power should be handed over to an elected civilian government after the end of the transitional period.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Biologists remove jug stuck on bear cub's head

NC ASHEVILLE — A bear cub wandering around a North Carolina neighborhood with a jug stuck on its head is running free in the forest again thanks to wildlife biologists and some observant residents.

Wildlife biologists with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission spent two days searching for the bear cub, according to a news release. The commission said the bear likely got stuck while going through some trash and was wandering around an Asheville neighborhood.

The bear was anesthetized before the jug was taken off its head. Biologists performed a health check before relocating it to a remote area in western North Carolina.

Carnival worker fires shot, hits woman, 91

FL MARGATE — A carnival worker shot fired a gun into the air during an argument with a co-worker and the bullet went through the window of a nearby assisted living facility and struck a 91-year-old woman, police said.

Authorities said the bullet traveled some 200 yards, from the grounds of the Broward County Fair to the first-floor window of the Waterside Landing assisted living facility in Margate.

The woman is expected to recover from her injuries, officials told news outlets. Her name was not released.

But Brandon Lucas Craig, 40, is facing multiple charges, including attempted murder, aggravated battery with a deadly weapon, battery, and carrying a concealed firearm.

The fair opens Dec. 5, and city officials are assuring the public that the incident was an isolated case.

Winds whip up volcanic ash from 1912 eruption

AK ANCHORAGE — Volcano scientists issued an alert Wednesday, warning that a cloud of ash — from an eruption more than a century ago — was headed toward Alaska's Kodiak Island.

The ash is from the powerful 1912 eruption of Novarupta, a volcano on the Alaska Peninsula that dropped volcanic ash that is still visible today.

Strong northwesterly winds in the vicinity of Katmai National Park and Preserve and Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes on Wednesday kicked up the loose volcano ash.

Winds were expected to carry the ash about 100 miles southeast toward Kodiak Island, and an aviation alert to aircraft was issued for the low-lying event.

Coroner buries unclaimed remains of 4 military men

SC BEAUFORT — The remains of 34 people who died decades ago, but whose families were never located, were finally laid to rest in South Carolina's Beaufort County.

The first four — three soldiers and a Marine — were buried at the Beaufort National Cemetery with full military honors during a small ceremony, WCSC-TV reported.

No family or friends could be found to attend the burials of William Goldberg, Francis Lonegan, Eckeron Kelly and Lawrence Davis. Instead, members of the community paid their final respects.

"It was really a good turnout today and it was really awesome and a cross-section of all services here representing so it was really special," Marine Corps League spokesperson Cathy Stump said. "I think even though they have no family to know, we know and we care."

The four were among 62 people whose cremains, or cremated remains, have been in the possession of Coroner David Ott's office since 1982.

Man faces charges after poached bucks found

MI DECATUR — The discovery of nine poached trophy bucks in a barn has led to 15 state wildlife charges against a southwestern Michigan man, authorities said.

Police investigating an October domestic violence complaint discovered the bucks in a barn in the Van Buren County village of Decatur.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources said Justin Ernst, 33, of Decatur, is suspected of driving his truck through fields, shining a light on the deer and shooting them.

Ex-cop admits to making meth at his own home

NJ FREEHOLD — A former New Jersey police officer has admitted operating a methamphetamine lab at his home.

Christopher Walls, 50, pleaded guilty to manufacturing a controlled dangerous substance and to causing a risk of widespread injury.

The 19-year veteran of the Long Branch Police Department was suspended without pay following his arrest in May.

The lab was discovered when police responded to a domestic

disturbance call at Walls' home in Long Branch and someone there told officers about it, authorities said. A state police hazmat team responded and found equipment and substances commonly used to make meth in the home's basement and in a shed on the property, authorities said, along with books about making the drug, explosives and poison.

Authorities also found an open, unsecured gun safe with two long guns, four handguns, eight high-capacity magazines and ammunition inside. The safe was accessible to a child living in the home, police said.

Student dies after falling 11 stories down chute

PA STATE COLLEGE — A 19-year-old Penn State student who had been reported missing probably died after falling 11 stories down a trash chute in her campus apartment building, authorities said.

Justine Gross, a sophomore from New Jersey, was reported missing Nov. 11 after not returning to her room the night before.

Police said a municipal trash hauler had emptied a dumpster at the base of the chute early Nov. 11 and took the trash to a dump, where officers found her body early Nov. 12.

Officers reviewed surveillance recordings showing the woman was alone when she entered a trash room on the 11th floor of her building, campus police said. They believe her death was an accident but await toxicology and autopsy reports.

Gross' mother said to NJ.com that she had been told by her daughter's friends that she had met a man who gave her "a smoke" — referring to illegal drugs — shortly before she fell.

— From wire reports



Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit www.stripes.com.

Reporting World, National and Military News

Superpowers flex with titles in sight

Associated Press

The superpowers asserted themselves over the upstarts Saturday.

In a season that has been dotted with upsets and surprises, the most talented teams are rising to the top.

No. 7 Michigan State and No. 13 Wake Forest have been good stories, but against No. 5 Ohio State and Clemson, they were outclassed.

And No. 4 Oregon, which has been trying to prove it belongs among the elite, showed that it most definitely does not yet at Utah.

In Columbus, Ohio, the day's marquee matchup was over for all intents and purposes after about a quarter. The Buckeyes were up 49-0 at halftime on the Spartans behind a near-perfect performance by C.J. Stroud, who called it a day in the third quarter with 432 yards passing and a school-record six touchdown passes.

If there is an offense in the country that might have a chance to do more than just dent No. 1 Georgia's ferocious defense, it might be the Buckeyes'.

"We have a high ceiling, and we're still striving towards greatness," Ohio State coach Ryan Day said.

Next up for the Buckeyes and their star studded offense is a

trip to No. 8 Michigan, which looked ready against Maryland to try to break an eight-game losing streak in The Game.

That Oregon loss in September is a distant memory for Ohio State, which is victory away from a fifth straight Big Ten title game appearance. The Buckeyes have won the previous four.

In Death Valley, Clemson put together its best offensive performance of the season and slammed the door on the slightest glimmer of hope Wake Forest (9-2) and the Atlantic Coast Conference had to put a team in the College Football Playoff.

The Tigers (8-3) are too far gone to make the playoffs for a seventh straight season, but there is suddenly hope to extend their streak of six straight ACC titles. If Wake loses next week at Boston College and North Carolina State loses to North Carolina, Clemson is back in conference title game for a rematch against No. 20 Pitt.

Michigan State has had a remarkable turnaround in year two under coach Mel Tucker, who is reportedly weighing a massive contract extension from the school because it believes he can build a program that can truly threaten Ohio State.

Michigan State learned Saturday that there is still a long way to go.

Even if Wake were to stumble next week, this has been the Demon Deacons' best season in more than a decade, clueing the rest of the country in on the nice job coach Dave Clawson has done at the smallest Power Five school in the country.

Still, Wake's experienced roster and creative offense was no match for Clemson's dudes, led by freshman running back Will Shipley.

The Tigers were the first team this season to hold the Demon Deacons under 35 points and extended their winning streak over Wake to 13. After a 2-2 start, Clemson has a path to New Year's Six bowl.

"They've rallied and they battled" coach Dabo Swinney told reporters. "The foundation of our program has won the day for us."

A foundation built on four straight top-10 recruiting classes.

In the Big 12, No. 12 Oklahoma has spent much of the season searching for its top form, but after bouncing back from last week's loss behind five-star freshman Caleb Williams, the Sooners will head into Bedlam against No. 9 Oklahoma State positioned for a fifth straight conference title game appearance. OU has won each of the previous four.

In the SEC, No. 2 Alabama locked up its side of the conference against Arkansas, booking a spot in what figures to be a titanic championship against Georgia.

If Stroud isn't the leader in what has felt like a wide-open Heisman race, its probably the Tide's Bryce Young. Alabama's star first-year starter passed for a school-record 561 yards and five touchdowns against No. 21 Arkansas.

Before the season, there was a feeling of inevitability at the top of college football with four super teams (Alabama, Clemson, Ohio State and Oklahoma) dominating their conferences and Georgia trying to enter that conversation.

With Thanksgiving approaching, a season that at times seemed to be trending toward chaos is on the verge of falling in to place largely as expected.

For the sixth time in the eight-year history of the College Football Playoff, the Pac-12 will not have a team in it.

No. 23 Utah ended Oregon's CFP hopes, blowing holes in all the cracks that had been exposed in the Ducks since they left Ohio State. Beating the Buckeyes allowed Oregon to pose as a playoff contender, even though they often did not look the part.

Robinson grinds out 137 yards, Army downs UMass

Associated Press

WEST POINT, N.Y. — Tyrell Robinson ran for an 87-yard touchdown and finished with 137 of Army's 377 rushing yards as the Black Knights ran over UMass 33-17 on Saturday.

Army had 10 players with at least one carry and got touchdown runs from four different backs.

After UMass took a 3-0 lead midway through the first quarter on a Cameron Carson 45-yard field goal, Army answered when Robinson took the pitch in the backfield, got a block on the corner and raced 87

yards untouched to the end zone. Wilson Catoe scored from three yards out to cap a 10-play drive and a 16-3 Army lead with 13:30 left in the second quarter.

Garrett Dzuro tossed a five-yard pass to Jacob Orlando to pull UMass within a touchdown at 16-10, but Cole Talley booted a 33-yard field goal as time expired in the first half for a 19-10 lead.

Jakobi Buchanan and Tyhier Tyler each added fourth-quarter touchdown runs for Army (7-3).

East Carolina 38, Navy 35: Owen Daffler drilled a 54-yard field goal as time ex-

pired to give the visiting Pirates a victory over the Midshipmen.

Maquel Haywood scored on a 98-yard kickoff return that gave Navy (2-8, 2-5 American) a 35-27 lead with 8:33 remaining.

East Carolina's Holton Ahlers answered with a 28-yard touchdown pass to Tyler Snead about three minutes later to tie it at 35. The Midshipmen punted with 1:24 to play, and Ahlers connected with Snead on a 46-yard pass on the next play.

The Pirates (7-4, 5-2) then let the clock run before Daffer's game-winning kick.

No. 17 Vols can't keep up with No. 5 Wildcats

Associated Press

UNCASVILLE, Conn. — The game between Villanova and Tennessee was billed as a classic matchup between the Wildcats veteran leader, Collin Gillespie, and the Volunteers' young star-of-the-future, Kennedy Chandler.

This one went to the old man.

Gillespie, Jermain Samuels, and Brandon Slater each scored 14 points as No. 5 Villanova eased to a 71-53 win over No. 17 Tennessee on Saturday in the opening round of the Hall of Fame Tip-Off tournament.

Justin Moore added 13 points for the Wildcats (3-1), who had a 20-point lead at halftime.

Santiago Vescovi scored 23 points for the Volunteers (2-1), who had opened the season with lopsided wins over Tennessee-Martin and East Tennessee. He was the only Tennessee player to get to double figures. Chandler was held to six points on 1-of-9 shooting.

"When you're that guy (Gillespie) they are coming at every night and you're trying to just lead your team and not get into a one-on-one, that's a hard thing to do," Villanova coach Jay Wright said.

The Wildcats scored the game's first nine points, holding the Volunteers without a basket for over six minutes. Tennessee missed its first six shots before Vescovi made a three-pointer from the right wing.

No. 6 Purdue 93, No. 18 North Carolina 84: Sasha Stefanovic scored 23 points and Jaden Ivey put up 22 points to go along with his 10 rebounds as the Boilermakers beat the Tar Heels in the first round of the Hall of Fame Tip-Off tournament in Uncasville, Conn.

Trevion Williams added 20 points for Purdue (4-0), which has scored at least 90

points in all four of its games this season.

Dawson Garcia hit 10 of his 13 shots and led North Carolina (3-1) with 26 points before fouling out. R.J. Davis and Caleb Love each added 18 points for the Tar Heels. UNC led once with about nine minutes left, but it was short-lived.

No. 8 Texas 79, San Jose State 45: Timmy Allen scored 17 points, and the host Longhorns defeated the Spartans.

Tre Mitchell had 14 points and eight rebounds for Texas (3-1). Andrew Jones scored 13.

Tibert Gorener led San Jose State (1-3) with 12 points, hitting 4 of 5 three-pointers, and Josh O'Garro scored 11.

The Spartans shot just 32% and committed 27 turnovers. The Longhorns shot 51.8% overall and had a 47-17 halftime lead.

No. 9 Baylor 86, Stanford 48: LJ Cryer scored 21 points and James Akinjo had 11 points with a career high-tying 11 assists, leading the host Bears over the Cardinal.

A game after matching a school record with 21 steals in a 92-47 win over Central Arkansas, Baylor had nine during a 26-2 run that covered nearly 10 minutes and ended with the Bears in front 60-31. Baylor (4-0) finished with 16 steals.

Freshman Kendall Brown scored 15 points in the first meeting between the schools in 34 years. It was the first victory for the Bears in the fourth matchup in the series.

Jaiden Delaire and Spencer Jones scored 10 points apiece for Stanford (3-2), which shot 29% in the second half in its first-ever trip to Waco. The Cardinal dropped to 0-2 on the road.

No. 23 UConn 87, Binghamton 63: Tyrese Martin had 15 points and 11 rebounds for the host Huskies in a win over the Bear-

cats.

Adama Sanogo scored 12 points for UConn (4-0). Jordan Hawkins had 11, and Andre Jackson finished with nine points and eight rebounds.

Tyler Bertram led Binghamton (1-3) with 15 points. Oghenyoye Akuwovo scored 12.

Air Force 72, Holy Cross 53: A.J. Walker had 27 points as the Falcons led wire-to-wire to beat the Crusaders at the Sunshine Jam in Daytona Beach, Fla., advancing to the championship game.

Joseph Octave had 12 points for Air Force (3-1). Jake Heidbreder added 11 points. Ethan Taylor had 11 points and six assists.

Kyrell Luc had 15 points for Holy Cross (1-3). Gerrale Gates added 14 points and eight rebounds. Louth-M Coulibaly had 10 points and seven rebounds.

Bo Montgomery, whose 13.0 points per game ranked second on the Crusaders, made one basket for two points.

Navy 47, Radford 33: John Carter Jr. had 13 points as Navy beat Radford 47-33 on Saturday in Greenville, S.C.

Daniel Deaver had 10 points and three blocks for the Midshipmen (2-2). Sean Yoder added six rebounds. Greg Summers had eight rebounds.

Chyree Walker had 10 rebounds for the Highlanders (1-4), who have now lost four games in a row.

LaSalle 61, Army 58: Jhamir Brickus registered 14 points as the host Explorers defeated the Black Knights.

Khalil Brantley had 12 points for La Salle (2-2). Christian Ray added 10 points and eight rebounds. Clifton Moore blocked six shots.

Jalen Rucker had 13 points and six rebounds for Army (3-2). Charlie Peterson added 13 points and seven rebounds.

Source: Florida fires Mullen after Gators' sixth loss

Associated Press

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — A person familiar with the decision says Florida fired coach Dan Mullen on Sunday, a day after his sixth loss in nine games, two months after the Gators went toe to toe with defending national champion Alabama and a year after they had a chance to make the College Football Playoff.

The person spoke to the Associated Press on condition of anonymity because neither side had announced the move. ESPN first reported Mullen's firing.

Mullen's stunning downfall and not-so-

surprising departure ends a tumultuous two seasons that included mounting losses, numerous public relation missteps, NCAA sanctions and a victory against lower-division Samford that didn't seem like much for Gators fans to celebrate.

His final game was a 24-23 loss in overtime at Missouri that spotlighted Florida's flaws: inconsistent quarterback play, a porous offensive line, a lack of playmakers on both sides of the ball and an inability to win close games. The Gators (5-6) have dropped seven consecutive one-possession games, all in the last two seasons.

Source: Kings fire Walton

The Sacramento Kings have fired coach Luke Walton after getting off to a disappointing start in his third season in charge, a person familiar with the decision told The Associated Press.

Walton was informed of the decision on Sunday, a day after a 123-105 home loss to Utah that dropped the Kings to 6-11 on the season, according to the person who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the team hadn't announced the move.

ESPN first reported the firing.

Caldwell-Pope, Dinwiddie lift Wizards

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Kentavious Caldwell-Pope and Spencer Dinwiddie each scored 16 points and hit two three-pointers during a crucial late stretch and the Washington Wizards rallied to beat the Miami Heat 103-100 on Saturday.

Bradley Beal had 21 points to help Washington split the home-and-home series with Miami and move a half-game above the Heat in the Southeast Division standings. Miami beat the Wizards 112-97 in Florida on Thursday night.

Washington trailed by 16 in the third quarter and by 10 with 4:42 to play before Caldwell-Pope and Dinwiddie scored every point during a 15-2 run to give the Wizards a 99-96 lead with 1:43 left.

Jimmy Butler scored 29 points for the Heat.

Celtics 111, Thunder 105: Jayson Tatum scored 33 points, Dennis Schroder had 29 and host Boston beat Oklahoma City.

Al Horford added 10 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists for the Celtics, who won for seventh time in 10 games. Grant Williams added 14 points.

Lu Dort scored 16 points for the Thunder, and Josh Giddey had 15 points and eight rebounds. Oklahoma City has dropped four of five.

Coming off an emotional 22-point victory over the rival Lakers a night earlier, the Celtics didn't have any letdown, charging

to a double-digit lead midway into the second quarter. Tatum had 37 points and 11 rebounds in the win over Los Angeles on Friday.

Bucks 117, Magic 108: Giannis Antetokounmpo had 32 points and 20 rebounds and host Milwaukee held off Orlando to open a two-game set.

The teams will meet again Monday night in Milwaukee.

Bobby Portis had a season-high 24 points along with 15 rebounds to help the Bucks win their third straight and improve to 9-8. They're above .500 for the first time since they were 3-2 on Oct. 27.

Trail Blazers 119, 76ers 111: Damian Lillard scored a season-high 39 points to help host Portland beat Philadelphia.

CJ McCollum added 18 points, Norman Powell had 17, and Jusuf Nurkic finished with 11 points and 11 rebounds. The Trail Blazers improved to 8-1 at home and, at 9-8, are above .500 for the first time since Oct. 31.

Hawks 115, Hornets 105: Clint Capela had 20 points and 15 rebounds, Trae Young scored 19 points and host Atlanta beat Charlotte.

Cam Reddish and Kevin Huerter each added 17 points, and Danilo Gallinari had 16 to help the Hawks win their fourth consecutive game. John Collins had 15 points and eight rebounds.

Knicks 106, Rockets 99: Alec Burks

scored 17 of his 20 points in the fourth quarter, Evan Fournier added 19 and host New York handed Houston its 14th consecutive loss,

All-Star Julius Randle added 16 points and 10 rebounds, and Immanuel Quickley had 13 points off the bench for the Knicks.

Pacers 111, Pelicans 94: Domantas Sabonis had 20 points and 10 rebounds and Indiana's starters bounced back from being benched a night earlier to beat visiting New Orleans.

Yanked by coach Rick Carlisle in the third quarter of loss at Charlotte, the Pacers' starters opened with 23 points in the first quarter for a 32-19 lead. The one change to the starting lineup was shooting guard Justin Holiday, who scored 17 points.

Timberwolves 138, Grizzlies 95: D'Angelo Russell scored 28 points, Anthony Edwards added 23 and host Minnesota routed Memphis for its third straight victory.

Karl-Anthony Towns finished with 21 points. The Timberwolves led by as many as 45, their biggest lead in a game this season and the Grizzlies' largest deficit.

Jazz 123, Kings 105: Donovan Mitchell scored 26 points, Rudy Gobert added 21 points and 14 rebounds and Utah won at Sacramento.

Richaun Holmes had 22 points and seven rebounds for the Kings, who have lost seven of eight.

Panthers slip past Wild, improve to 10-0-0 at home

Associated Press

SUNRISE, Fla. — Frank Vatrano scored twice and Sergei Bobrovsky made 34 saves to help the Florida Panthers remain perfect at home with a 5-4 victory against the Minnesota Wild on Saturday night.

Owen Tippett, Carter Verhaeghe and Sam Bennett also scored for the Panthers, who improved to 13-2-3 overall and 10-0-0 at home this season. Vatrano added an assist.

"We're a dangerous team on home ice and it's something we want to do all year, be a good team on home ice," Vatrano said.

Flames 5, Islanders 2: Andrew Mangiapane scored two

power-play goals and Calgary spoiled New York's debut of its new home arena next to Belmont Park. Brad Richardson, Trevor Lewis and Johnny Gaudreau also scored, and Noah Hanafin had two assists to help Calgary extend its point streak to five games (3-0-2). Jacob Markstrom stopped 34 shots.

Capitals 4, Sharks 0: Alex Ovechkin and Conor Sheary each scored two goals to lead visiting Washington over San Jose.

Bruins 5, Flyers 2: Derek Forbort had two goals to lead visiting Boston past Philadelphia for its third straight victory.

Oilers 5, Blackhawks 2: Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl

each had a goal and an assist as host Edmonton beat Chicago.

Penguins 2, Maple Leafs 0: Tristan Jarry made 26 saves for his second straight shutout and visiting Pittsburgh snapped Toronto's five-game winning streak.

Golden Knights 3, Blue Jackets 2: Mattias Janmark broke a tie in the third period and host Vegas defeated Columbus.

Devils 5, Lightning 3: Mackenzie Blackwood stopped a penalty shot in the third period for one of his 31 saves, Yegor Sharangovich scored his second goal of the game in New Jersey's four-goal third period, and the visiting Devils beat Tampa Bay.

Hurricanes 5, Kings 4: Martin

Necas scored the tiebreaking goal late in the second period and Seth Jarvis had a goal for the third straight game in Carolina's win at Los Angeles.

Canadiens 6, Predators 3: Ryan Poehling scored twice and host Montreal stopped a four-game skid despite a third-period hat trick from Nashville center Matt Duchene.

Stars 4, Blues 1: Roope Hintz scored two almost identical short-handed goals, the first for Dallas this season, and the host Stars defeated St. Louis.

Coyotes 2, Red Wings 1 (OT): Clayton Keller scored 25 seconds into overtime to lift host Arizona over Detroit.