

Ukraine war has US rethinking weapons stockpile

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The intense firefight over Ukraine has the Pentagon rethinking its weapons stockpiles. If another major war broke out today, would the United States have enough ammunition to fight?

It's a question confronting Pentagon planners, not only as they aim to supply Ukraine for a war with Russia that could stretch years longer, but also as they look ahead to a potential conflict with China.

Russia is firing as many as 20,000 rounds a day, ranging from bullets for automatic rifles to truck-sized cruise missiles. Ukraine is answering with as many as 7,000 rounds a day, firing 155 mm howitzer rounds, Stinger anti-aircraft missiles and now NASAMS air defense munitions, and thousands of rounds of small arms fire.

Much of Ukraine's firepower is being supplied through U.S. government-funded weapons that are pushed almost weekly to the front lines. On Wednesday, the Biden administration announced an additional round of aid that will provide 20 million more rounds of small arms ammunition to Kyiv.

"We've not been in a position where we've got only a few days of some critical munition left," Pentagon comptroller Michael McCord told reporters this month. "But we are now supporting a partner who is."

U.S. defense production lines are not scaled to supply a major land war, and some, like for the Stinger, were previously shut down.

That's putting pressure on U.S. weapons reserves and has officials asking whether U.S. stockpiles are big enough. Would the U.S. be ready to respond to a major conflict today, for example if China invaded Taiwan?

"What would happen if something blew up in INDOPACOM? Not five years from now, not 10 years from now, what if it happened next week?" Bill LaPlante, the Pentagon's top weapons buyer, said, referring to the military's Indo-Pacific Command. He spoke at a defense acquisitions conference this month at George Mason University in Virginia.

"What do we have in any degree of quantity? That will actually be effective? Those are the questions we're asking right this

minute," he said.

The Army uses many of the same munitions that have proven most critical in Ukraine, including High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, known as HIMARS, the Stinger missiles and 155 mm howitzer rounds, and is now reviewing its stockpile requirements, Doug Bush, the Army's assistant secretary for acquisition, told reporters Monday.

"They're seeing what Ukraine is using, what we can produce and how fast we can ramp up, all of which are factors you would work into, 'OK, how (big) does your pre-war stockpile need to be?'" Bush said. "The slower you ramp up, the bigger the pile needs to be at the start."

The military aid packages the U.S. sends either pull inventory from stockpiles or fund contracts with industry to step up production.

At least \$19 billion in military aid has been committed to date, including 924,000 artillery rounds for 155 mm howitzers, more than 8,500 Javelin anti-tank systems, 1,600 Stinger anti-aircraft systems and hundreds of vehicles and drones.

Kim's daughter's return spurs succession debate

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's daughter made a public appearance again, this time with missile scientists and more honorific titles as her father's "most beloved" or "precious" child. She's only about 10, but her new, bold photos are deepening the debate over whether she's being primed as a successor.

The daughter, believed to be Kim's second child named Ju Ae and about 9 or 10 years old, was first unveiled to the outside world last weekend in state media photos showing her observing the North's intercontinental ballistic missile launch the previous day with her parents and other older officials. The daughter was shown walking hand-in-hand with Kim past a huge missile loaded on a launch truck and watching a soaring weapon.

On Sunday, the North's official Korean Central News Agency mentioned her for the second time, saying she and Kim took group photos with scientists, officials and others involved in what it called the test-launch of its Hwasong-17 ICBM.

KCNA described her as Kim's "most beloved" or "precious" child, a more honorific title than her previous description of "(Kim's) beloved" child on its Nov. 19 dispatch.

State media-released photos showed the daughter in a long, black coat holding her father's arm as the two posed for a photo. Taking after her mother Ri Sol Ju, who wasn't visible in any of the photos Sunday, she had a more mature appearance than in her unveiling a week ago.

Some photos showed the pair standing in the middle of a line of uniformed soldiers before a massive missile atop a launch

truck. Others showed Kim's daughter clapping her hands, exchanging handshakes with a soldier or talking to her father as people cheered in the background.

"This is certainly striking. The photograph of Kim Ju Ae standing alongside her father while being celebrated by technicians and scientists involved in the latest ICBM launch would support the idea that this is the start of her being positioned as a potential successor," said Ankit Panda, an expert with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

"State media underscoring her father's love for her further underscores this, I think. Finally, both of her initial public appearances have been in the context of strategic nuclear weapons — the crown jewels of North Korea's national defense capabilities. That doesn't strike me as coincidental," Panda said.

Air Force eases moves for victims of sexual assault

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

Air Force and Space Force service members, or their spouses, who are victims of sexual crimes or domestic violence may more easily relocate to new duty stations under recent rule changes.

The changes, which took effect Oct. 28, lift a requirement that alleged victims who file unrestricted reports obtain a waiver before they can receive an expedited transfer within their first four years at a duty station.

A restricted report remains confidential and doesn't trigger an investigation or command notification, unless the service member gives written consent or a health and safety risk exists.

The rule changes apply to service members and their adult family members who may be victims of sexual assault, stalking and other sexual misconduct or domestic violence.

Expedited transfers assist recovering sexual assault survivors "by moving them to a new location where they feel comfort-

able, few people know about the assault, and they can work without fear of ostracism or retaliation," Tonya Lee, operations manager of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Integrated Resiliency Operations Branch at the Air Force Personnel Center, told Stars and Stripes in comments emailed by the Air Force on Thursday.

The service's new policy applies to servicemen and women who allege domestic violence by a spouse or intimate partner and who files an unrestricted report, the policy states.

A service member whose adult military dependent makes an allegation of sexual assault that isn't domestic abuse and files an unrestricted report may request expedited transfer, according to the policy.

However, in these cases there needs to be a military connection, such as an alleged offender being an adult military dependent, someone who works for the Department of Defense as a civilian employee or as a contractor or if the alleged assault happened on base, according to the changed policy.

Federal judge: 'Homesick' Navy officer can obtain firearms permit

Associated Press

HONOLULU — A U.S. Navy officer stationed in Hawaii cannot be denied a firearms permit solely because he sought counseling for feeling depressed and homesick, a federal judge ruled.

Michael Santucci, a cryptologic warfare officer from Fort Myers, Fla., saw a medical provider at a military hospital for feelings of depression and homesickness a few months after arriving in Hawaii last year, according to his lawsuit, filed in April.

He wasn't diagnosed with any disqualifying behavioral, emotional or mental disorder, the lawsuit said.

He later filled out forms to register his firearms with the Honolulu Police Department and indicated that he had been treated for depression, but noted it was "not

serious."

Hawaii law requires registration of all firearms. Prior to acquiring a gun, an applicant must apply for a permit. Santucci needed such a permit even though he legally owned his firearms before arriving Hawaii.

Because Santucci answered "yes" on a form indicating he had sought counseling, the permit process was halted and his firearms were seized, his lawyers said.

Honolulu must return Santucci's firearms and complete the registration of the weapons, U.S. District Judge Derrick Watson's order issued Wednesday said.

"The City is evaluating the decision and its impact on our processes," Honolulu Corporation Counsel Dana Viola said in a statement Friday.

Ex-PACOM chief questions F-15 exit in Okinawa

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

Replacing fighter squadrons on Okinawa with rotational forces will have negative impacts that will be hard for the Air Force to remedy, according to a former deputy commander of the U.S. Pacific Command.

Retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Dan Leaf in a Nov. 16 interview questioned the two-year phased withdrawal of two squadrons of F-15 Eagle fighters from Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, that began Nov. 1. Alaska-based F-22 Raptors began a rotation at the base on Nov. 4.

A former F-15 pilot himself on Okinawa from 1981 to 1985, Leaf was also deputy commander from 2005 to 2008 of U.S. Pacific Command, now called Indo-Pacific Command.

"I would maintain a permanent air superiority fighter presence in Okinawa if the decision were up to me," he said, noting the island's proximity to Taiwan and the Korean Peninsula.

Basing forces on Okinawa has involved difficult negotiations with the prefectural and Japanese governments, Leaf said.

"Removing the F-15s is going to make it very difficult to negotiate a permanent basing of any other planes on Okinawa," the veteran of combat in Iraq and Kosovo told Stars and Stripes by phone.

"Once they're gone on a permanent basis, they're gone," he said of the fighter squadrons at Kadena. "So permanently basing fighters on Okinawa, for whatever reason we might want to do it, is going to be difficult."

Kadena's 18th Wing on Tuesday mobilized 23 F-15C Eagles, eight F-22A Raptors, a trio of HH-60 Pave Hawks, a KC-135 Stratotanker, reconnaissance and command-and-control aircraft in its first large-scale show of force since the F-15s' phaseout began.

Air Force commanders in Japan rely on a fabric of capabilities that includes permanently based and rotational force, Leaf said.

"One thing you do with permanently based forces is build relationships with partners like the Japan Air Self-Defense Force," he said. "That's much more difficult to do on a rotational basis."

Ga. runoff grows more bitter down stretch

Associated Press

WARNER ROBINS, Ga. — Ads with the candidates' ex-wives. Cries of "liar" flying in both directions. Stories of a squalid apartment building and abortions under pressure. Questioning an opponent's independence. His intellect. His mental stability. His religious faith.

The extended Senate campaign in Georgia between the Democratic incumbent, Raphael Warnock, and his Republican challenger, football legend Herschel Walker, has grown increasingly bitter as their Dec. 6 runoff nears. With Democrats already assured a Senate majority, it's a striking contrast from two years ago, when the state's twin runoffs were mostly about which party would control the chamber in Washington.

"Herschel Walker ain't serious," Warnock told supporters recently in central Georgia, saying that Walker "majors in lying" and fumbles the basics of public policy.

"But the election is very serious. Don't get those two things confused."

Walker casts Warnock, the senior pastor at Ebenezer Baptist Church, as a "hypocrite" and servile to President Joe Biden. Underscoring the insult, Walker calls the incumbent "Scooby-Doo," complete with an impression of the cartoon hound's gibberish.

The broadsides reflect the candidates' furious push in the four weeks between the Nov. 8 general election and runoff to persuade their core supporters to cast another ballot. For Walker, it also

means drawing more independents and moderates to his campaign after he underperformed a fellow Republican on the slate, Gov. Brian Kemp, by 200,000 votes. Warnock led Walker by 37,000 votes out of almost 4 million cast, but the senator fell short of the 50% threshold needed to avoid a runoff.

In many ways, the shift from his first runoff campaign is exactly what Warnock wanted: a straightforward choice between two candidates.

Two years ago, then-President Donald Trump, fresh off his defeat, and Biden, then president-elect, made multiple Georgia trips to illuminate the national stakes of the races between Warnock and Republican Sen. Kelly Loeffler and between Democrat Jon Ossoff and Republican Sen.

David Perdue as control of the Senate hung in the balance.

Trump ended up alienating his own supporters and many moderates with his false claims of a rigged 2020 presidential election. Victories by Warnock and Ossoff put the Senate at a 50-50 split, with Democrats gaining control by virtue of Vice President Kamala Harris' tiebreaking vote. Warnock also became Georgia's first Black senator.

This year, with Warnock vying for a full six-year term after winning the 2021 special election, Democrats have already guaranteed control of the Senate by flipping a seat in Pennsylvania. A Warnock win would give Democrats an outright majority at 51-49, meaning that the parties would not have to negotiate a power-sharing agreement.

Buffalo snowstorm may have broken state records

The Washington Post

Areas downwind of lakes Erie and Ontario in western New York are among the snowiest places in the United States. Even against the backdrop of the many impressive storms that have plastered these areas over the years, this month's snow event stands out.

Just south of Buffalo, snowfall totals associated with the event exceeded 6 feet, cementing it as one of the most prolific on record for the region. It's possible that the rapid pace with which snow accumulated will break New York's 24-hour snowfall record and an unofficial 48-hour mark.

Reports compiled by the National Weather Service office in Buffalo documented extreme totals that maxed out at 81.2 inches in Erie County, which includes Buffalo and its southern suburbs, among them Orchard Park, Hamburg and Blasdell. These totals, which were reported by trained and untrained public observers, have yet to be officially

vetted and certified, according to a statement by the National Weather Service office in Buffalo. While the reports remain "unofficial until they can be verified," they paint a picture of a storm of historic magnitude in the Lake Erie area.

Before this month, the most prolific Buffalo-area lake effect snow event in modern history likely occurred in mid-November 2014, when three towns in Erie County each measured more than 60 inches of snow.

According to the Weather Service, the 2014 event had some historical precedent: a December 1945 storm during which Lancaster, N.Y., reported snow totals "in excess of 70 inches."

This month's storm seems to have overshadowed both of those events, making it the most prolific lake-effect event in known history for the Lake Erie area.

Storms in 2006 and 1977 didn't involve snowfall totals close to last week's event.

US grants Chevron license to pump oil in Venezuela

The Washington Post

The Biden administration said on Saturday it would lift a key oil sanction against Venezuela, marking the first significant crack in a yearslong U.S. embargo that could eventually help ease the tight global energy market.

Chevron, the only remaining active U.S. oil company in Venezuela, is part of a joint venture with the country's state oil company but has been barred by sanctions from operations there. Under a new Treasury Department license, it will be able to resume pumping oil.

The limited license stipulates that any oil produced can only be exported to the United States. No profits from its sale can go to the Venezuelan company but must be used to pay off Venezuelan creditors in the United States.

The move came as the government of Nicolás Maduro held its first formal talks with Venezuela's opposition coalition in more

than a year. Meeting in Mexico City on Saturday, the two sides agreed to ask the United Nations to manage several billion dollars in government funds held in foreign banks that will be unfrozen to help assuage a humanitarian crisis in Venezuela.

The negotiators also agreed to continue talks next month to discuss a timetable for "free" elections in 2024 and human rights issues.

"We have long made clear we believe the best solution in Venezuela is a negotiated one between Venezuelans," said a senior Biden administration official who spoke on the condition of anonymity under rules set by the White House. "To encourage this, we have also said we were willing to provide targeted sanctions relief."

The official dismissed reports that the administration was acting to ease an oil shortage and high energy prices exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

NATO to discuss how to limit reliance on China

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

U.S. and other western leaders this week will examine ways to reduce allied dependency on China, a move given added urgency in light of how Moscow's war on Ukraine exposed Europe's overreliance on Russian energy, NATO's top official said Friday.

"The war in Ukraine has demonstrated our dangerous dependency on Russian gas," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters Friday at allied headquarters in Brussels. "So we must assess our dependencies on other authoritarian regimes, not least China."

The focus on China during a meeting of foreign ministers Tuesday and Wednesday in Bucharest, Romania, comes as the Russian war on Ukraine enters its 10th month. The consequences of the conflict have rippled across Europe in economic terms, with energy prices soaring as the flow of cheap energy from Russia has sharply declined.

For Europe, the effect of the war in Ukraine raises questions about the implications if a similar economic severing occurred with China, which controls ports in parts of Europe, influences global supply chains and dominates in areas such as rare earth minerals.

"We must manage the risks, reduce our vulnerabilities and increase our resilience," Stoltenberg said.

At NATO's Madrid summit in June, the allies for the first time singled out China in their new strategic concept, saying Beijing's "ambitions and coercive policies" are a threat to the international order.

At the foreign ministers meeting this week in Bucharest, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and other diplomats will attempt to take the next step: figuring out exactly what can be done to limit the allied exposure.

"China is not an adversary, but it is stepping up military modernization. Increasing

its presence from the Arctic to the Western Balkans, from space to cyberspace. And seeking to control the critical infrastructure of NATO allies," Stoltenberg said.

Meanwhile, Stoltenberg reaffirmed NATO's intention to continue providing military support to Ukraine over the long-haul, drawing a link between the outcome of that conflict and preventing other ones like it in the future.

In Bucharest, allies will meet with Ukraine Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba to discuss the country's military needs, Stoltenberg said.

"If we let [Russian President Vladimir] Putin win, all of us will pay a much higher price, for many years to come," Stoltenberg said.

"If Putin and other authoritarian leaders see that force is rewarded, they will use force again to achieve their goals. That would make our world more dangerous. And all of us more vulnerable."

Ukraine confronts shelling, winter's impact

Associated Press

KHERSON, Ukraine — Shelling by Russian forces struck several areas in eastern and southern Ukraine overnight as utility crews continued a scramble to restore power, water and heating following widespread strikes in recent weeks, officials said Sunday.

With persistent snowfall blanketing the capital, Kyiv, on Sunday, analysts predicted that wintry weather — bringing with it frozen terrain and grueling fighting conditions — could have an increasing impact on the direction of the conflict that has raged since Russian forces invaded Ukraine more than nine months ago. But for the moment, both sides were bogged down by heavy rain and

muddy battlefield conditions in some areas, experts said.

After a blistering barrage of Russian artillery strikes on at least two occasions over the past two weeks, infrastructure teams in Ukraine were fanning out in around-the-clock deployments to restore key basic services as many Ukrainians dealt with only a few hours of electricity per day — if any.

Ukrenergo, the state power grid operator, said Sunday that electricity producers are now supplying about 80% of demand. That's an improvement from Saturday's 75%, the company says.

The Institute for the Study of War, a think tank that has been closely monitoring developments in Ukraine, said reporting from

both sides indicated that heavy rain and mud have had an impact — but wider freezing expected along the front lines in coming days could play a role.

"It is unclear if either side is actively planning or preparing to resume major offensive or counteroffensive operations at that time, but the meteorological factors that have been hindering such operations will begin lifting," it said in a note published Saturday.

ISW said Russian forces were digging in further east of the city of Kherson, from which they were expelled by Ukrainian forces more than two weeks ago, and continued "routine artillery fire" across the Dnieper River.

Body of girl found in Italy mudslide; search ongoing

Associated Press

MILAN — Search teams pulled the body of a young girl from her family home on Sunday as they dug through mud for a second day in the search for people still missing after an enormous landslide on the Italian resort island of Ischia.

The Naples prefect confirmed that the death toll in the tragedy had risen to two,

following also the recovery of the body of a 31-year-old woman from the island on Saturday.

A further 10 people remained missing in the port town of Casamicciola, feared buried under mud and debris.

"Mud and water tend to fill every space," the spokesperson for Italian firefighters, Luca Cari, told RAI state TV. "Our teams are searching with hope, even

if it is very difficult."

"Our biggest hope is that people identified as missing have found refuge with relatives and friends and have not advised of their position," he added.

The risks of landslides remained in the highest part of the town, near where heavy rainfall loosened a chunk of mountainside, requiring search teams to enter by foot, he said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

UFO records center coming to Albuquerque

NM ROSWELL — A group of historians and archivists have announced plans to open a new national archive in the Albuquerque area focusing on unidentified aerial phenomenon.

Led by author and researcher David Marler, the National UFO Historical Records Center will establish the largest historical archive dedicated to the preservation and centralization of UFO information in the U.S.

The archive is set to include official and civilian case files, audio and video recordings, correspondence, photographs, books, magazines, news clippings, research notes, microfilm, along with digital and physical artifacts.

Native American boarding school graves sought

NE GENOA — The bodies of more than 80 Native American children are buried at the former Genoa Indian Industrial School in central Nebraska. But for decades, the location of the student cemetery has been a mystery, lost over time after the school closed in 1931 and memories faded of the once-busy campus that sprawled over 640 acres in Genoa.

That mystery may soon be solved thanks to efforts by researchers who pored over century-old documents and maps, examined land with specially trained dogs and made use of ground-penetrating radar in search of the lost graves.

The search for the graves comes as the federal government is in the midst of a first-ever comprehensive examination

of the national system of more than 400 Native American boarding schools. The schools and additional privately funded institutions were part of an attempt to integrate Indigenous people into the white culture by separating children forcibly or by coercion from their families.

Snow-plow driver shortfall seen going into winter

OR PORTLAND — A shortage of snow plow drivers has made clearing roads a challenge, according to the Oregon Department of Transportation.

The agency has almost 40 vacancies for seasonal and permanent positions on its road maintenance team in the eastern part of the state, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported.

New federal licensing rules resulted in longer wait times to obtain a commercial driver's license, which contributed to the driver shortage, the agency said.

ODOT will pay for new snow plow drivers to get the special driver's license.

Woman dies after taking ambulance from hospital

WV CHARLESTON — A woman died Thanksgiving Day after she stole an ambulance from a hospital emergency room and crashed it into the Kanawha River, authorities said.

Elizabeth Reed, of Hinton, was a patient at Charleston Area Medical Center General Hospital when she took Cedar Grove Volunteer Fire Department Ambulance Unit 64 just after 12:30 a.m., Charleston Police Department officials said. Reed then began driving toward Kanawha Boulevard.

Five minutes later, she struck a cement barrier near Chesapeake Avenue and went over the embankment into the river, police said. Reed was pronounced dead at around 10 a.m. after she was located inside the ambulance by a search and rescue team, authorities said.

Judges uphold state's school voucher law

TN NASHVILLE — A Tennessee judicial panel has upheld the state's school voucher law, which allows public tax dollars to be given to families to pay for private schooling.

Critics of vouchers argue that the law will weaken the state's public education system, but the three-judge panel said counties and families who sued couldn't prove how students would be immediately harmed by the program. They concluded that any concerns raised now are "speculative and representative of (opponents') disapproval of policy."

Plaintiffs are "simply asking the court to wade into a policy debate, something we cannot do," the panel said Wednesday.

The ruling comes after a yearslong legal battle over the contentious voucher program, known as education savings accounts. Under the law, eligible families are given around \$8,100 in public tax dollars to help pay for private school tuition and other preapproved expenses.

Teacher needed surgery, got married at hospital

FL WEST PALM BEACH — Daniel Pecoraro and Lisa Siegel weren't supposed to get married on a Mon-

day.

But from his hospital bed on Nov. 7, Pecoraro decided that day was going to be the happiest day of their lives.

He had been admitted to HCA Florida JFK Hospital in Atlantis three days earlier with chest pains — only to learn he needed triple-bypass surgery just a few days before the couple's planned wedding ceremony.

"So I said, 'Let's get married right now. Call the rabbi and get him up here,'" Pecoraro, 55, remembered. "We had the marriage license, and I didn't want to let it go to waste."

The wedding was hastily put together, but the marriage wasn't. Siegel and Pecoraro had been engaged for eight years.

TV meteorologist, pilot die in helicopter crash

NC CHARLOTTE — A helicopter pilot and a meteorologist for a television station died Tuesday when a news helicopter crashed along an interstate highway in the Charlotte area, according to authorities and the station.

Meteorologist Jason Myers and pilot Chip Tayag were identified as the people killed in the crash in a statement by WBTV. The crash snarled traffic along Interstate 77 in the area after its southbound lanes were closed by investigators, but no vehicles on the ground were involved.

The station paid tribute to Myers and Tayag both in a written statement and on the air. WBTV broadcasters who had been reporting on the crash identified their colleagues through cracked voices on air about three hours following the deadly crash.

— From wire reports



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Michigan wins 2nd straight over Ohio St.

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — After Michigan beat Ohio State with stunning ease for the second straight year, Wolverines defensive back Mike Sainristil grabbed a huge maize and blue flag and rushed with teammates to the block “O” in the middle of the Ohio Stadium turf.

Sainristil forcefully planted that flag in the 50-yard line, and then the Wolverines mugged for the cameras.

Ohio State players leaving the field barely looked their way.

Again, Michigan was the best team in The Game, this time by a score of 45-23.

Behind career performances by J.J. McCarthy and Donovan Edwards, the Wolverines (12-0,

9-0, No. 3 CFP) advance to the Big Ten championship next Saturday against Purdue, with hopes for a second straight playoff appearance firmly in their control.

As for the Buckeyes (11-1, 8-1, No. 2 CFP), they’ll have to hope they can back into the College Football Playoff after again crumbling in their most important game.

Jim Harbaugh and Michigan snapped an eight-game losing streak against their fiercest rivals last year with a cathartic 42-27 victory in the Big House. Now they have a two-game winning streak in The Game for the first time in 22 years.

“Could not be more proud,” Harbaugh said. “Knew the

team was focused and determined as they have been all season. This is a locker room of heroes.”

Maybe the biggest hero was McCarthy, who threw three touchdown passes and ran for a score. Edwards busted the game open with two long fourth-quarter TD runs.

Playing almost the whole game without injured star running back Blake Corum (knee), Michigan was still able to beat Ohio State in Columbus for the first time since 2000.

McCarthy, the second-year quarterback who won the starting job from incumbent Cade McNamara early in the season, came up huge when Michigan needed it most. McCarthy

passed for 263 yards and didn’t commit a turnover.

“He was just on fire in every way — throwing the ball, running the ball,” Harbaugh said. “So focused and determined. It was a team that was focused and determined.”

McCarthy’s previous longest pass completion this season was 42 yards, but against the Buckeyes he threw three touchdown passes of at least 45 yards, the most scoring passes of 45 or more in the history of the 105-game series.

He connected on scoring passes of 69 and 75 yards to Cornelius Johnson in the first half, and then hooked up with Colston Loveland in the second half for 45 yards.

No. 1 Georgia pulls away from feisty Georgia Tech

Associated Press

ATHENS, Ga. — Stetson Bennett threw two touchdown passes Saturday and Georgia completed back-to-back undefeated regular seasons for the first time in school history by overcoming a slow start to beat Georgia Tech 37-14.

Georgia (12-0, No. 1 CFP) was down 7-0 early and led Georgia Tech only 10-7 at halftime. Then the Bulldogs overpowered the Yellow Jackets (5-7) with their running game to score 37 unanswered points and notch their fifth consecutive win in the state rivalry.

Kenny McIntosh and Kendall Milton ran for touchdowns. Georgia outrushed Georgia Tech 251-40. Bennett finished 10-for-18 for 140 yards.

No. 4 TCU 62, Iowa State 14: Kendre Miller ran for two touchdowns and the host Horned Frogs completed the first undefeated regular season by a Big 12 team since 2009 with a win over the Cyclones and moved closer to making the four-team College Football Playoff.

No. 5 Southern California 38, No. 13 Notre Dame 27: Caleb Williams polished his Heisman Trophy credentials with 232 yards passing and four total touchdowns, and the host Trojans capped their outstanding regular season under coach Lincoln Riley by staying firmly in the College Football Playoff race.

Texas A&M 38, No. 6 LSU 23: Devon Achane had a career-best 215 yards rushing with two touchdowns, and the host Aggies stunned the Tigers, all but certainly knocking them out of contention for the College Football Playoff.

South Carolina 31, No. 7 Clemson 30: Spencer Rattler threw for 360 yards and two touchdowns, Mitch Jeter hit the go-ahead field goal with 11 minutes left and the visiting Gamecocks crushed the playoff hopes of a second straight top-10 team.

No. 8 Alabama 42, Auburn 27: Bryce Young passed for 343 yards and three touchdowns and ran for another score in perhaps his final home game for the Crimson Tide in its Iron Bowl win over the visiting Tigers.

No. 9 Tennessee 56, Vanderbilt 0: Jaylen Wright ran for 160 yards and two touchdowns on five carries, with Jabari Small running for two more scores as the visiting Volunteers ran for six TDs and routed their in-state rivals.

No. 22 Oregon State 38, No. 10 Oregon 34: Isaiah Newell ran for the go-ahead touchdown with 8:11 remaining, and the host Beavers took advantage of critical mistakes in the fourth quarter to beat the Ducks.

No. 11 Penn State 35, Michigan State 16: Sean Clifford threw four touchdown

passes and the Nittany Lions defense tightened up late to beat the visiting Spartans in the regular-season finale for both teams.

No. 12 Washington 55, Washington State 33: Michael Penix Jr. threw for 485 yards and had five total touchdowns and the visiting Huskies reclaimed the Apple Cup with a wild victory over the Cougars.

No. 14 Utah 63, Colorado 21: Cameron Rising threw three touchdown passes before taking a seat for the second half, Ja’Quinden Jackson ran for three scores and the visiting Utes routed the Buffaloes and got a spot in the Pac-12 title game.

No. 15 Kansas State 47, Kansas 27: Will Howard threw for 213 yards and two touchdowns, Deuce Vaughn ran for 147 yards and a score, and the host Wildcats beat the Jayhawks to earn a shot at payback against TCU in the Big 12 championship game.

James Madison 47, No. 23 Coastal Carolina 7: Todd Centeio threw for four touchdowns and ran for one score as the host Dukes romped past the Chanticleers.

No. 25 UCF 46, South Florida 39: At Tampa, Fla., Alec Holler made a leaping, one-handed catch for a touchdown on a 14-yard pass from Mikey Keene with 20 seconds remaining to lead the Knights past the Bulls for a spot in the American Athletic Conference championship game.

Hughes has hat trick in Devils' win

Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. — Jack Hughes had his first career NHL hat trick, Vitek Vanecek made 38 saves against his former team and the New Jersey Devils beat the Washington Capitals 5-1 on Saturday for coach Lindy Ruff's 800th victory.

Ruff became the fifth NHL coach to reach the mark. The former Buffalo player won 571 games with the Sabres from 1997-2011. He had 165 wins in five seasons with Dallas and has 64 in two-plus seasons with New Jersey.

The Atlantic Division-leading Devils have won two in a row after having its franchise-record 13-game winning streak snapped by Toronto.

Devils captain Nico Hischier and Fabian Zetterlund also scored.

John Carlson scored for Washington and Charlie Lindgren made 24 saves.

Oilers 4, Rangers 3: Leon Draisaitl scored on a power play with 2:02 left and visiting Edmonton had four third-period goals to overcome a three-goal deficit and beat New York.

Jack Campbell made 20 saves, defenseman Evan Bouchard scored twice and Dylan Holloway had his first NHL goal in the comeback.

After Rangers forward Alexis Lafreniere took a roughing penalty with 2:26 to go, Draisaitl finished the outburst with his 12th goal of the season.

Lafreniere, Chris Krieder and Julien Gauthier spotted New York a 3-0 lead.

Avalanche 4, Stars 1: Alexandar Georgiev made 41 saves, Nathan MacKinnon and Josh Manson scored first-period goals and host Colorado beat Dallas.

Andrew Cogliano and Dryden Hunt also scored for the Avalanche, and Manson added an assist.

Colorado was called for five minor penalties in the second period, but was able to kill off four of them. Joe Pavelski got the lone power-play goal for Dallas.

Islanders 5, Flyers 2: Brock Nelson and Anthony Beauvillier scored 22 seconds apart early in the third period, Semyon Varlamov made 25 saves and host New York beat Philadelphia for its fourth straight victory.

Zach Parise scored twice for the Islanders and Adam Pelech also scored to help New York improve to 8-3-0 at home.

The injury-depleted Flyers are 0-7-3 in their last 10 contests and haven't won since Nov. 8.

Maple Leafs 4, Penguins 1: Mitch Marner extended his points streak to 16 games with a goal and an assist and visiting Toronto beat Pittsburgh.

Auston Matthews became the seventh player in team history with 200 even-strength goals and William Nylander and Pontus Holmberg also scored for the Maple Leafs. They have points in eight straight and

14 of their last 16.

Toronto has won three straight games and nine of its last 13 overall. The Maple Leafs are 5-0 on the road in November.

The Penguins had won five in a row.

Canucks 5, Golden Knights 1: JT Miller had a goal and two assists and visiting Vancouver beat Vegas.

Vancouver won its second straight on a three-game trip that ended Sunday in San Jose. The Canucks have won four of five after a three-game skid.

Brock Boeser, Elias Pettersson, Andrei Kuzmenko and Bo Horvat also scored for the Canucks. Spencer Martin made 26 saves.

Blues 5, Panthers 4 (OT): Jordan Kyrou scored his second goal of the game at 1:08 of overtime to lift visiting St. Louis past Florida.

St. Louis overcame a three-goal deficit in the third period, tying it on Vladimir Tarasenko's goal with 3:49 left. Brandon Saad and Ryan O'Reilly also scored and Thomas Greiss made 33 saves.

Aaron Ekblad, Radko Gudas and Carter Verhaeghe scored for Florida in the first period and Anton Lundell made it 4-1 in the second.

Hurricanes 3, Flames 2: Brett Pece broke a third-period tie with his first goal of the season and host Carolina beat Calgary to end a five-game winless streak.

Calgary went 2-3-1 on a six-game trip.

US Soccer takes Iran flag emblem off social media posts

Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar — The U.S. Soccer Federation briefly displayed Iran's national flag on social media without the emblem of the Islamic Republic, saying the move supported protesters in Iran ahead of the two nations' World Cup match Tuesday.

Iran's government reacted by accusing America of removing the name of God from its national flag.

The USSF decision added another political firestorm to the Middle East's first World Cup, one organizers had hoped would be spared of off-the-field controversies.

It occurred as the U.S. prepared to face Iran in a decisive World Cup match already freighted by the decades of enmity between the countries and the nationwide protests challenging Tehran's theocratic govern-

ment.

The USSF said in a statement Sunday morning it decided to forego the official flag on social media accounts to show "support for the women in Iran fighting for basic human rights."

The Twitter account of the U.S. men's team displayed a banner with the squad's matches in the group stage, with the Iranian flag only bearing its green, white and red colors. The same was seen in a post on its Facebook and Instagram accounts laying out the point totals so far in its group.

By Sunday afternoon, the normal flag with the emblem had been restored in the Twitter banner and the Facebook and Instagram posts with the altered flag removed.

"We wanted to show our support for the women in Iran with our graphic for 24 hours," the federation said.

Federation spokesman Neil Bueth would not say whether the original decision had been cleared by USSF President Cindy Parlow Cone, a former national team player. Bueth said Parlow Cone was not available to discuss the matter.

"This was a decision within the federation," he said. "I'm not going to get into who knew and who didn't."

Asked whether there had been discussions with diplomatic entities, Bueth said: "There have been at certain times. I'm not going to talk about those, but, again, this is our decision not anyone else's or pressure from anyone else."

The USSF displayed the official Iranian flag in a graphic showing Group B standings on its website.

Defender Walker Zimmerman said the U.S. players were unaware of the posts.

James' 39 points lift Lakers past Spurs

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — LeBron James picked the perfect time for his best offensive output of the season.

James scored a season-high 39 points and grabbed 11 rebounds as the Los Angeles Lakers escaped with a 143-138 victory over the San Antonio Spurs on Saturday night.

"We gave up a ton in transition, we turned the ball over, couldn't get a defensive rebound at times," Lakers coach Darvin Ham said. "But again, when you're able to score the ball, it covers up for a lot of mistakes."

San Antonio has lost eight straight, tied for the fourth-longest skid in franchise history.

James matched a career high with seven three-pointers. He finished 11-for-21 from the field, including a booming one-handed dunk on a lob from Russell Westbrook with a minute remaining in the first half.

While James was playing in his second game following a five-game absence, Los Angeles center Anthony Davis sat out with a bruised left calf he sustained in Friday's victory over San Antonio.

"We still honed in and do what we do best," former Spurs guard Lonnie Walker IV said. "And LeBron took us home, he took us to victory."

The Lakers (7-12) have defeated the Spurs three times in a seven-game span.

Dennis Schroder had 21 points and six as-

sists for Los Angeles. Walker had 19 points, including 13 in the fourth quarter to help seal the Lakers' fifth victory in six games.

Los Angeles opened the season losing its first five games.

"It's just a sense of you're not really sure of each other, we don't know each other," James said of the start. "But over the last couple of weeks, we continue to learn one another, we continue to play some good ball, share ball."

Keldon Johnson had 26 points and 10 rebounds for San Antonio. Tre Jones added 23 points and 13 assists, and Devin Vassell had 19 points.

Suns 113, Jazz 112: Deandre Ayton notched season highs with 29 points and 21 rebounds, Devin Booker added 27 points and host Phoenix held on for a hard-fought win over Utah.

The Jazz led 81-78 after three quarters, but the Suns pushed ahead 99-93 by midway through the fourth. The game remained tight through the final minutes, but Phoenix never lost the lead. On top of Ayton's scoring and rebounding, he also had a crucial steal in the final minutes that helped thwart a final Jazz rally.

Ayton scored a season high for the second straight night. He poured in 28 points against the Pistons in a 108-102 win on Friday. Booker had a tough night shooting, making just 8 of 27 shots.

Jordan Clarkson scored 22 points for the Jazz. Collin Sexton added 20 while Lauri Markkanen had 15 points and 10 rebounds.

Raptors 105, Mavericks 100: O.G. Anunoby scored 12 of his 26 points in the fourth quarter, Fred VanVleet also had 26, and host Toronto snapped a four-game losing streak against Dallas.

Chris Boucher scored a season-high 22 points and had 13 rebounds as the Raptors improved to 7-2 at home.

Luka Doncic scored 24 points and Dorian Finney-Smith had 16 as the Mavericks lost their third straight. Dallas is 1-6 on the road.

Doncic, the NBA's leading scorer, shot 8-for-15, going 2-for-4 from three-point range. He had nine assists and seven rebounds.

Rockets 118, Thunder 105: Jalen Green had 28 points and a career-high nine assists, Alperen Sengun added 21 points, a career-best 18 rebounds and seven assists, and host Houston beat Oklahoma City.

Rookie Jabari Smith Jr. had his third double-double with 15 points and 13 rebounds for the Rockets, who have won back-to-back games for the first time since beating Portland last March 25-26.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 32 points for the Thunder. Gilgeous-Alexander scored 13 of the Thunder's first 22 points of the game and has scored 30 or more in four straight games.

Houston remains unbeaten, set to take over as No. 1

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Marcus Sasser scored 19 points, J'Wan Roberts added 11 points and 14 rebounds, and No. 2 Houston held on to beat Kent State 49-44 on Saturday and give itself an opportunity to take over the No. 1 ranking.

Sasser was 8-for-8 from the free-throw line to overcome a 5-for-16 shooting performance, including 1-for-10 on three-pointers. Houston (6-0) shot 32% from the floor and was 2-for-17 on threes.

"That's the first time all year someone has punched us in the mouth," Houston coach Kelvin Sampson said. "We're used to punching other people in the mouth around here."

Sampson, who won his 705th career game, has never had a team ranked No. 1 in the AP Top 25.

"Sitting here with an opportunity, whether we are or not after today, who knows, I

don't know," Sampson said. "Obviously, I'm happy for all the guys who came before us. North Carolina has been No. 1 more times than I've been alive, so it's no big deal to them, but it should be a big deal to us."

The Cougars' defense carried them, holding the Golden Flashes to 24% shooting, including 6-for-29 from beyond the arc. Houston outrebounded Kent State 56-33 and held a 28-18 advantage in points in the paint.

No. 4 Texas 91, UT Rio Grande Valley 54: Sir'Jabari Rice scored 19 points, Marcus Carr had 18 and Tyrese Hunter 17 to lead the host Longhorns over the Vaqueros. The three guards combined to hit 20 of 36 field-goal attempts, including nine three-pointers.

Texas (5-0) also received a boost from Dylan Disu, a 6-foot-9 senior who had 10 rebounds, a career-tying five blocks, four assists, three steals and six points.

Justin Johnson led UTRGV (4-3) with 18

points. Will Johnston scored 10.

TCU 79, No. 25 Iowa 66: Micah Peavy scored 16 points and Mike Miles Jr. added 15 in his second game back from an injury to lead the Horned Frogs over the Hawkeyes in the Emerald Coast Classic championship game in Niceville, Fla.

Miles, the Big 12 Preseason Player of the Year, was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player.

TCU (5-1) broke open what had been a nip-and-tuck battle up until about three minutes into the second half, when it went on a 13-4 run to grab a 58-43 lead. Xavier Cork was the only other scorer in double figures for TCU with 10 points.

TCU held Iowa's Patrick McCaffery scoreless a day after he led the Hawkeyes (5-1) with 21 points in their semifinal win over Clemson. Tony Perkins and Ahron Ulis had 15 points each, and Kris Murray added 11.