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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Iraq leader criticizes US air campaign

BY JON HARPER

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi criticized the U.S.-led air campaign against the Islamic State group, saying it was moving too slowly.

The Iraqi leader visited Washington this week to request more U.S. assistance in the ongoing fight against the militant group, which overran much of northern and western Iraq last year.

The U.S. and its coalition partners have carried out nearly 2,000 airstrikes against Islamic State targets in Iraq, according to the Pentagon, but al-Abadi said the effort is falling short at the tactical level.

"It must be quicker," he told an audience Thursday at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank.

The U.S.-led coalition has destroyed more than 5,500 Islamic State targets in Iraq and Syria since the air campaign began last August, according to the Pentagon, but al-Abadi said the bombing needs to be "more precise and more effective."

On the Syria side of the border, al-Abadi said U.S.-led coalition airstrikes are strategically important, but he faulted the Obama administration for not doing more on the political front to broker a political settlement to the civil war there.

The Iraqi leader said the U.S. also needs to send more heavy weapons for the Iraqi army. In recent months, Iraqi officials have complained that American arms shipments have been slow in arriving.

According to a White House fact sheet, the U.S. has delivered loads of equipment to Iraq since last fall including:

- More than 100 million rounds of ammunition.
- 62,000 small arms.
- 1,700 Hellfire missiles.
- 6 M1A1 tanks.
- 1,000 Anti-Tank Missiles.
- More than 12,000 rifles, body armor, helmets and first aid kits.

On Thursday, al-Abadi said there was an "agreed list" between the U.S. and Iraqi governments about the Iraqi military's equipment needs drawn up before he left for Washington.

Thousands flee assault on Ramadi

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — More than 2,000 families have fled from the Iraqi city of Ramadi, an official said Thursday, as the Islamic State group advanced on the provincial capital of the western Anbar province, clashing with Iraqi troops.

The extremist group, which has controlled the nearby city of Fallujah for more than a year, captured three villages on Ramadi's eastern outskirts on Wednesday. The advance is widely seen as a counteroffensive after the Islamic State group lost the city of Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's hometown, earlier this month.

Hundreds of U.S. troops are training Iraqi forces at a military base west of Ramadi, but a U.S. military official said the fighting had no impact on the U.S. soldiers there, and that there were no plans to withdraw them.

Sattar Nowruz, from the Ministry of Migration and Displaced, said those fleeing Ramadi have settled in southern and western Baghdad suburbs.

Tents, food and other aid are being sent to them, he said. The ministry is also assessing the situation with the provincial government in order "to provide the displaced people, who are undergoing difficult conditions, with better services and help," Nowruz said.

Sporadic clashes were still underway Thursday, according to security officials in Ramadi. Government forces control the city center, while the Islamic State group has had a presence in the suburbs and outskirts for months. They described Ramadi as a ghost town, with empty streets and closed shops.

Navy officer guilty in 'Fat Leonard' scandal

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Navy's epic bribery scandal grew even larger Wednesday as another officer pleaded guilty to leaking classified information to a foreign defense contractor in exchange for cash, luxury travel and sex.

Lt. Cmdr. Todd Malaki, 44, a former supply officer based in Asia, pleaded guilty in federal court in San Diego to one count of conspiracy to commit bribery.

He is the eighth person to be

convicted on corruption charges in the scandal, which has rattled the upper ranks of the Navy and shows few signs of ending anytime soon.

According to his plea agreement, Malaki admitted to feeding classified ship schedules and other sensitive information to Leonard Francis, a Malaysian defense contractor who squeezed out competitors to become the primary supplier of goods and port services to U.S. Navy ships in Asia.

Francis, widely known as "Fat

Leonard" in Navy circles for his girth, in turn provided Malaki with envelopes of cash as well as luxury hotel stays in Singapore, Hong Kong and Tonga that were worth a combined \$15,000, according to the plea deal. The Navy officer also admitted that Francis once hired a prostitute for him during a visit to a karaoke club in Malaysia.

Francis pleaded guilty three months ago in the long-running federal investigation, which came to light in September 2013 when he was arrested during a

sting operation in San Diego.

As president and chief executive of Glenn Defense Marine Asia, a firm that had won hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of Navy contracts, Francis admitted in court that he had bribed "scores" of Navy personnel with cash, prostitutes, extravagant meals and other gifts.

Investigators had targeted Malaki for months. His offenses were described in court records when Francis pleaded guilty in January, but his name was redacted from the documents.

Cobra Gold planning postponed indefinitely

BY ERIK SLAVIN
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — The United States has indefinitely postponed a planning meeting with Thailand for next year's Cobra Gold exercise, a decision that comes months after the U.S. scaled down its part in one of the world's largest multinational military events.

The postponement of the planned March meeting in Hawaii also comes as the U.S. evaluates its relationship with Thailand, a longtime, steadfast security ally that has shown little sign of returning to democracy since a May 2014 military coup.

"No decisions have been made regarding the 2016 iteration of Cobra Gold," according to a statement issued by the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok and the U.S. Pacific Command. "Decisions concerning the exercise will be made over the course of the next months in consultations with Thailand, the co-host of the exercise, and other participating countries."

Cobra Gold, which normally combines combat exercises with humanitarian assistance and disaster response, has served for decades as a foundation for U.S. military relations with the region's other powers.

The U.S. military values its access to Thailand's well-developed airfields and bases, which give its forces a stable staging point for operations in Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, the Thai military has gained valuable access to U.S. tactics and procedures.

The Thai military is moving ahead under the expectation that the exercise will proceed in 2016. Officials still expect a meeting in Thailand, which is generally held in the summer.

Report details multiple issues with Philadelphia VA office

BY HEATH DRUZIN
Stars and Stripes

A Department of Veterans Affairs office in Philadelphia simultaneously underserved and overcompensated veterans, keeping them waiting for months to get answers to their benefits questions, paying out millions in duplicative benefits and housing some employees in a vermin-infested warehouse, according to a report released Wednesday by the VA's Office of Inspector General.

In the latest bad news for an agency that has been embroiled in a yearlong scandal, the exhaustive report details a range of problems, from failure to process thousands of pieces of mail to unsafe working conditions, at the VA's Philadelphia Regional

Office.

"There is an immediate need to improve the operation and management of this VA (regional office) and take actions to ensure a more effective work environment," the 78-page report reads.

One of the most striking findings was that investigators found 31,000 inquiries went unanswered for an average of 312 days even though staff is supposed to respond to each within five days.

Investigators also found 48 boxes of mail with 16,600 documents that were supposed to have been scanned into the VA's virtual database, potentially affecting veterans' benefits.

Staff approved about \$2.2 million in improper payments

because they failed to account for duplicate records, and in at least two cases they paid dead people. Roughly 150 staffers were made to work in a leaky, dilapidated warehouse that lacked bathrooms and was infested by insects and rodents, according to the report.

In an email response to a reporter's query, VA spokeswoman Walinda West said the report reflected conditions in Philadelphia more than one year ago and that new director Diana Rubens immediately began remedying the problems after starting her job in July.

The report specifically refutes that assertion, saying IG staff received complaints from Philadelphia VA employees as recently as March.

Gyrocopter lands on US Capitol lawn

The Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — A Florida postal worker who piloted a gyrocopter onto the U.S. Capitol lawn alerted the Secret Service beforehand because he was afraid he would get shot down, a friend said.

Doug Hughes, 61, made the flight to call attention to his belief that campaign finance laws are too weak. His friend, Mike Shanahan, called him "a patriot" who first came up with the

idea about a year ago.

Hughes called Shanahan on Wednesday and said he was in the Washington area and ready to take off, Shanahan was quoted by The Tampa Bay Times as saying. Shanahan said he feared law enforcement would shoot down the small aircraft emblazoned with the Postal Service logo, so he alerted the U.S. Secret Service. The gyrocopter landed about half a city block from the Capitol building.

Hughes steered his tiny air-

craft onto the Capitol's West Lawn after flying through restricted airspace around the National Mall, police said. A Senate aide told The Associated Press the Capitol Police knew of the plan shortly before Hughes took off.

Hughes is a married father of four who wanted to "spotlight corruption in DC and more importantly, to present the solution(s) to the institutional graft," reads a statement on his website, The Democracy Club.

Japan scrambling warplanes at Cold War levels

The Associated Press

TOKYO — Japan's government said Wednesday that the number of scrambles by the country's warplanes has surged in recent years to levels nearly matching the Cold War era amid growing activity by China and Russia in the region.

The Self Air-Defense Force scrambled its jets 943 times during the 12-month period through March 31, just one short of the record set in 1984, the Defense Ministry said. The scrambles were dominated by those against Chinese and Russian aircraft.

The ministry reported 133 more scrambles than in the previous year, underscoring growing tension in the region.

Russian activity was seen mainly as reconnaissance around Japan in April last year, following North Korea's missile launch in late March.

Keith caps Blackhawks' rally in 20T

The Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Chicago Blackhawks could not have started worse giving up three goals on the first 12 shots, forcing coach Joel Quenneville to yank goalie Corey Crawford.

Scott Darling came off the bench and made his post-season debut a game to remember.

Darling stopped all 42 shots he faced, and Duncan Keith scored at 7:49 of double overtime helping the Chicago Blackhawks rally and beat the Nashville Predators 4-3 Wednesday night.

"It was a great opportunity for him, and he seized the moment ..." Quenneville said of Darling. "That was one of the greatest relief performances you're going to see."

The Blackhawks finished only two points back of Nashville in the Central Division, and they grabbed home-ice advantage back despite benching Crawford after the first period. Darling had played only 14 NHL games, but he stopped every subsequent shot as Nashville took 54 — a franchise record for the playoffs.

Keith ended the game with his one-timer from the blue line. Jonathan Toews had a goal and an assist, and Niklas Hjalmarsson, Patrick Sharp and Jonathan Toews

each scored for Chicago. Patrick Kane also had two assists in his return after missing 21 games with a broken collarbone.

Islanders 4, Capitals 1: Brock Nelson scored twice, Josh Bailey and Ryan Strome added goals, Jaroslav Halak made 24 saves, and visiting New York beat Washington in Game 1 of their first-round series.

Nelson, Bailey and Strome had never scored in the play-offs. All were first-round draft picks by New York, none is older than 25, and they entered the game with these combined playoff numbers: seven games, zero goals, three assists.

That didn't matter one bit. Nor did Halak's struggles down the stretch in the regular season. The goalie who stymied Alex Ovechkin and the Capitals while playing for eighth-seeded Montreal in a 2010 first-round upset was mostly superb, allowing only Marcus Johansson's goal in the final minute of the first period.

Game 2 is Friday night.

Canadiens 4, Senators 3: Brian Flynn scored a tie-breaking goal late in the second period and host Montreal held on in a wild opening game of their first-round playoff series.

Flynn also had two assists for the first three-point game of his career.

Tomas Plekanec and Torrey Mitchell scored 15 seconds apart in a frenetic second period that saw five players get goals in less than five minutes. Lars Eller scored short-handed as part of the barrage.

Mika Zibanejad and Kyle Turris got power-play goals in the middle period for the Senators. Milan Michalek was credited with the game's first goal, which Montreal's Andre Markov tipped into his own net 12 minutes in.

Canadiens star defenseman P.K. Subban was given a five-minute major and game misconduct after slashing Ottawa rookie Mark Stone in the wrist midway through the second period.

Game 2 is Friday night.

Flames 2, Canucks 1: Defenseman Kris Russell scored with just under 30 seconds remaining in the third period to lift visiting Calgary over Vancouver in the opening game of their first-round series.

David Jones also scored for the Flames, who were down 1-0 entering the third period. Jonas Hiller stopped 29 shots in the Flames' first playoff game since 2009.

Bo Horvat opened the scoring for Vancouver midway in the second period. Jannik Hansen and Alexander Edler assisted on the play.

Vancouver hosts Game 2 on Friday night.

Twins hand Royals their first loss of season

The Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — The Kansas City Royals were rolling through the start of the season, still undefeated when they took the field Wednesday at Minnesota.

Well, Kyle Gibson hadn't lost either, at least not against the Royals in his young career.

Kansas City became the last team in the majors to lose this season, as Gibson pitched into the seventh inning and Oswaldo Arcia hit a two-run homer for the Twins in a 3-1 victory over the Royals.

"I think they knew they were going to lose at some point," Gibson said. "It was nice for us. Getting a win like that for us was hopefully some good momentum."

The Twins (2-6) sure needed it. They went 1-8 to begin the 1994 season, the only other time in the club's 55-year history they started with seven losses in their first eight games. But Brian Duensing and Casey Fien backed up Gibson when manager Paul Molitor went to the bullpen, and Glen Perkins pitched a perfect ninth for his first save.

"It looked a lot more like the team that we thought we had coming out of spring. I know you don't put a lot into the losses or one win, but when you get a good starting pitching performance it just makes everybody's job a little bit easier," Molitor said.

Lorenzo Cain bounced into a double play after consecutive singles to start the game, and Salvador Perez grounded into an inning-ending turn-two by the Twins in the second. Alcides Escobar had three of the nine hits against Gibson and Alex Gordon drove in a run with a two-out single in the fourth inning, but the right-hander didn't walk anybody after issuing five free passes in his first start. He had his sinker, changeup and slider all working well.

"If I can limit 'em to singles and allow the defense to do some work behind me, that's going to be big for me," Gibson said.

Gibson, who failed to finish the fourth at Detroit last week, improved to 4-0 in four career starts with a 1.38 ERA against Kansas City.

"He's always pitched well against us. Tonight he was on," Royals manager Ned Yost said.

The Royals (7-1) were chasing the 2003 team's 9-0 start as the best in franchise history, but Gibson (1-1) used 12 groundball outs and three strikeouts to keep the highest-scoring team in the majors quiet.

Edinson Volquez (1-1) struck out seven in 7²/₃ innings, with five hits and one walk allowed. He loaded the bases with no outs in the first, but he escaped with only Brian Dozier's sacrifice fly as the damage after a long running catch by Cain.

Arcia's two-strike, two-out drive into the seats above right-center field in the fourth came right after Trevor Plouffe's single. Arcia said he knew it was gone.

"That would be the one pitch he'd wish he could bring back, but outside of that he threw a great game," Yost said.

Cubs 5, Reds 0: Two years ago, Travis Wood was an All-Star. This year, he's a pitcher looking to return that form following a rough 2014 season.

"This game will always sneak up and find a way to bite ya," Wood said. "I had that pretty much all last year. Now I just try to go with each start and take it pitch by pitch."

Wood pitched three-hit ball into the eighth inning and Anthony Rizzo hit his first home run of the season. The Cubs (5-3) won two of three games in the series and moved back into first place in the National League Central.

Angels 10, Rangers 2: Mike Trout had three hits, scored twice and drove in a run to back another win in Texas for Hector Santiago in their series finale.

Santiago (1-1) allowed one run and four hits over seven innings, improving to 4-

0 with a 2.15 ERA in five career starts at Texas.

Tigers 1, Pirates 0: Alfredo Simon gave up two hits over eight dominant innings, and the visiting Tigers beat the Pirates.

Rajai Davis hit a leadoff homer in the sixth against Francisco Liriano (0-1) as Detroit shut out Pittsburgh for the second straight day. Joakim Soria worked a perfect ninth for his fourth save while filling in for injured Joe Nathan.

Dodgers 5, Mariners 2: Brett Anderson posted his first victory with the Dodgers. Scott Van Slyke hit a two-run double, and the two-time defending NL West champions completed a three-game sweep of the visiting Mariners.

Nationals 10, Red Sox 5: Wilson Ramos hit a three-run double and Ian Desmond slammed a solo homer during a six-run third inning as visiting Washington avoided a three-game sweep.

Tyler Moore had a two-run homer that backed Gio Gonzalez (1-1), who gave up five runs — four earned — and six hits in six innings.

Marlins 6, Braves 2: Dan Haren (1-0) gave up three hits in seven innings, and Adeiny Hechavarria went 3-for-3 with a homer and three RBIs as host Miami won consecutive games for the first time this season.

Atlanta's Eric Stults (0-1) gave up four runs and five hits in five innings.

Cardinals 4, Brewers 2: Lance Lynn extended his April success with five solid innings and Matt Holliday had a two-run single in the first inning, lifting the host Cardinals.

Lynn (1-1) allowed one run and six hits. He pushed his April record to 13-2 since 2012, the best record in the majors over that period.

Indians 4, White Sox 2: Trevor Bauer (2-0) won consecutive starts for the first time in his three-plus seasons in the major leagues, helping host Cleveland stop a four-game losing streak.

Orioles 7, Yankees 5: Jonathan Schoop homered to spark a five-run sixth inning and Chris Davis had three RBIs for host Baltimore.

Manny Machado hit his first home run of the season and Caleb Joseph went 3-for-4 with an RBI for the Orioles, who took two of three from New York.

Blue Jays 12, Rays 7: Jose Bautista and rookies Devon Travis and Dalton Pompey homered to back Mark Buehrle, Kevin Pillar made a leaping catch at the left-field wall to deny a home run as the host Blue Jays beat Tampa Bay to stop the Rays' four-game winning streak.

Astros 6, Athletics 1: Collin McHugh struck out 11, and Jed Lowrie hit one of Houston's three homers in a win over visiting Oakland.

Padres 3, Diamondbacks 2: Justin Upton homered with two outs in the eighth inning to give host San Diego a victory.

Upton, one of several star players obtained in an offseason roster revamp, hit the first pitch he saw from Randall Delgado (0-1) into the seats in left. It was his third.

Mets 6, Phillies 1: Travis d'Arnaud homered after assuming David Wright's spot in the lineup, and Lucas Duda also went deep as the Mets defeated the Phillies for a three-game sweep in their first home series this season.

Rockies 4, Giants 2: The catch of his career one night, a three-run homer the next for Nolan Arenado, who put visiting Colorado on the board in the first inning and saw it hold up as the first-place Rockies swept the Giants.

Tyler Matzek (1-0) outpitched two-time NL Cy Young Award winner Tim Lincecum (0-1), retiring 12 of 13 batters during one stretch. The NL West-leading Rockies extended the best road start in franchise history to 6-0.



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New beginning for playoff teams

The Associated Press

New Orleans and Brooklyn are in the NBA playoffs. Indiana and Oklahoma City are out. And while San Antonio slipped to sixth in the loaded Western Conference, the defending champions are looking awfully dangerous again.

Forget the 82-game grind of the past six months. There are no more back-to-back sets, no more uneven schedules, no more excuses.

The playoff brackets are set. Everybody's on equal ground. It's time to crown a champion.

"It's like a new beginning," Golden State Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. "It feels like the first game of the season. You're excited. There's a renewed energy and a sense of urgency."

It took the final night of the regular season — with more than half the games on the closing docket loaded with intrigue — to clear up the cluttered playoff picture.

Stephen Curry and the top-seeded Warriors will face Anthony Davis and the Pelicans in a best-of-seven series starting Saturday after New Orleans snapped San Antonio's 11-game winning streak Wednesday night. That ran Russell Westbrook — who sealed the NBA scoring title — and the depleted Thunder out of the postseason and into the draft lottery.

"A month-and-a-half ago, nobody thought we would be in this position," Pelicans coach Monty Williams said. "So many people counted us out ... We got here."

In the East, the Nets nudged their way in by outlasting Orlando and getting a boost with Memphis' win over a Pacers team that watched Paul George get helped off the floor again, this time with just a sore left calf, the team said.

Atlanta, the top seed in the East, opens against Brooklyn. LeBron James and the Cavaliers begin with Boston. Chicago meets Milwaukee, and Toronto takes on Washington.

In the wild, wacky West, a logjam between second and sixth is finally sorted out.

■ The No. 3 Los Angeles Clippers will face the Spurs.

■ No. 2 Houston hooks up with seventh-seeded Dallas.

■ No. 5 Memphis meets No. 4 Portland, which won the Northwest Division to finish with a higher seed but will start on the road because of the Grizzlies' better record.

"If you get in, it's a whole new season," Nets forward Joe Johnson said. "Everybody is 0-0 and then you wipe your hands clean and then you give it another go."

Indeed, the Warriors (67-15) whipped the competition in the regular season, setting a franchise record for wins. Kerr could be NBA Coach of the Year and Curry might be MVP, but only the team that wins 16 more games gets to lift the Larry O'Brien Trophy as confetti falls from the rafters.

"This is what we've been waiting for," said Curry, whose Warriors clinched home-court advantage throughout the playoffs a couple weeks ago. "Everything

we've gone through to this point will hopefully prepare us for this journey."

A few familiar faces won't be part of these playoffs.

Kobe Bryant, Kevin Durant, Dwyane Wade and Carmelo Anthony are among those who will be watching after getting injured or coming up short with their teams — or both.

The Knicks missed out on the best chance to land the No. 1 pick in the draft lottery; the Timberwolves (16-66) won that honor with the league's worst record.

The Lakers (21-61), who started in Minnesota in 1948, lost more games than any team in their storied history. And after four straight trips — and two titles — to the NBA Finals with James leading the way, the undermanned Miami Heat are home already.

James found his way home to Northeast Ohio last summer.

The four-time MVP will try again to end the longest title drought for any North American city with three professional sports franchises. Cleveland hasn't won a championship since the Browns beat the Baltimore Colts for the 1964 NFL title, but there's renewed hope that James, Kyrie Irving and Kevin Love can do what previous Cavs teams couldn't.

"We've been playing the right way — win, lose or draw — we've played the right way," James said. "We've stuck to our system and I think it's built some great habits for us."

San Antonio rolling into postseason

The Associated Press

Must be spring. Here comes San Antonio.

Winners of 22 of their last 26 games to close last year's regular season — the perfect tuneup to what became a title run — the Spurs are at it again. They're 21-3 in their last 24 games, rising from the bottom of the Western Conference playoff pack to quite possibly be the team to beat in this year's playoffs.

And the message from those who've played them lately? Be afraid. Be very afraid.

"To me, they're still the best team in the NBA," Miami forward Udonis Haslem said.

Golden State and Atlanta might argue, but perhaps to no avail. Since Feb. 27, no team in the league has a better record, better scoring average, better field-goal percentage or better free-throw percentage than the Spurs — who figure to have a great chance to do the one thing that's missing from their franchise's glistening resume.

The five-time champions have never won back-to-back titles. That might change.

"They are rounding into form," said Golden State coach Steve Kerr, whose team has the No. 1 overall playoff seed. "They are doing what championship teams do. You try to make it through the regular season. You try to peak at the right time and they are peaking. They are playing awfully well."

For much of the year, the Spurs looked, well, mortal.

They lost nine out of 13 in one stretch in December, including a bizarre run of three straight home defeats — one in overtime, then the other two both in triple overtime over a three-day span. They came back from the All-Star break as their annual road trip when the rodeo visits San Antonio continued, and promptly lost four in a row.

"It's usually around the rodeo trip in February where we really kind of turn that corner, but it didn't work out that way this time and it took a little longer," Spurs forward Tim Duncan said. "But I think we finally are at a place where we're starting to feel that confidence build and we got some legs."

What they got was healthy.

It took Kawhi Leonard — the NBA Finals MVP from last year — about half the season to get right, after dealing with first an eye infection and then a torn hand ligament. Tony Parker basically had to sit out all of December. Manu Ginobili missed four games last month with a bad ankle.

Now, they're rolling.

"We are starting to play the way we want to play right now," Duncan said. "Starting to."

Scary thought, given the way they're playing right now.

The Spurs have won their last 11 overall — basically going from No. 7 to No. 3 in the West in that span, although the second seed is far from locked up — and are 15-1 at home since February began. That one home loss came on a night where Cleveland's Kyrie Irving scored 57 points in one of the best shooting displays the league has seen in a long time.

From March 25 through April 8, not only did the Spurs win all nine of their games, but they won each by at least 12 points. No team in NBA history has ever had a longer such streak; San Antonio's run matched the 2008-09 Cavaliers and the 2011-12 Heat.

"We've always done this since I've been here," Parker said. "When the playoffs come everybody clicks and we start playing better basketball."

Pelicans top Spurs to nab final spot

The Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Anthony Davis had 31 points and 13 rebounds as the New Orleans Pelicans earned their first playoff berth since 2011 with a 108-103 victory over the San Antonio Spurs on Wednesday.

Davis, who'll make his playoff debut against Golden State, came through in the waning minutes with two jumpers, two blocks and two rebounds to prevent the Spurs from pulling off a 23-point comeback.

Tyreke Evans had 19 points and 11 assists, and Eric Gordon added 14 points for New Orleans, which had to win to make the postseason because Oklahoma City also won in Minnesota. The teams finished with identical records, but the Pelicans held the tiebreaker on head-to-head results.

Jrue Holiday added 11 points, capped by game-sealing free throws with 9.5 seconds left.

Tony Parker had 23 points and Boris Diaw 20 for San Antonio, which needed to win to secure the second seed in the Western Conference playoffs.

Thunder 138, Timberwolves 113: Russell Westbrook scored 37 points in Oklahoma City's victory over host Minnesota that was rendered moot by New Orleans' playoff-clinching win over San Antonio.

The Thunder needed to a win in the regular-season finale and a loss from the Pelicans to make the playoffs. The Thunder will miss the playoffs for the first time since Westbrook's rookie season in 2008-09.

Nets 101, Magic 88: Brooklyn clinched the final Eastern Conference playoff spot, beating visiting Orlando and getting help when Memphis knocked off Indiana.

Rookie Bojan Bogdanovic scored a career-high 28 points for Brooklyn.

Grizzlies 95, Pacers 83: Marc Gasol had 33 points and 13 rebounds as host Memphis ended Indiana's playoff hopes.

Warriors 133, Nuggets 126: Klay Thompson scored 25 points before resting in the second half as host Golden State wrapped up the best regular season in club history.

Starters on both sides rested most of the game, with the Warriors tuning up for the playoffs and Denver long out of contention.

Rockets 117, Jazz 91: James Harden had 16 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists in just three quarters for his fourth triple-double of the season as Houston never trailed against visiting Utah.

Harden's four triple-doubles this season are the most by a Rocket since Hakeem Olajuwon also had four in 1989-90.

Mavericks 114, Trail Blazers 98: Tyson Chandler had 22 points and 15 rebounds as host Dallas beat Portland.

LaMarcus Aldridge led Portland with 19 points after missing two games with a left foot sprain.

Cavaliers 113, Wizards 108 (OT): LeBron James sat out Cleveland's regular-season finale to rest for the playoffs as the Cavaliers rallied to beat visiting Washington.

Raptors 92, Hornets 87: Kyle Lowry scored 26 points and Toronto wrapped up the regular season with their club record 49th victory, beating Charlotte.

Jonas Valanciunas added 18 points, DeMar DeRozan had 16 and Terrence Ross 13 for the Raptors.

Bulls 91, Hawks 85: Aaron Brooks scored 23 points and host Chicago rallied from 18 down to beat Atlanta.

The Bulls locked up the third seed in

the Eastern Conference and a first-round matchup with Milwaukee with their fourth straight win.

Celtics 105, Bucks 100: Gigi Datome scored 22 points, including two key baskets in the final 3 minutes, as visiting Boston ended the regular season with its sixth straight victory.

Kelly Olynyk added 16 for the Celtics, the seventh seed in the Eastern Conference playoffs.

Kings 122, Lakers 99: Ben McLemore scored 24 points and Derrick Williams added 22 as visiting Sacramento sent Los Angeles to the worst record in club history.

Ray McCallum had 19 points for Sacramento, which missed the playoffs for the ninth consecutive year.

Pistons 112, Knicks 90: Reggie Jackson had 24 points and 11 assists as Detroit beat host New York.

Tim Hardaway Jr. led the Knicks with 25 points, and Cole Aldrich added a career-high 24.

The Pistons (32-50) finished with their most wins since going 39-43 in 2008-09, the last season that they made the playoffs. The Knicks (17-65) set a franchise record for fewest wins and finished with the second-worst record in the NBA.

Heat 105, 76ers 101: Henry Walker hit the go-ahead three-pointer with 9 seconds left as Miami ended the season with two wins in one game.

The Heat's win paired with Brooklyn's win meant Miami is all but assured of keeping its top-10 draft pick. If Miami owns the No. 10 pick or better after the draft lottery, the Heat keep that selection.

Had the Heat lost and the pick fell to 11th or worse, it would have gone to Philadelphia under the conditions of a trade.