

Analyses: Navy strategy that pares fleet is risky

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

The Navy's strategy to dispose of older vessels and make way for a larger, more lethal fleet is unrealistic and could even hamper its response capability in a protracted confrontation with China, naval analysts say.

The 2023 shipbuilding plan underestimates the cost of replacing destroyers and submarines targeted for decommissioning over the next few years, according to a recent Congressional Budget Office report.

Overall, the Navy would retire "more cruisers, destroyers, and submarines than it would commission over the next 10 years," the report said.

As a result, the lethality of the fleet, measured in part by total missile cells, would decline by 13% cumulatively until 2032, the report estimates.

The Navy estimates it would spend an average of \$23 billion to \$25 billion annually on shipbuilding over the next 30 years. The CBO said the costs are closer to the range of between \$30

billion and \$33 billion each year.

The service's plan requires annual shipbuilding appropriations that would be 23% to 35% more on average than amounts over the past five years, according to the report.

That difference, with submarines getting the lion's share of funding followed by surface combatants, is where the difficulties arise, said Bryan Clark, director of the Hudson Institute's Center for Defense Concepts and Technology.

"The problem is these new ships are so expensive you can't buy nearly as many of them as the Navy wants, which means that increasing the lethality may never materialize," Clark said Tuesday.

For example, instead of purchasing about two next-generation destroyers a year, as the Navy estimates, it may have to settle for rebuild slower than anticipated, he said.

Furthermore, the Navy's plan to shrink its fleet over the next 10 years before gradually increasing it in size and capability

is a response to a Defense Department initiative focused on a quick, short-term Chinese invasion of Taiwan that fails to consider other possibilities, Clark said.

For example, China could use a blockade, quarantine, aerial bombardment or other techniques that would take longer but also tax and wear down a smaller U.S. fleet.

In a protracted scenario, a smaller number of ships could result in a reduced Navy presence and perhaps a greater willingness by Taiwan to come to terms with China, he said.

"The whole idea of shrinking the force down to its most capable elements assumes you're going to get warning and that the event is going to be an invasion where you can intervene quickly," Clark said. "It doesn't assume the Navy has its role either in a longer-term conflict or even a role in just day-to-day deterrence."

Clark believes China could act against Taiwan well before 2032.

Over the next five years, the

service wants to decommission 77 warships, including all 17 Ticonderoga-class cruisers, 10 attack submarines and three guided-missile submarines, according to a plan released in April.

Although new ships would be delivered to the fleet, the number of large surface combatants would fall from 88 to 80 in 2032, according to the CBO report, which was issued Nov. 10.

Similarly, the number of attack subs would decline from 50 in 2022 to 46 in 2028.

By 2052, though, the fleet could be as large as 367 ships, depending on which of three alternatives in the plan was followed.

However, the Navy's plan appears to rely on a presumption that budgets, timelines and shipyard capability projections will fall into place, said Sebastian Bruns, a Fulbright scholar in residence at the U.S. Naval Academy and maritime expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"There's a lot of gambling going on," Bruns said.

Sailors to get 3 extra months to complete fitness tests

By JUAN KING
Stars and Stripes

The Navy is giving sailors three more months to complete mandatory physical fitness tests in 2023.

The window for the formerly twice-a-year test, now just once annually, opens Navy-wide on Feb. 1 and closes Nov. 30, 2023.

"The Navy extended the time period to provide commands greater flexibility to schedule and complete the physical fitness assessment," Lt. Sarah Niles, a spokeswoman for the personnel command, told Stars and Stripes by email Nov. 18.

This is the third year sailors are participa-

ting in the once-per-year physical fitness assessment, which the Navy required to cut down on the risk of spreading COVID-19. This year's testing period began April 1 and concluded Sept. 30.

The Navy in a message this month summarized the guidelines for participating sailors, including command fitness leaders and post-partum sailors.

Last year was also the first cycle to score the newly introduced forearm plank that did away with curl-ups. A 2,000-meter row was also added as part of optional cardio.

Sailors with a pregnancy status expiring during the official physical fitness assess-

ment cycle are exempt from participation, according to the message.

Command fitness leaders are not required to do anything differently versus the previous year. They have until Nov. 30 to enter physical fitness data into PRIMIS-2, the official database for recording and tracking physical readiness information.

No exemptions will be given to sailors who earned an excellent or above on tests in the preceding two years. Navy commanders are encouraged to use incentive programs for the physical readiness program such as special liberty, award certificates and other motivation, the message said.

Ukrainians without power after strikes

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — A punishing new barrage of Russian strikes on Ukrainian infrastructure on Wednesday caused power outages across large parts of the country as well as neighboring Moldova, piling more damage onto Ukraine's already battered power network and adding to the misery for civilians as winter begins.

Multiple regions reported attacks in quick succession and Ukraine's Energy Ministry said that "the vast majority of electricity consumers were cut off." Officials in Kyiv said three people were killed and nine wounded in the capital after a Russian strike hit a two-story building.

Russia has been pounding the power grid and other facilities with missiles and exploding drones for weeks and the energy system is being damaged faster than it can be repaired.

Before the latest barrage, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had said that Russian strikes had already damaged around half of Ukraine's energy infrastructure.

Rolling power outages have become the horrid new normal for millions and the latest barrage affected water supplies, too. Ukrainian officials believe Russian President Vladimir Putin is hoping that the misery of unheated and unlit homes in the cold and dark of winter will turn public opinion against a continuation of the war but say it's having the opposite effect, strengthening Ukrainian resolve.

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said Wednesday

that "one of the capital's infrastructure facilities has been hit" and there were "several more explosions in different districts" of the city. He said water supplies were knocked out in all of Kyiv.

There were power outages in parts of Kyiv, while power was out in the wider Kyiv region, in the northern city of Kharkiv, the western city of Lviv, and in all or part of the Chernihiv, Kirovohrad, Odesa and Khmelnytskyi regions. In Moldova, Infrastructure Minister Andrei Spinu said that "we have massive power outages across the country," whose Soviet-era energy systems remain interconnected with Ukraine.

It was the second outage this month in Moldova. The country's pro-Western president, Maia Sandu, said in a statement that "Russia left Moldova in the dark."

Ukraine's state-owned nuclear operator, Energoatom, said the strikes led to the country's last three fully functioning nuclear power stations all being disconnected from the power grid in an "emergency protection" measure. It said they would resume supplying electricity as soon as the grid is "normalized." Energoatom said on its Telegram channel that radiation levels at the sites are unchanged and "all indicators are normal."

The Energy Ministry said the attacks also caused a temporary blackout of most thermal and hydroelectric power plants, and transmission facilities also were affected. Power workers were working to restore supply, "but given the extent of the damage, we

will need time," it said on Facebook.

Ukraine's Air Force said Russia launched around 70 cruise missiles on Wednesday and 51 were shot down, as were five exploding drones.

The barrages started in October, with targets being hit early in the morning and power restored to many places by the evening. Wednesday's strike and another major round last week occurred in the afternoon on short winter days, leaving workers toiling to restore supplies after dark.

Wednesday's blackouts also caused "the largest internet outage in Ukraine in months and the first to affect neighboring Moldova, which has since partially recovered," said Doug Madory, director of internet analysis at network-monitoring Kentik Inc.

The latest onslaught came hours after Ukrainian authorities said an overnight rocket attack destroyed a hospital maternity ward in southern Ukraine, killing a 2-day-old baby. Following the overnight strike in Vilniansk, close to the city of Zaporizhzhia, the baby's mother and a doctor were pulled alive from the rubble.

The region's governor said the rockets were Russian. The strike adds to the gruesome toll suffered by hospitals and other medical facilities — and their patients and staff — in the Russian invasion.

First lady Olena Zelenska wrote on Twitter that a 2-day-old boy died in the strike and expressed her condolences. "Horrible pain. We will never forget and never forgive," she said.

Marine: Dead father's voice guided rescue on Okinawa

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE

AND KEISHI KOJA

Stars and Stripes

CAMP KINSER, Okinawa — Marine Lance Cpl. Vivencio Bio III remembered hearing a reassuring voice spurring him into a rip current on July 4 to save a woman being sucked out to sea at Blue Cave, a popular diving spot on Okinawa.

Bio, 24, from Lahaina, Hawaii, said his father, Vivencio Bio II, died in similar rough surf at Sugar Beach in Kihei in

2001.

"I was very scared when I first got out there," he said Thursday at the Combat Logistics Regiment 37 headquarters at Camp Kinser. "I could feel him protecting me, guiding me the whole time I was rescuing that woman. I could hear like a voice in my head saying, 'Keep going, son. Don't give up.'"

Bio was one of four Marines awarded a certificate of appreciation for the rescue by Ishikawa police chief Yasushi

Oshiro on Oct. 27. He was also nominated by his command for a certificate of commendation, and the others for letters of appreciation, 3rd Marine Logistics Group spokesman Capt. Johnny Coronel told Stars and Stripes on Friday.

The Marines described working together to summon help while Bio pulled Marine Staff Sgt. Cody Shelton, 37, and his wife, Ririka Uehara, 26, of Okinawa city, from the water. Some of Okinawa's beaches

are notoriously hazardous and drowning in rip currents are a leading cause of accidental death on the island. Blue Cave has its own reputation.

"There are many water accidents in this area; we put signs to warn people to be careful when swimming," vice police chief Shingo Sunabe told Stars and Stripes at the station on Nov. 8. "I really appreciate them. They were brave, and thanks to them a life was saved."

Manager opens fire on Walmart workers

Associated Press

CHESAPEAKE, Va. — A Walmart manager opened fire on fellow employees in the break room of a Virginia store, killing six people in the country's second high-profile mass shooting in four days, police and witnesses said Wednesday.

The gunman, who apparently shot himself, was dead when officers found him, police said. There was no clear motive for the shooting, which also put four people in the hospital.

The store was busy just before the attack Tuesday night as people stocked up ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday, a shopper told a local TV station.

Employee Briana Tyler said the overnight stocking team of about 15 or 20 people had just gotten together in the break room to go over the morning plan. As soon as the team was set to start, she said she looked up, and her manager turned around and opened fire on the staff.

"It is by the grace of God that a bullet missed me," Tyler said. "I saw the smoke

leaving the gun, and I literally watched bodies drop. It was crazy."

Tyler, who worked with the manager just the night before, said the assailant did not aim at anyone specific.

"He was just shooting all throughout the room. It didn't matter who he hit. He didn't say anything, he didn't look at anybody in any specific type of way."

Chesapeake Police Chief Mark G. Solesky confirmed that the shooter, who used a pistol, was a Walmart employee but did not give his name because his family had not been notified. Solesky could not confirm whether the victims were all employees.

Employee Jessie Wilczewski told Norfolk television station WAVY that she hid under the table, and the shooter looked at her with his gun pointed at her. He told her to go home, and she left.

"It didn't even look real until you could feel the ... 'pow-pow-pow,' you can feel it," Wilczewski said. "I couldn't hear it at first because I guess it was so loud, I could feel

it."

The attack was the second time in a little more than a week that Virginia has experienced a major shooting. Three University of Virginia football players were fatally shot on a charter bus as they returned to campus from a field trip on Nov. 13. Two other students were wounded.

The assault at the Walmart came three days after a person opened fire at a gay nightclub in Colorado, killing five people and wounding 17. Last spring, the country was shaken by the deaths of 21 when a gunman stormed an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas.

Tuesday night's shooting also brought back memories of another shooting at a Walmart in 2019, when a gunman who targeted Mexicans opened fire at a store in El Paso, Texas, and killed 22 people.

A 911 call about the shooting came in just after 10 p.m. Solesky did not know how many shoppers were inside, whether the gunman was working or whether a security guard was present.

Defense: Gay nightclub shooter is nonbinary

Associated Press

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — The alleged shooter facing possible hate crime charges in the fatal shooting of five people at a Colorado Springs gay nightclub is nonbinary, the suspect's defense team says in court filings.

In several standard motions filed on behalf of Anderson Lee Aldrich on Tuesday, public defenders refer to the suspect as "Mx. Aldrich," noting in footnotes that Aldrich, 22, is nonbinary and uses they/them pronouns. The motions deal with issues like unsealing documents and evidence gathering, not Aldrich's identity and there was no elaboration about it.

Aldrich, who was beaten into submission by patrons during Saturday night's shooting at Club Q, was scheduled to appear in court for the first time Wednesday by video from jail. The motive in the shooting was

still under investigation, but authorities said Aldrich faces possible murder and hate crime charges.

Hate crime charges would require proving that the shooter was motivated by bias, such as against the victims' actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. The charges against Aldrich are preliminary, and prosecutors have not yet filed formal charges. Aldrich is represented by Joseph Archambault, a chief trial deputy with the state public defender's office. Lawyers from the office do not comment on cases to the media.

Aldrich's name was changed more than six years ago as a teenager, after filing a legal petition in Texas seeking to "protect himself" from a father with a criminal history including domestic violence against Aldrich's mother.

Sailor who helped stop Colo. attack recovering

BY DOUG G. WARE

Stars and Stripes

One of three people who halted a bloody shooting rampage at an LGBTQ nightclub in Colorado last weekend was a Navy sailor who was injured in the attack, officials said Tuesday.

Authorities say the shooter, Anderson Lee Aldrich, entered Club Q in Colorado Springs during a drag show on Saturday night carrying multiple firearms and began firing indiscriminately at club-goers. Among the weapons was an AR-15 assault rifle and at least one handgun.

Police said the 22-year-old Aldrich killed five people before U.S. Army retired Maj. Richard Fierro and Navy Information Systems Technician Second-Class Thomas James intervened and subdued the gun-

man.

The Navy confirmed Tuesday that James was injured in the attack.

"James is currently in stable condition, and we remain hopeful he will make a full recovery," the Navy said in a statement. "We ask that all respect his privacy as he continues his recovery."

Fierro has said that he grabbed the gunman by his body armor and pulled him to the floor before beating him over the head with his own handgun. James jumped in and kept the shooter from reaching for his rifle — and moments later, a drag queen stepped in and began kicking the gunman with high heels.

"I had to do something," Fierro, who was at the club with his family when the gunfire erupted, told reporters this week. "He was not going to kill my family."

Court OKs Trump tax return handover

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Tuesday cleared the way for the imminent handover of former President Donald Trump's tax returns to a congressional committee after a three-year legal fight.

The court, with no noted dissents, rejected Trump's plea for an order that would have prevented the Treasury Department from giving six years of tax returns for Trump and some of his businesses to the Democratic-controlled House Ways and Means Committee.

Alone among recent presidents, Trump refused to release his tax returns either during his successful 2016 campaign or his four years in the White House, citing what he said was an ongoing audit by the IRS. Last week, Trump announced he would run again in 2024.

It was the former president's second loss at the Supreme Court in as many months, and third this year.

In October, the court refused to step into the legal fight surrounding the FBI search of Trump's Florida estate that turned up classified documents.

In January, the court refused to stop the National Archives from turning over documents to the House committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol. Justice Clarence Thomas was the only vote in Trump's favor.

In the dispute over his tax returns, the Treasury Department had refused to provide the records during Trump's presidency.

But the Biden administration said federal law is clear that the committee has the right to examine any taxpayer's return, including the president's.

Lower courts agreed that the committee has broad authority to obtain tax returns and rejected Trump's claims that it was overstepping and only wanted the documents so they could be made public.

Chief Justice John Roberts imposed a temporary freeze on Nov. 1 to allow the court to weigh the legal issues raised by Trump's lawyers and the counter arguments of the administration and the House of Representatives.

Just over three weeks later, the court lifted Roberts' order without comment.

Rep. Richard Neal, D-Mass., the committee chairman until the next Congress begins in January, said in a statement that his committee "will now conduct the oversight that we've sought for the last three and a half years."

The Trump campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The House contended an order preventing the IRS from providing the tax returns would leave lawmakers "little or no time to complete their legislative work during this Congress, which is quickly approaching its end."

Had Trump persuaded the nation's highest court to intervene, he could have run out the clock on the committee, with Republicans ready to take control of the House in January.

They almost certainly would have dropped the records request if the issue had not been resolved by then.

The House Ways and Means panel first requested Trump's tax returns in 2019 as part of an investigation into the Internal Revenue Service's audit program and tax law compliance by the former president. A

Unemployment claims rise to 240K, highest since August

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits rose to the highest level since August but still remains low by historic standards.

The Labor Department reported Wednesday that 240,000 people applied for jobless aid last week, up by 17,000 from the week before. The four-week moving average of claims, which smooths out week-to-week volatility, rose by 5,500 to 226,750.

Applications for unemployment benefits are a proxy for layoffs and the current low levels show that American workers enjoy extraordinary job security.

But it may not last.

To combat inflation that hit four-decade highs earlier this

year, the Federal Reserve has raised its benchmark interest rate six times since March. The housing market has buckled under the strain of mortgage rates that have more than doubled from a year ago. And many economists expect the United States to slip into a recession next year as higher borrowing costs slow economic activity.

But the job market has remained strong. Employers added 261,000 jobs last month and are creating an average of nearly 407,000 a month this year — on pace to make 2022 the second-best year for hiring (after 2021) in government records going back to 1940. There are nearly two job openings for every unemployed American. The unemployment rate is 3.7%, a couple of ticks above a half-century low.

Georgia high court reinstates ban on abortions after 6 weeks

Associated Press

ATLANTA — The Georgia Supreme Court Wednesday reinstated the state's ban on abortions after roughly six weeks of pregnancy.

In a one-page order, the high court put a lower court ruling overturning the ban on hold while it considers an appeal. Abortion providers who had resumed performing the procedure past six weeks after the lower court ruling will again have to stop.

The order said seven of the nine justices had agreed to the decision. It said one was disqualified and another did not participate.

Fulton County Superior Court Judge Robert McBurney ruled on November 15 that the state's abortion ban was invalid because when it was signed into law in 2019, U.S. Supreme Court

precedent under *Roe v. Wade* and another ruling allowed abortion well past six weeks.

The decision immediately prohibited enforcement of the abortion ban statewide.

Abortion providers had resumed performing the procedure past six weeks, though some said they were proceeding cautiously over concerns the ban could be quickly reinstated.

The state attorney general's office appealed the ruling to the state Supreme Court.

It also asked the high court for an order putting the decision on hold while the appeal was pending.

Georgia's ban took effect in July, after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. It prohibited most abortions once a "detectable human heartbeat" was present.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Chihuahua killed by LA's famed cougar P-22

CA LOS ANGELES — A mountain lion that killed a Chihuahua while the dog was being walked on leash in the Hollywood Hills earlier this month is the famed cougar P-22, the National Park Service confirmed.

P-22 wears a tracking collar as part of a park service study and is known by Southern Californians for traveling across two freeways and making a huge Los Angeles park its home. The big cat is regularly recorded on security cameras strolling through residential neighborhoods near Griffith Park.

Grainy security video of the attack, first reported by KTLA-TV, showed the dog walker with two dogs being followed by a mountain lion in the narrow streets of the Hollywood Hills. The cougar stalked the group before it attacked Piper, a Chihuahua mix, according to the news station.

Hemp plant fire injures 5, town evacuated

OR GRASS VALLEY — A small town in central Oregon was evacuated and five people were hurt as flames engulfed a hemp manufacturing plant.

The Sherman County Sheriff's Office said five employees were burned in the blaze, including one who suffered significant burns, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.

Grass Valley's 150 residents were evacuated last weekend to the town of Moro because the chemicals stored in the plant posed a risk for a larger explo-

sion, according to the sheriff's office. They returned to their homes Monday.

Man pleads guilty to stealing kids' pills

NH CONCORD — A former worker at a residential treatment home pleaded guilty to stealing medication from children and replacing it with pills colored with markers.

According to prosecutors, Thomas John Ball Poirier, 41, of Tilton stole Ritalin from children at Spaulding Academy and Family Services in Northfield in 2020. He was arrested in March 2021 and pleaded guilty Monday to first degree assault, second degree assault and obtaining a controlled drug by deceit.

Man sentenced to 50 years for barn fires

IN GOSHEN — A man who pleaded guilty to torching several barns last year in northern Indiana was sentenced to 50 years in prison followed by decades on probation.

An Elkhart County judge sentenced Joseph Hershberger to 96 years, but suspended nearly half of that sentence, ordering Hershberger to serve 46 years on probation following his release. He must also pay \$80,000 in fines.

Hershberger, 42, pleaded guilty in October to eight counts of arson while admitting that he set fire to eight Elkhart County barns. He still faces pending arson charges in Marshall and Kosciusko counties for additional fires he allegedly set in those counties.

Hershberger's girlfriend, Sherry Thomas, was also

charged in Elkhart County with eight counts of arson in the barn fires. Her case is still pending.

Gunfight wounds 3, including deputy

NY ALBANY — Gunfire on the streets of Saratoga Springs last weekend left at least three people wounded, including an off-duty sheriff's deputy from Vermont who was shot multiple times by police.

Two men were shooting at each other as police arrived, including a deputy from the Rutland, Vt., County Sheriff's Office, according to Saratoga Springs Police Sgt. Paul Veitch.

Video released by the city showed officers running toward the sound of the gunshots with their pistols drawn, one screaming "drop the gun!"

When the sheriff's deputy, who was not in uniform, didn't drop his weapon, Saratoga Springs officers opened fire, according to Commissioner of Public Safety James Montagnino.

The deputy, who was not immediately identified, suffered 10 bullet wounds, including one to the chest, but was conscious and was expected to survive, the Times-Union reported.

The deputy had gotten into a barroom argument with a group of three people, Montagnino said. After the fight spilled onto the street, the deputy showed his weapon and the Utica man drew his, which was when gunfire broke out.

Prosecutors say man ran 2 illegal drug labs

CA LOS ANGELES — A man was arrested on

suspicion of running two illegal drug labs that used high-speed pill presses to create bulk amounts of tablets containing fentanyl and methamphetamine that were sold on the dark web, federal authorities said.

Christopher Hampton, 36, was named in an 11-count indictment that charges him with various narcotics and weapons offenses that could result in a sentence of life in federal prison, the U.S. Attorney's Office said in a statement.

Hampton, who was arrested Nov. 2, used the online moniker "Narco710" while frequenting at least nine marketplaces on the dark web where he and his co-conspirators sold nearly \$2 million worth of illegal narcotics, according to the indictment.

1 dead, several hurt in shooting at dice game

MS YAZOO CITY — One person was killed and several others wounded when gunfire erupted during a weekend dice game.

The Yazoo County Sheriff's Office told news outlets that a group of people were enjoying a bonfire and music at Wells Ranch, about 45 miles northwest of Jackson, when an apparent disagreement during a dice game sparked the shooting.

Sheriff Jake Sheriff said seven people were shot. Their injuries ranged from bullets to a shoulder, hand, arm, hip and side, and one person was listed as critical after being shot in the head, he said. The deceased victim was identified as Christopher Turnage, 27, of Yazoo County, according to the county coroner's office.

— From Associated Press

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Japan gets 2 late goals to beat Germany

Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar — Another World Cup day, another World Cup shock.

Substitutes Ritsu Doan and Takuma Asano scored late goals Wednesday to give Japan a come-from-behind 2-1 victory over Germany.

Both Doan and Asano play for German clubs.

"I believe it's a historic moment, a historic victory. If I think about the development of Japanese soccer, thinking of players, for them this was a big surprise," said Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu, who had five Germany-based players in his starting lineup and three, including the scorers, on the bench.

"They're fighting in a very strong, tough, prestigious league. They've been building up their strength. In that context we believe that those divisions (Bundesliga and second division) have been contributing to the development of Japanese players," Moriyasu said. "I'm very grateful for that."

Ilkay Gündogan had given four-time champion Germany the lead with a first-half penalty. But Doan, who plays for Freiburg, pounced on a rebound to equalize in the 76th

minute after Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer blocked a shot from Takumi Minamino.

Then Asano, who plays for Bochum, sprinted clear of Nico Schlotterbeck and beat Neuer from a narrow angle in the 83rd minute of the first competitive meeting between the two nations.

It was only the third time Germany had lost its tournament-opening game after defeats against Algeria in 1982 and Mexico in 2018. In the other World Cup openers for Germany, the team had won 13 matches and drawn four.

Germany outplayed Japan for much of the match with 24 attempts on goal compared with Japan's 11. Japan goalkeeper Shuichi Gonda made a string of saves and was player of the game.

Spain 7, Costa Rica 0: Spain's young squad got off to a high-scoring start, routing Costa Rica.

Not long after Japan surprised Germany 2-1 in the other Group E match, Spain avoided any chance of an upset with Dani Olmo, Marco Asensio and Ferran Torres scoring a goal each in the first 31 minutes. Torres, Gavi, Carlos Soler and Álvaro Morata added to

the lead in the second half.

Olmo's goal was the 100th at World Cups for Spain, which became the sixth nation to score more than 100 times in the tournament.

It was the first time Spain has scored seven goals in a World Cup match.

Morocco 0, Croatia 0: Another surprisingly strong performance by an Arab country stifled the threat of Luka Modric and held 2018 finalist Croatia to a draw.

Morocco's resilient performance came 24 hours after Saudi Arabia sparked the first World Cup in the Middle East into life by beating Lionel Messi's Argentina in one of the biggest upsets in the tournament's history.

Tunisia followed that up with a scoreless draw against European Championship semifinalist Denmark.

Morocco managed to do enough to rein in Croatia captain Modric, who was still his team's best player in their Group F opener and had one of the best chances when his shot just rose over the crossbar in the first half. Dejan Lovran got a shot off at a corner in the second half and Sofyan Amrabat cleared off the line for Morocco to preserve the draw.

LSU, USC move up behind same four in CFP rankings

Associated Press

LSU moved up to fifth and Southern California was sixth Tuesday night in the College Football Playoff rankings behind Georgia, Ohio State, Michigan and TCU.

The top four remained the same for the third straight week, but the chasing teams changed order after Tennessee lost to South Carolina last Saturday night.

Selection committee chairman Boo Corrigan, who is also the athletic director at North Carolina State, said there was a lot of discussion about LSU (9-2) and USC (10-1) this week.

"The committee at the end of the day saw the wins over Alabama, Mississippi (for LSU) as stronger than the wins over UCLA and Oregon State (for USC)," Corrigan said. "The one area we still have questions on is the strength of the defense of

USC and looking at it in its entirety, we believe that LSU deserves to be ranked five and SC six."

Two games this weekend could create more clarity.

Michigan (11-0) is at Ohio State (11-0) on Saturday and USC hosts Notre Dame (8-3), which checked in at 15th in the selection committee's rankings.

There are two more rankings left. The final ones on Dec. 4 set the field for the College Football Playoff. The semifinals will be played Dec. 31 in the Peach and Fiesta bowls. The national championship game will be played at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, Calif.

Alabama was seventh, though the Crimson Tide don't seem to have a realistic route to make the College Football Playoff for the eighth time in nine years. LSU and Georgia are already locked into the Southeastern

Conference title game.

Clemson came in eighth, Oregon was ninth and Tennessee fell to 10th.

Analysis

Georgia (11-0), the winner of the Ohio State-Michigan game, TCU (11-0) and LSU will head into the final two weeks of the race in the best shape to earn a spot in the final four.

That's probably overstating LSU's position because the Tigers would have to beat the defending national champion Bulldogs to become the first team to make the CFP with two losses.

But they have a shot and that's all you can ask for at this point in the season.

USC fans might not like seeing the Trojans behind an SEC team with two losses, but they shouldn't fret too much.

If Georgia takes care of busi-

ness against LSU, that opens up a spot for USC — if the Trojans can win out. That will be difficult against Notre Dame and either Oregon, Utah or Washington in the Pac-12 title game.

As for the Ohio State-Michigan loser, how the game plays out will go a long way toward determining if that team can take a back door into the final four. It's also going to need some losses sprinkled around among TCU, USC and LSU.

The Buckeyes are probably better positioned to get in with a loss in the rivalry game because that opening-night win against Notre Dame is looking pretty good these days and would only go up in value if the Irish beat USC.

Michigan's terrible nonconference schedule (Colorado State, Hawaii and UConn) is continually cited as a mark against the Wolverines.

'Motor' puts Bills ground game in gear

Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — With Josh Allen misfiring on passes last weekend, the Bills placed an emphasis on their ground game against the Browns.

Devin Singletary approached fellow running back James Cook and issued a challenge to the rookie.

"I went to the sideline and I told James, 'What's up? It's a race to 100,'" Singletary said. "We both laughed it off, but we were out there going at it."

Though both fell short of the imaginary 100-yard finish line by gaining 86 yards rushing each in a 31-23 win against Cleveland on Sunday, Singletary's and Cook's contributions were valuable reminders of how the Bills offense doesn't have to rely solely on Allen's arm or scrambling ability for that matter.

On a day the Bills opened with three-and-outs on their first three possessions, and Allen finished with season lows with 197 yards passing and 7 yards rushing, the running backs raced to the rescue. Their combined 172 yards rushing represented

nearly half of Buffalo's 357 yards.

"It's huge," Allen said of the running backs finding traction. "That's going to help us out going forward."

Now it's a question as to whether the Bills (7-3) can continue to find some semblance of balance after snapping a two-game skid while preparing to travel to Detroit to play the Lions (4-6) on Thanksgiving.

Buffalo returns to Detroit for a second time in five days after a major lake-effect storm dumped 7 feet of snow in some places across western New York, forcing the Bills play their "home" game against Cleveland at Ford Field.

It's only a coincidence that Singletary, who's nickname is "Motor," finally got in gear in Motor City with a season-high in yards rushing while scoring his third TD in two games.

"He was running angry, because that 'Motor' was going last week," offensive lineman Ryan Bates said of Singletary.

"When he gets his opportunity, he makes the most of it. And when he's one-on-one on the

field, he's one of the hardest backs to tackle," Bates added. "He wants the world to know that he's the best running back in the NFL. I know I believe that wholeheartedly, and our whole offense believes that."

The only thing holding Singletary back has been a lack of touches in what's generally been a pass-first offense.

His 18 carries against the Browns represented a season high, and were tied for seventh most in his four seasons with Buffalo.

"When you get more opportunities, it is easier to get into a groove," said Singletary, who had eight carries for 27 yards in the first half, and 10 carries for 59 yards in the second.

"I think it was fun not only for me, but for James and our O-line," he added. "It felt good to show that we're able to do that if we need to do that moving forward. Because we know we're going to need everything we got to try to get to where we're trying to get to."

Singletary, of course, was referring to the two-time defending AFC East champion Bills

playing to the Super Bowl aspirations they had entering the season.

Cook is a rookie second-round pick whose playing time has gradually increased. Buffalo's backfield also features Nyheim Hines, a fifth-year player who was acquired in a trade with Indianapolis and best noted for his role as a receiver. Hines has mostly been used as Buffalo's primary returner in three games with the Bills.

The renewed focus on the running game has potential parallels to last season. The Bills were in the midst of a midseason slump in which they lost four of seven before they turned to Singletary to provide a spark.

Buffalo closed the season by winning four straight in which Singletary came close to nearly doubling his production with 76 carries for 323 yards rushing and four touchdowns.

Coach Sean McDermott declined to make comparisons to last season, and yet re-emphasized a point he began making a year ago in stressing the importance of playing physical football.

Kreider scores two goals as Rangers top Kings

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Chris Kreider scored twice in the third period and the New York Rangers overcame a two-goal deficit for the first time this season in a 5-3 win over the Los Angeles Kings on Tuesday night.

Braden Schneider, Vincent Trocheck and Kaapo Kakko all had goals in the second period for the Rangers, who have won three of four. Igor Shesterkin made 35 saves.

"Started playing our game, and that's what we can do," Kakko said.

Kevin Fiala had a goal and two assists, and Gabe Vilardi set a career high with his 11th goal, but the Kings had their five-

game winning streak on home ice snapped. Cal Petersen allowed four goals on 24 shots.

Kreider took advantage of two Los Angeles gaffes to put New York back in front 4-3 at 7:06 of the third, beating defenseman Mikey Anderson down the ice to negate icing and burying a wrist shot past Petersen at the near post for his eighth goal.

It came just 56 seconds after Sean Walker tied it at 3 with his first of the season.

Kreider chased down a long pass from Mika Zibanejad and credited the center for noting Petersen's tendency to not fully protect the short side to his right.

"It's something that he men-

tioned a little earlier, if you're coming down the strong side that sometimes there's space on the short pipe, so I just tried to put it there and there was space on the short side. So good coaching by Mika and a good play by Mika," said Kreider, who added an empty-netter with 49.7 seconds remaining.

Kings coach Todd McLellan said it was a shot Petersen needs to stop.

"Cal has to make that save. Cal made some outstanding saves. ... Sometimes it's the one that you need rather than all the ones you've made that makes a difference in the game, and we needed that one," McLellan said.

Sabres 7, Canadiens 2: Jeff

Skinner had two goals and three assists as visiting Buffalo snapped an eight-game losing streak with a victory over Montreal.

Tage Thompson added a goal and three assists, while Rasmus Dahlin and Alex Tuch each had a goal and two assists. JJ Peterka and Henri Jokiharju also scored for Buffalo (8-11-0), and Craig Anderson made 29 saves.

Cole Caufield and Sean Monahan scored for the Canadiens (9-9-1), who went 0-for-6 on the power play. Jake Allen allowed seven goals on 38 shots.

Buffalo jumped out to a 3-0 lead in the first 2:13, the second-fastest three goals to begin a game in franchise history.

76ers, fans spirited in Simmons' return

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Ben Simmons shrugged off the boos that rose out of the Philly crowd each time the mercurial guard handled the ball.

The Nets guard even egged on fans one more time over their reception toward one of the more loathed former Philly sports stars.

"I thought it was going to be louder," Simmons said.

Tobias Harris scored 24 points and a spirited Philadelphia 76ers team playing without Joel Embiid and James Harden spoiled Simmons' homecoming with a 115-106 win over Brooklyn on Tuesday night.

"I feel like this is a huge win for us," Harris said. "I knew going into the game we were all going to come out with this type of energy and this type of buzz to get up to play."

There was plenty of buzz from the time the doors opened in anticipation of Simmons' return. He had 11 points, 11 assists

and seven rebounds to the tune of steady boos. Simmons even had a late-game fade familiar to the Sixers. He didn't take a shot, was scoreless in the fourth quarter and scored only two points in the second half.

Kyrie Irving scored 23 points and Kevin Durant had 20 before coach Jacque Vaughn pulled his starting lineup with 3 minutes left in the game.

"Everybody wants to see our team fail," Durant said. "Nobody likes Ben. Nobody likes Ky. Nobody likes myself."

The expected marquee matchup was dimmed with Embiid out with a sprained left foot, Harden still out with a tendon strain in his right foot and Tyrese Maxey also out with a broken left foot.

Embiid vs. Simmons will have to wait.

Simmons vs. 76ers fans was pretty good.

Simmons was heckled, drew a flagrant foul, shushed a sellout crowd of 20,184 on a layup, and even Jordan shrugged af-

ter hitting free throws. Of most importance for a player who has battled mental health issues, Simmons played with poise as boos rained on him for the bulk of his 32 minutes.

Suns 115, Lakers 105: Mikal Bridges and Devin Booker each scored 25 points to lead host Phoenix past Los Angeles.

The Suns, playing without point guard Chris Paul for the seventh straight game, have beaten the Lakers five straight times in the regular season and eight straight including the playoffs.

With 3:55 left in the game, the Lakers' Patrick Beverley was ejected for shoving Phoenix's Deandre Ayton following a foul called on Booker against Austin Reaves that was assessed a flagrant-1 after review. Booker later fouled out.

Anthony Davis had 37 points and 21 rebounds for the Lakers, who had won three in a row. It was Los Angeles' fifth game in a row without LeBron James, out with a left adductor strain.

Kings 113, Grizzlies 109: De'Aaron Fox had 32 points and eight rebounds, Harrison Barnes added 26 points and visiting Sacramento won its seventh straight.

Ja Morant led Memphis with 34 points, six assists and seven rebounds. Jaren Jackson Jr. added 22 points and five blocks and Dillon Brooks finished with 14 points as the Grizzlies lost their fourth of five.

Kevin Huerter scored 18 points for the Kings, who led by 14 midway through the fourth quarter but had to hold on in the final seconds.

Pistons 110, Nuggets 108: Bojan Bogdanovic scored 22 points and visiting Detroit snapped a seven-game skid.

Denver's Nikola Jokic had 31 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds after missing the past three games while in the NBA's COVID-19 protocols.

The Pistons won their first road game this season; they had been 0-10. Alec Burks finished with 21 points for Detroit.

Texas Tech holds winless Louisville to 38 points

Associated Press

LAHAINA, Hawaii — Texas Tech's defensive identity was on full display against a Louisville team trying to find its way under first-year coach Kenny Payne.

The 21st-ranked Red Raiders held the Cardinals to their lowest point total in 74 years in a 70-38 victory in the Maui Invitational on Tuesday, a result that continued Louisville's worst start to a season since 1940-41.

"We're going to dive on the floor, we're going to play hard," Tech freshman Robert Jennings said. "We're going to make teams feel uncomfortable. We're going to be the team that people don't want to play."

Louisville had a tough enough time offensively in its

80-54 loss to ninth-ranked Arkansas on Monday. Things got much worse Tuesday. The Cardinals have shot 29% overall and 23% on three-pointers and committed 40 turnovers in their two games.

"The two things I take away from Arkansas and Texas Tech is their defense, their ability to create turnovers," Payne said.

Kevin Obanor scored 15 points to lead the Red Raiders (4-1), who bounced back from a 76-65 loss to No. 10 Creighton on Monday with their most dominating defensive performance since holding Incarnate Word to 37 points in 2018.

Louisville (0-5) was held scoreless for more than 10 minutes spanning the halves. The Cardinals missed 13 field goals and two free throws and com-

mitted six turnovers during the drought.

No. 10 Creighton 90, No. 9 Arkansas 87: Ryan Nembhard drove the lane for an authoritative dunk in the closing minutes and scored a career-high 25 points for the Bluejays, who survived a tense second half to advance to the championship game of the Maui Invitational.

Trey Alexander made two free throws with 1.9 seconds left for Creighton, which will play for the title Wednesday.

The Bluejays (6-0) and Razorbacks (4-1) played an electrifying second half worthy of a March Madness matchup.

Ryan Kalkbrenner scored 21 points, and Baylor Scheierman 20 for the Bluejays.

Anthony Black scored 26 points for the Razorbacks.

No. 14 Arizona 87, No. 17 San Diego State 70: Courtney Ramey and Kerr Kriisa scored 21 points apiece and the Wildcats pulled away in the second half to beat the Aztecs in the semifinals of the Maui Invitational.

Arizona (5-0) advanced to play No. 10 Creighton in Wednesday's championship game.

Darrion Trammell topped San Diego State with 21 points.

No. 13 Auburn 85, Bradley 64: Wendell Green Jr. and Johni Broome each scored 14 points and the Tigers beat the Braves in the first round of the Cancun Challenge.

Auburn (5-0) advanced to play in Wednesday night's championship game of the Riviera Division.