

STARS AND STRIPES®

Tuesday, April 7, 2015

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

US hastens arms shipments to Yemen

BY JON HARPER

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The U.S. is expediting arms deliveries to the Saudi-led coalition that is battling Iranian-backed rebels in Yemen, according to U.S. officials.

Last month, the Saudis began launching airstrikes against Houthi insurgents who have taken over most of the country after forcing Yemeni President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi to flee the capital, Sanaa.

“Saudi Arabia is sending a strong message to the Houthis and their allies that they cannot overrun Yemen by force,” Deputy Secretary of State Anthony Blinken told reporters in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, on Tuesday, according to news reports.

“As part of that effort, we have expedited weapons deliveries.”

Pentagon spokesman Col. Steve Warren confirmed the U.S. is supplying its Arab allies as the fight in Yemen rages.

“It’s a combination of pre-existing orders made by our partner nations and some new requirements as they expend munitions,” he told reporters.

Warren was unable to provide details about the types of weapons being delivered.

“I don’t have a listing specifically of a shopping list, so to speak, but we’re working very closely with our partners there to get them what they need,” he said.

Other U.S. military officials were not immediately able to provide a list of the items being

delivered.

The U.S. military is also providing intelligence and logistical support to the Arab war effort.

The Pentagon has agreed to a Saudi request to provide aerial refueling for its jets that are conducting the bombing campaign, although no such refueling operations have been carried out thus far, according to Warren.

U.S. intelligence support to the operations does not include assistance with targeting, according to Pentagon officials.

The Saudis have come under criticism for allegedly inflicting a large number of civilian casualties in their bombing campaign. Warren said the U.S. military has talked to the

Saudis about the issue.

“This is something that we expect all of our coalition partners to be mindful of,” he said. “We want all the combatants to adhere to international standards, which include the maximum amount of mitigation and reduction of civilian casualties that’s possible.”

U.S. military assistance is being coordinated through an Arab-led joint planning cell, which includes about a dozen American servicemembers.

Warren said there are no specific plans to grow that presence, but Pentagon leaders “remain flexible.”

“That [presence] is certainly scalable,” he said.

Teams exhume bodies in Tikrit mass graves

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Iraqi forensic teams in the newly recaptured city of Tikrit have started exhuming bodies from mass graves believed to contain some of the hundreds of soldiers killed by Islamic State militants last year, a government spokesman said Tuesday.

Kamil Amin, from Iraq’s Human Rights Ministry, said the work started Monday on eight locations inside Tikrit’s complex of presidential palaces, where much of the killing is believed to have taken place.

Islamic State militants overran Saddam Hussein’s hometown last June, capturing around 1,700 soldiers as they were trying to flee Camp Speicher, an air base previously used by U.S. troops on the outskirts of Tikrit. The fall of Tikrit was part of the Islamic State onslaught that stunned

Iraqi security forces and the military, which melted away as the militants advanced and captured key cities and towns in the country’s north and west.

Later, the Islamic State group posted graphic images online that appeared to show its gunmen massacring scores of the soldiers after loading the captives onto flatbed trucks and then forcing them to lie face-down in a shallow ditch, their arms tied behind their backs.

Other videos showed masked gunmen bringing the soldiers to a bloodstained concrete river waterfront inside the presidential palaces complex in Tikrit, shooting them in the head and throwing them into the Tigris River.

After weeks of bitter clashes, Iraqi forces and allied Shiite militias succeeded in retaking Tikrit from the Islamic State. Their victory was helped by

U.S.-led coalition airstrikes, which were not initially part of the operation.

Amin told The Associated Press that at least 12 bodies were exhumed Monday. Lab tests will be carried out to match them with DNA samples that have already been taken from families of around 85 percent of the victims.

Iraqi state TV showed forensic teams digging in an open area, helped by bulldozers as family members stood nearby. The bodies were tagged with yellow tags while weeping soldiers and relatives lit candles and laid flowers alongside the covered remains. One clip showed unearthed skeletal remains still wearing combat boots.

“The work is continuing and we expect to discover more mass graves in different areas,” Amin said. “We expect huge number of bodies to be

unearthed.”

During their blitz last year, the Islamic State extremists also carried out other mass killings in other areas. One of those massacres was outside the country’s second-largest city, Mosul, where they forced some 600 Shiite inmates captured from Badoosh prison to kneel along the edge of a nearby ravine and shot them with automatic weapons. The prisoners had been serving sentences for a range of crimes, from murder and assault to nonviolent offenses.

In Anbar province, the militants shot dead dozens of pro-government Sunni tribal fighters in public areas after capturing their towns.

The militants have also targeted Iraq’s indigenous religious minorities, including Christians and followers of the ancient Yazidi faith, forcing thousands from their homes.

Obama says Iran could build nuclear weapon in 13 years

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Defending an emerging nuclear deal, President Barack Obama said Iran would be kept a year away from obtaining a nuclear weapon for more than a decade, but conceded Tuesday that the buffer period could shrink to almost nothing after 13 or more years.

Obama, whose top priority at the moment is to sell the framework deal to critics, was responding to the charge that the deal fails to eliminate the risk because it allows Iran to keep enriching uranium. He told NPR News that Iran will be capped for a decade at 300 kilograms — not enough to convert to a stockpile of weapons-grade material.

“What is a more relevant fear would be that in Year 13, 14, 15, they have advanced centrifuges that enrich uranium fairly rapidly, and at that point, the breakout times would have shrunk almost down to zero,” Obama said.

Breakout time refers to how long it would take to build a bomb if Iran decided to pursue one full-bore — in other words, how long the rest of the world would have to stop it. The framework deal expands Iran’s breakout time — currently two to three months — to at least a year. But that constraint would stay in place only for 10 years, at which point some restrictions would start phasing out.

Although Obama acknowledged that Iran’s breakout time

could shrink, he said at least the world would have better insight into Iran’s capabilities because of extensive inspections in the earlier years.

“The option of a future president to take action if in fact they try to obtain a nuclear weapon is undiminished,” Obama said.

The stark admission came as the president seeks to quiet a growing chorus questioning whether the deal he and world leaders have negotiated merely delays the certainty of a nuclear-armed Iran. Obama has insisted confidently that Iran will not get a nuclear weapon on his watch, which ends in roughly 20 months, but has made no similar assurances about his successors.

McCain will seek 6th term in Senate

By TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — If John McCain has his way, the Arizona Republican will spend most of his 80s in the Senate.

McCain’s announcement this week that he will seek a sixth Senate term may not have surprised those familiar with his schedule and marathon Senate Armed Services Committee hearings — he boasted convincingly of 18-hour workdays — and it means one of the loudest Capitol Hill voices on military issues could remain firmly in place.

The decision comes as McCain and other hawks in the Senate are pressing for big increases in the Defense Department budget and wrangling with fiscal conservatives who support mandatory spending caps to decrease federal spending and debt. It is a debate on U.S. spending priorities that has defied quick solutions.

“There is a faction within the Republican party that is more concerned about fiscal matters than they are about defense,” said Jerry Mayer, associate professor in the School of Policy, Government and International Affairs at George Mason University.

The tea party particularly has tagged McCain as a political enemy. But the senator is “always someone who says, ‘How can we get more in there?’” to strengthen the defense budget, Mayer said.

So far, McCain and his fellow hawks appear to be losing the political fight to eliminate the defense budget cap, often referred to as sequestration. Republicans recently passed a budget plan sticking to the \$523 billion set by the cap and instead pumping up an emergency war fund, a method McCain initially derided as a “gimmick” but then supported.

Army investigating GI sexual assault claims

By JON HARPER
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command is looking into allegations that American soldiers sexually assaulted women and girls in Colombia.

The allegations were made last week in a report issued by the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia,

according to news reports.

FARC, an insurgent group that has been designated a terrorist organization by the U.S. State Department, has been accused of numerous atrocities, including rape and sexual slavery.

“U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command will, after coordinating with Colombian authorities, initiate an investigation into any credible allegations of sexual assault or

criminal acts committed by U.S. soldiers while in that country,” said Christopher Grey, a spokesman with Army CID.

“We take the issue very seriously and will aggressively pursue all credible allegations.”

Grey emphasized that no criminal investigation has been launched, and the recently initiated cooperation with the Colombian government is not a joint investigation.

Dad, 7 kids found dead in Md. home

PRINCESS ANNE, Md. — A single dad and his seven children were found dead in their one-story home, relatives said. Though officials gave no identities or details on the cause of the deaths, the man’s stepfather said he had been trying to keep the family warm with a genera-

tor after the power was cut because of an outstanding bill.

Lloyd Edwards told The Associated Press that his stepson, Rodney Todd, 36, had bought the generator after the power was shut off to the home in Princess Anne, about 60 miles southeast of Annapolis on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. He said those who died were Todd and Todd’s two sons and five daughters.

Authorities would not confirm

any information about possible carbon monoxide poisoning, but Princess Anne Police Chief Scott Keller told The AP that there was no foul play and that a generator with no gasoline was found in the kitchen. He confirmed that the electricity to the home was turned off and said officers were looking into when that began.

From The Associated Press

Duke wins 5th national title

The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Over a matter of mere minutes, the youngsters at Duke grew into salty old pros.

Call them freshmen. But please, do not call them kids.

Led by Tyus Jones and Jahliil Okafor, Duke's talented group of potential one-and-doners played like veterans down the stretch, outscoring Wisconsin by 14 points over the final 13 minutes Monday night to grit out a 68-63 victory for the program's fifth national title.

"It shows a lot about their confidence," said Quinn Cook, Duke's only senior starter.

Okafor, the likely first pick in the NBA Draft if he decides to leave, got outplayed by Badgers senior center Frank Kaminsky most of the night but came through big when the pressure was highest.

The 6-foot-11 freshman made two straight buckets over Kaminsky, sandwiched between a pair of three-pointers from Jones, to help the Blue Devils (35-4) turn a one-time, nine-point deficit into an eight-point lead with 1:22 left.

A furious Wisconsin rally ensued, but it came up short. Then, it was Okafor on the bottom of a rowdy dog pile — a scene reminiscent of the last time the Final Four was in Indianapolis, back in 2010 when Duke edged out Butler in another scintillating final. The Blue Devils also took one here in 1991 — the Grant Hill, Christian Laettner squad.

"It was heaven," coach Mike Krzyzewski said of the stadium where he's now 4-0 in Final Fours. "It was really divine."

Krzyzewski now has five titles, alone in second place on the all-time list, behind only John Wooden.

Coach K did it with a collection of All-Americans — many of whom won't be around too long.

There's Okafor, his buddy Jones — who

finished with 23 points — and another freshman, Justise Winslow. All might be playing at an NBA arena near you next season.

Grayson Allen? He'll be back.

The most overlooked of Krzyzewski's first-year players stepped up with Okafor on the bench for much of the second half in foul trouble. Allen, the slam-dunk champion at the high school McDonald's All-American contest last year, scored 16 points — 12 above his average — including eight straight for Duke after Wisconsin (36-4) had gone up by nine.

"It was fun to watch my teammates do what they do," Okafor said. "They have my back the entire season, and it was no different tonight."

This was a savvy, calm, collected comeback against the team that wrote the book on that all season. Wisconsin kept its cool two nights earlier in an upset of undefeated Kentucky and looked like it would close the deal when it turned a 31-all halftime tie into a 48-39 lead after Kaminsky made a layup with 13:23 left.

Then, suddenly, Duke looked like veterans and Wisconsin looked like kids.

The Blue Devils took the lead for good with 4:08 left when Jones made a three, then fell hard to the ground while tangled up with Bronson Koenig. Dick Vitale's call: "You cannot be serious!"

Jones' face lit up and his jaw dropped, looking amazed at what he had just done.

"That's just one of those situations where you dream of hitting a shot like that late in the game," said Jones, who was named the Most Outstanding Player for the Final Four. "It was just emotions running through me and you just got to soak it all in. You don't expect to make a shot like that, but my teammates have confidence in me. When I saw it go through the hoop, it was one of those things ... I'm at a loss for words to be honest."

On Duke's next possession, Kaminsky tried to wrap an arm around Okafor in the paint, but the big fella powered his way through it for the bucket and the foul. He missed the free throw, but a different point was made: Kaminsky had 21 points and 12 rebounds to Okafor's 10 and three, yet down the stretch, "Frank the Tank" struggled to get a good look and Okafor helped win the game.

"He got in some foul trouble, but because of his positive attitude, he made some big plays down the stretch," Jones said.

In the seconds leading to Okafor's first basket, Winslow appeared to step on the baseline. But the whistle never blew and he delivered it to Okafor for the score.

That, and the foul count, had the Wisconsin Twitterverse fuming about some calls. The Badgers got whistled for only two fouls in the first half, but the count in the second half was Badgers 13, Blue Devils 6. Duke shot 20 free throws to Wisconsin's 10.

"There was more body contact in this game than any game we played all year, and I just feel sorry for my guys that all of a sudden a game was like that," Badgers coach Bo Ryan said.

Even though Kaminsky schooled Okafor to draw both his third and fourth fouls early in the second half, Wisconsin couldn't pull away from an aggressive Duke defense that allowed only 55 points a game in the five contests leading to the final.

Wisconsin shot 41 percent — 7 points under its season average.

"Shots just weren't falling, and they were getting to the line, and when the tide changes like that, it's kind of hard to get back in the flow," said Badgers forward Sam Dekker.

Nigel Hayes had 13 points and Dekker, the key guy down the stretch against Kentucky, had a very quiet 12.

McIlroy seeking last major

The Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Rory McIlroy thought the Masters would be the first major he won. Now it's the only major he's missing.

Jack Nicklaus and Arnold Palmer once thought Tiger Woods might win as many green jackets as they did combined — 10 — and that audacious prediction still looked remotely possible when Woods picked up his fourth title at age 29 with that magical chip-in behind the 16th green and a 15-foot birdie putt to win in a playoff.

That was 10 years ago. Woods hasn't won the Masters since, and now it's not a matter of whether he can win but if he would even play. Woods announced Friday he would return from a two-month hiatus at the grandest stage in golf.

The 79th Masters, which starts Thursday, rarely lacks drama.

Woods has played only 47 holes at a combined 15-over par this year, including a career-high 82 in the Phoenix Open. The Masters is the only major where he has made the cut every time as a pro, which is sure to be tested this year.

Speeding off in the other direction is McIlroy, who will try to slip on that green jacket and complete the career Grand Slam.

"We'll see how determined he is," Martin Kaymer said. "Because at the end of the day, it's all about his own will and his own discipline and practice, how much he puts into it. Because we all know he's good enough to win every week, to win many more majors."

McIlroy figured he would have this one by now. He was 21 with curly locks tumbling out from his cap when he walked to the first tee in 2011 with a four-shot lead, the largest at Augusta National going into the final round since Woods broke 20 records in his watershed Masters victory in 1997.

It just didn't turn out the same way. Over the next four hours, McIlroy was in the trees and beyond the cabins, in a creek and among the azaleas. He shot 80 that day and trudged off the course to sympathetic applause. He was compared more with Greg Norman than Tiger Woods.

Four years later, he's at the Masters on the cusp of joining the most elite group in golf history. Only five players have completed the career Grand Slam. Woods was the most recent in 2000, and before that it was Jack Nicklaus in 1966. The others are Gary Player (1965), Ben Hogan (1953) and Gene Sarazen (1935).

What brought McIlroy to this moment in history has as much to do with failure as success.

"During your losses is where you learn the most," he said. "I've always said that the last round at Augusta in '11 was a huge learning curve for me, and I took a lot from that day, just how I approach final rounds, and especially when you're in the lead and there's a bit of pressure there."

Kaminsky's career ends on a sour note

The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Hands on his head, Frank Kaminsky walked slowly back to the bench as the young Duke Blue Devils started celebrating at midcourt.

This fun run is over for Frank the Tank and the tight-knit Wisconsin Badgers.

Kaminsky's remarkable career with the Badgers ended with a 68-63 loss Monday night in the NCAA Tournament title game against Duke.

"It's hard to say anything. These guys are my family," Kaminsky said. "I mean that literally. It's going to be hard to say goodbye."

The double-double machine finished with 21 points and 12 boards.

But a couple late-game mistakes by the usually savvy senior hurt the Badgers.

The AP Player of the Year threw up an errant shot as the shot clock wound down with 2:39 left.

Kaminsky got beat by Duke freshman phenom center Jahliil Okafor with 3:14 left for a layup in the middle of the Blue Devils' second-half surge, right after the big guy

missed his own layup off a spin move.

Just like in December, when Duke beat Wisconsin 80-70 in Madison, Okafor and Duke's youth beat Kaminsky and the experienced Badgers.

Fouls also hurt in the second half. Wisconsin had just two fouls in the first half, but 13 in the second — unusual for a team that prides itself on not getting whistles.

"There was more body contact in this game than any game we played all year, and I just feel sorry for my guys that all of the sudden a game was like that, and I think they're struggling with that a little bit," coach Bo Ryan said.

"We missed some opportunities. They hit some tough shots. But you know it's just a shame that it had to be played that way."

This isn't the way Kaminsky wanted his career to end, of course.

But the disappointment won't take away from what has been one of the most unique rags-to-riches stories in recent college basketball memory.

Kaminsky played just 10 minutes a game

off the bench two years ago. He was an unknown quantity to the rest of the Big Ten when he entered the starting lineup in November 2013 as junior.

What a ride it's been since then for him. An admitted goofball, Kaminsky was all business on the court. Duke associate head coach Jeff Capel called him one of the most unusual difference-makers in the game today.

Ryan said he always knew what he had in Kaminsky. It was just a matter of him getting confidence and playing time.

He could post up. He could hit the 3. He could run the break.

He just had a few tough minutes at the wrong time on Monday night.

Kaminsky finished 7-for-16 from the field and 2-for-4 from three-point range. His three with 1:08 left gave Wisconsin some late hope to pull within 66-61. Nigel Hayes' dunk with 49 seconds left got the Badgers within three.

But Duke and its heralded freshmen held on from there.

"I still told them how proud I am," Ryan said.



Ship's Store official new car program

Exclusive Navy at-sea offers:

www.navyauto.com or nasinfo@navyauto.com

Cheers, boos, new rules on Opening Day

The Associated Press

Alex Rodriguez got cheered at Yankee Stadium, a rain delay got booed in Miami, and David Ortiz got a quick introduction to baseball's new speed-up rules.

It was opening day all across the majors Monday, and pitchers were in command early.

Oakland right-hander Sonny Gray took a no-hitter into the eighth inning of his win over Texas. New Washington ace Max Scherzer and Cy Young Award winner Corey Kluber of Cleveland carried their no-hit bids into the sixth before falling behind. Seattle star Felix Hernandez, Detroit lefty David Price and Boston righty Clay Buchholz dominated.

A day after the Cardinals blanked the Cubs at Wrigley Field in the big league opener, the other 28 teams were in action. To fans, players and everyone else at the ballpark and watching on TV, it was easy to be optimistic.

"This day brings a lot of hope for a lot of

different reasons for people," New York Yankees manager Joe Girardi said before predecessor Joe Torre threw out the first ball in the Bronx.

"The hope of your team is going to be in the World Series at the end. If you live in the Northeast and the Midwest, the hope that we're actually going to have warm days again and everything is going to be green," he said.

After a wicked winter in many places, it was sunny at most ballparks.

An exception was Miami, where the game against Atlanta had a 16-minute rain delay. That was a first for 3-year-old Marlins Park, where there's a retractable roof.

With no rain in the forecast, the top was open when showers came in the second inning. It takes about 15 minutes to close the roof, and the infield got soaked.

Some fans booed and the Marlins tweeted on their Marlins Park site: "Sorry for the delay, folks."

In New York, where the Empire State Building was lit up in a rotating display of all

30 clubs' colors, A-Rod returned.

With Derek Jeter retired, the crowd at Yankee Stadium saved its biggest cheers for Rodriguez. Back from a season-long drug suspension, the three-time AL MVP singled, walked and lined out in a 6-1 loss to Toronto.

"It means the world to me," he said. "I don't think I ever took it for granted, but I can guarantee you I won't take this year for granted."

There was a mutual sign of acknowledgment at Dodger Stadium as the cheers built when San Diego newcomer Matt Kemp stepped to the plate against his former teammate, Los Angeles ace Clayton Kershaw.

"I've got a lot of respect for him and I feel like he has a lot of respect for me," Kemp said. "I think he saw the crowd's reaction and kind of stepped back and let it play out. Then we went at it."

Boston won 8-0 at Philadelphia, though Ortiz didn't do any damage in going 0-for-4 with three strikeouts.

At least Big Papi stayed in the batter's box, part of Major League Baseball's pace of play guidelines. Ortiz sure sped up things in the first inning — he fanned on three pitches.

Plate umpire Gerry Davis said there were no rubs with the new rules.

"We didn't have any problems at all. The hitters were excellent. I didn't notice anybody having any problems," Davis said.

New clocks at every ballpark counted down the time between innings, trying to hurry along pitchers with their warmups.

Three times, Buchholz grounded out to end an inning. That meant he had to get back to the dugout on the third base side, get his glove, head to the mound and loosen up.

Buchholz was a little long, but he tried. "It's difficult to get out in that time. He worked hard at doing it. It's the only thing we had the whole game," Davis said. "I actually noticed that he was hustling and thanked him for doing it."

Dodgers' Rollins blasts winning HR

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — New addition Jimmy Rollins hit a tiebreaking, three-run homer in the eighth inning, rallying the Los Angeles Dodgers to a 6-3 victory over the re-tooled San Diego Padres in the season opener on Monday.

Rollins took a curtain call for his drive off Shawn Kelley (0-1). Rollins and Howie Kendrick joined the team in the offseason to improve the Dodgers' infield defense, but their offensive prowess delivered the victory.

Kendrick's RBI double with two outs in the seventh tied it at 3. Rollins went 2-for-4.

In 2008, Rollins homered on opening day for Philadelphia, and the Phillies went on to win the World Series.

"I'll make sure the guys know that," the veteran infielder said.

Reigning NL MVP and Cy Young Award winner Clayton Kershaw struck out nine, but the team with baseball's highest payroll of \$270 million trailed twice before Kendrick and Rollins baled them out.

Athletics 8, Rangers 0: Sonny Gray carried a no-hit bid into the eighth inning before Ryan Rua broke it up with a leadoff single, and Oakland snapped its record 10-game losing streak on opening day by beating visiting Texas.

Giants 5, Diamondbacks 4: Madison Bumgarner pitched seven strong innings and San Francisco opened defense of its third World Series title in five years with a win over host Arizona.

Mariners 4, Angels 1: Felix Hernandez struck out 10 and allowed only two hits over seven innings, and Seth Smith had three extra-base hits and two RBIs in his Seattle debut against visiting Los Angeles.

Red Sox 8, Phillies 0: Boston newcomer Hanley Ramirez and Dustin Pedroia each hit two home runs, Clay Buchholz threw three-hit ball over seven innings and the Red Sox beat host Philadelphia in an interleague opener.

Blue Jays 6, Yankees 1: Edwin Encarnacion hit a two-run homer off Masahiro Tanaka, and Toronto beat host New York in Alex Rodriguez's return to the majors.

Mets 3, Nationals 1: Max Scherzer took a no-hitter into the sixth inning of his Washington debut but was unable to overcome two costly errors by shortstop Ian Desmond that aided visiting New York.

Tigers 4, Twins 0: David Price left no doubt about his worthiness as Detroit's opening day starter, coming within one out of a shutout against visiting

Minnesota.

Rockies 10, Brewers 0: Kyle Kendrick pitched seven sharp innings and also got two hits as Colorado trounced host Milwaukee.

Orioles 6, Rays 2: Chris Tillman pitched into the seventh inning and visiting Baltimore hit three homers while spoiling Tampa Bay's debut under rookie manager Kevin Cash.

Royals 10, White Sox 1: Yordano Ventura pitched six solid innings before leaving with a thumb cramp, and Alex Rios hit a three-run homer in his Kansas City debut against visiting Chicago.

Braves 2, Marlins 1: Two Atlanta relievers combined to escape a bases-loaded, none-out jam in the seventh inning, and new closer Jason Grilli pitched a perfect ninth to help the Braves beat host Miami.

Reds 5, Pirates 2: Todd Frazier hit a three-run homer in the eighth inning to rally host Cincinnati past Pittsburgh.

Billy Hamilton and Joey Votto singled before Frazier connected against Tony Watson (0-1), snapping a 2-all tie.

Astros 2, Indians 0: Dallas Keuchel and two relievers combined on a three-hitter, and host Houston beat Cleveland after being held hitless by AL Cy Young Award winner Corey Kluber for nearly six innings.

Lopez, Nets top Blazers

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Brook Lopez dominated twin brother Robin and the short-handed Portland frontcourt with 32 points and nine rebounds, and the Brooklyn Nets beat the Trail Blazers 106-96 on Monday night in the only game on the NBA schedule.

The Trail Blazers left LaMarcus Aldridge and others home for the makeup of a game that was postponed by weather on Jan. 26 and couldn't stop Brook Lopez, who has won the last two Eastern Conference player of the week awards. He shot 15-for-25 from the field.

Deron Williams added 24 points and 10 assists for the Nets, who strengthened their hold on seventh place in the Eastern Conference by winning for the ninth time in 11 games. Thaddeus Young scored 20 points.

Damian Lillard scored 36 points for the Trail Blazers, who had won two in a row. Meyers Leonard had 17 points and 15 rebounds, while Robin Lopez had just eight points and seven boards.

Besides Aldridge, Portland was without forward Nicolas Batum and backup center Chris Kaman. With a five-hour flight Sunday just to turn around and fly back after the game Monday, Blazers coach Terry Stotts opted to let the players stay behind and rest some injuries before they host Minnesota on Wednesday.

They cut a 22-point deficit to six in the fourth quarter before the Nets pulled away again. Portland, guaranteed a top-four seed as the Northwest Division champion, isn't assured of home-court advantage, which is determined solely by record.

The originally scheduled game was called off when New York was hit with snow, though not nearly enough to live up to the blizzard predictions.

The Nets outscored the Blazers 32-12 in the second quarter, limiting Portland to 4-for-18 shooting, and expanded their lead to 22 points in the third quarter. They won their season-high fifth straight at home.

Stepan wins game for Rangers in OT

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Derek Stepan's late heroics lifted the New York Rangers closer to the Presidents' Trophy.

Stepan scored with 28 seconds left in regulation to force overtime, then got the winner late in the extra period in the Rangers' 4-3 victory over the Blue Jackets on Monday night.

With their fourth straight win, the Rangers improved to 51-21-7 for a league-best 109 points. With three games remaining, the Rangers need two points to win the Presidents' Trophy for the second time in franchise history.

The only other time was the 1993-94

season — the last time the franchise won the Stanley Cup.

The Rangers could clinch the Eastern Conference as soon as Tuesday night at New Jersey.

Sabres 4, Hurricanes 3: Tyler Ennis scored his 20th goal and host Buffalo avoided clinching a last-place overall finish in the NHL this season — at least for another game.

Jets 2, Wild 0: Blake Wheeler and Drew Stafford scored and Ondrej Pavelec made 32 saves as visiting Winnipeg gave its playoff push a big boost and prevented Minnesota from clinching a wild-card spot.

Canucks 2, Kings 1 (SO): Chris Higgins scored in the shootout and Eddie Lack made 36 saves to lead host Vancouver.

Daniel Sedin scored in regulation as the Canucks solidified second place in the Pacific Division with 97 points, four ahead of Calgary and the Kings.

Stars 5, Sharks 1: Jamie Benn scored twice and Colton Sceviour scored in the first 30 seconds as visiting Dallas beat San Jose on a night when both teams were eliminated from the playoff race.

Patrick Eaves and Ryan Garbutt also scored for the Stars, who have won seven of their last eight road games and seven of 10 overall.