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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Taliban respond to Kerry with rockets

BY PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Taliban claimed responsibility Sunday for a rocket attack on Kabul's diplomatic area that came just after U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry ended a surprise visit by calling on the insurgents to come to the negotiating table to end the 15-year war.

Kerry told reporters late Saturday in Kabul that "the people of Afghanistan should be demanding that the Taliban, who are the only people holding out on that possibility, actually engage in [the peace] process."

A Taliban spokesman said Sunday that the rocket attack, which caused no casualties, was meant to undermine Kerry's visit.

"This shows foreigners cannot remain safe in any spot in the country and we can target them wherever they are," said

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid. "We couldn't know exactly where he was [but] at least we could sabotage his visit and send a message he is not welcome here."

According to officials, at least two rockets hit the heavily guarded diplomatic zone in the late evening. By that time, Kerry was at Bagram Airfield, 35 miles north of the capital, getting ready to leave the country.

Kerry was in town to participate in the third meeting of the U.S.-Afghan Bilateral Commission, to underscore the commitment of both countries toward a stable, self-reliant Afghanistan. The two sides agreed that to achieve stability, the Taliban must engage in dialogue.

"Today we call on the Taliban to enter into a peace process — a legitimate process, a real process — that provides equal rights protection for all Afghans and brings to an end the violence and suffering that the people of this country have endured for so

many years," Kerry said at the joint press conference with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.

The U.S., along with Afghanistan, Pakistan and China, has been working to initiate peace talks between the Afghan government and insurgent groups before the spring fighting season. Exploratory talks between representatives of the insurgents and the government fell apart last summer after the announcement that longtime Taliban leader and founder Mullah Mohammad Omar had died two years earlier. Since then, his successor Mullah Akhtar Mansoor has said his followers would not participate in new peace talks unless a number of demands, including a complete withdrawal of foreign troops from the country, were met.

Kerry also called on the country's power-sharing government to resolve its crippling internal divisions.

While Ghani did not comment on his feud with Chief Executive

Abdullah Abdullah, which has hampered the government's efficiency for two years since disputed presidential elections, he said ministers were committed to reforms ahead of international meetings that could ensure aid and long-term security commitments for Afghanistan.

"We will want to enter [the] Warsaw conference with clear achievements. And at the same time, we will want to enter into Brussels with clear achievements so that to the world and to the people of Afghanistan, we show and that they believe that there are fundamental changes and reforms coming in Afghanistan," Ghani said.

He was referring to the NATO summit in Warsaw in July and the Brussels Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan in October.

According to current U.S. plans, American troop strength in Afghanistan will be reduced from 9,800 to 5,500 at the beginning of next year.

Belgian police: Second Paris attack was planned

Associated Press

PARIS — The attackers who struck Brussels on March 22 initially planned to launch a second assault on France, Belgium's Federal Prosecution Office said Sunday.

But the perpetrators were "surprised by the speed of the progress in the ongoing investigation" and decided to rush an attack on Brussels instead, the office said in a statement. It didn't provide any details on the initial plot or its targets and the office couldn't immediately be reached for further comment.

Two suicide bombers killed 16 people at Brussels Airport on March 22. A subsequent ex-

plosion at Brussels' Maelbeek subway station killed another 16 people the same morning. Investigators have found intimate links between the cell behind those attacks and the group that killed 130 people in Paris on Nov. 13.

Sunday's statement provides confirmation of what many have suspected: The series of raids and arrests in the week leading up to the Brussels attacks — including the capture of key Paris attacks fugitive Salah Abdeslam — pushed the killers to action.

Belgian police detained four men in Brussels raids over the weekend who were charged with participating in "terrorist

murders" and the "activities of a terrorist group" in connection with the Brussels attacks. One of them, Mohamed Abrini, has also been charged in connection with the Paris attacks, prosecutors said.

Abrini has acknowledged being the "man in the hat" spotted alongside the two suicide bombers who blew themselves up at Brussels Airport, officials said. Surveillance footage has also placed him in the convoy with the attackers who headed to Paris ahead of the Nov. 13 massacre.

Abrini was a childhood friend of Brussels brothers Salah and Brahim Abdeslam, both sus-

pects in the Paris attacks, and he had ties to Abdelhamid Abboud, the Paris attackers' ringleader who died in a French police raid shortly afterward. Brahim Abdeslam blew himself up in the Paris bombings while Salah Abdeslam was arrested in Brussels on March 18 — four days before the attacks there — after a four-month manhunt.

The other suspects charged over the weekend were identified as Osama Krayem, who left the Swedish city of Malmo to fight in Syria and was described by one relative as having been "brainwashed." Also charged were Herve B.M., a Rwandan national, and Bilal E.M.

3 rescued from remote island after writing 'help'

The Washington Post

They had no choice but to swim.

The three men had left just hours earlier when a large wave capsized their 19-foot skiff on Monday night. They swam through 2 miles of dark water before finding salvation: the tiny Pacific Island of Fanadik, several hundred miles north of Papua New Guinea.

For three days, the men remained stranded on the uninhabited island, hoping for help. In the end, their own ingenuity would facilitate their rescue. The crew aboard a Navy plane spotted the men waving life jackets, standing next to piles of palm leaves arranged to spell out four capital letters: H-E-L-P.

Once the men were found,

their families were notified and, in the end, they were put onto a small, local boat back to Pulap, from which they initially set out to sea. No injuries were reported.

The men were recovered Thursday thanks to the coordinated efforts of Navy and Coast Guard rescuers.

The Coast Guard was first notified that the men were missing just before noon Tuesday, after which it immediately issued an urgent broadcast seeking assistance from the Navy and vessels in the area of the skiff's last known location. Two cargo ships helped by conducting a combined 17-hour search. The Navy plane that ultimately spotted the men set off Thursday at 6 a.m., taking just about two hours to find them.

Lackland shooter was training in special ops

The Washington Post

An enlisted airman who served previously in the FBI killed the commanding officer of his Air Force special operations training squadron in an apparent murder-suicide Friday after facing a disciplinary hearing, U.S. officials said.

Tech. Sgt. Steven D. Bellino, 41, killed Lt. Col. William A. Schroeder, 39, at the Medina Training Annex of Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland in Texas before turning a gun on himself, U.S. officials said. Bellino joined the Air Force in June 2015 and was a student with the 342nd Training Squadron, Air Force officials said.

The unit provides training and screening in pararescue, combat control, explosive ordnance disposal and other skills used by elite units in Air Force Special Operations Command.

Bellino had worked for less

than two years in the FBI, partly in the New York field office. It was not immediately clear how Bellino obtained the rank of technical sergeant, a mid-ranking enlisted airman, after serving in the Air Force for less than a year. The Air Force does have a program that allows veterans with military experience to join the service full time to take specific jobs that are hard to fill, including pararescueman.

In a statement Saturday, the FBI said that Bellino was a special agent for less than two years when he resigned in May 2013.

Schroeder was a weather officer who commanded numerous special operations units during the past decade. He joined the Air Force in 1999 and had been the commanding officer of the 342nd Training Squadron since June 2014.

Ex-SEAL in bin Laden raid charged with DUI

The Washington Post

Robert James O'Neill, the former member of SEAL Team 6 who claimed to have shot and killed al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden in a 2011 raid, was charged with DUI on Friday in his hometown of Butte, Mont.

According to George Skuletich, the undersheriff of Butte-Silver Bow City and County, local officers responded to the parking lot of a local convenience store after multiple complaints of a man sleeping in the front seat of his car with the engine running.

The officers recognized O'Neill, 39, and proceeded to wake him. After a brief conversation, the officers noticed that he was impaired, said Skuletich. The officers then administered one field sobriety test — known as the horizontal gaze — that O'Neill failed. O'Neill then refused any further field sobriety tests and was detained.

At the local jail, O'Neill took and failed a second sobriety test and then refused to submit to a Breathalyzer or a blood test. He

was charged shortly afterward and was released on bond for \$685.

His license is currently suspended, and in the interim he was given a 72-hour temporary driver's license, as it was his first offense, said Skuletich. O'Neill is expected to appear in court Monday.

In an emailed statement, O'Neill said he had taken a prescribed sleep aid prior to his arrest.

"While the timing was bad and I highly regret this decision, I am innocent of the charge and have entered a plea of not guilty," O'Neill said.

He also expressed his appreciation of the Butte Police Department for their "professionalism and courtesy."

O'Neill's exploits were first described anonymously in a 2013 Esquire article that referred to him only as "The Shooter." In October 2014, his identity was released to the public after an emotional exchange between O'Neill and family members of those killed during the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Poll: More giving Obama a positive approval rating

WASHINGTON — As many people in the United States hold their noses in the search for the next president, they're increasingly warming to the president they already have.

For the first time since 2013, half of those questioned approve of the job President Barack Obama is doing in office, according to an Associated Press-GfK poll. The survey found the apparent uptick in approval extended across issues including foreign affairs, immigration and, most notably, the economy, where people said they felt slightly better about their own prospects and Obama's stewardship.

Still, Obama's numbers remain modest. Compared with

his predecessors, he's well above Republican George W. Bush, who had about a 30 percent approval rating at this point in his presidency, but below Democrat Bill Clinton's roughly 60 percent, according to polls conducted by Gallup.

While the poll found an increase in approval among Democrats and with people younger than 50, only about 1 in 10 Republicans expressed a positive opinion of Obama or the job he's doing.

The AP-GfK Poll of 1,076 adults was conducted online March 31-April 4 using a sample drawn from GfK's KnowledgePanel. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 3.3 percentage points.

From The Associated Press

Kyle Busch sweeps up at Texas

Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — A broom was waiting for Kyle Busch in Victory Lane at Texas.

Busch took the lead after the final restart Saturday night, completing his second NASCAR weekend sweep in a row and becoming the first driver to do that since Harry Gant in 1991.

"It's pretty darn good, I'll tell you that," Busch said when asked what it's like to be him right now. "I've got a great wife, a great son and I'm having a blast, living the dream."

While completing his personal Texas two-step, Busch ended Jimmie Johnson's three-race winning streak at the high-banked, 1½-mile Texas track. It was Busch's 36th Sprint Cup victory, a week after also winning at Martinsville.

Busch also won the Xfinity race at Texas on Friday night, his 80th win in that series that was coming off a two-week break. At Martinsville, he also got his 45th Camping World Truck Series victory. That's four consecutive NASCAR Series wins in a span of eight days.

On the first lap after the final restart, lap 302 of 334, Busch went on the outside of Turn 4 to shoot around Martin Truex Jr. for the lead. Busch led the rest of the way in his No. 18 Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota, winning by nearly 4 seconds over Dale Earnhardt Jr. with Joey Logano third.

"The restart was going to be key. If I could just get out in front of him, I knew I could protect the rest of the race," Busch said. "They had a good restart, but we got a better one."

It was Busch's second Sprint Cup vic-

tory at Texas, where in 2013 he also swept both spring races.

Gant had consecutive sweeps at Richmond and Dover in 1991.

NASCAR's first night race of the season actually went into the next morning, ending a few minutes after midnight Texas time because the start was delayed for 1 hour, 50 minutes while drying the track after a couple of light rain showers during the afternoon.

Johnson, who had won five of the previous seven Texas races, finished fourth. When the Sprint Cup Series returns to Texas in November, he will be trying to win the fall race there for the fifth year in a row.

Chase Elliott, the rookie teammate of Earnhardt and Johnson at Hendrick Motorsports, finished fifth. Elliott had qualified fourth but had to start at the back of the 40-car field after a transmission change in the No. 24 Chevrolet.

The four Hendrick drivers finished in the top eight, with Kasey Kahne eighth.

All four Gibbs drivers finished in the top 12, with polesitter Carl Edwards seventh, Matt Kenseth 11th and Denny Hamlin 12th.

Edwards led 124 laps and was running second on a restart with 113 laps to go after pitting during a caution. Within a few laps after that, he had to go back in the pits because of a loose front right wheel and dropped all the way to 19th. He has won three Cup races at Texas, the last when sweeping the 2008 races.

Truex led six times for 141 laps.

The last restart followed an incident that involved 13 cars on the backstretch.

Austin Dillon, on older tires, got loose

with 40 laps to go when Hamlin came under him going on the backstretch. Johnson was coming up behind him and tried to avoid contact before tapping into the back of Dillon's No. 3 that then spun.

Truex, who was not involved in the incident, and Dillon had stayed on the track running first and second when everyone else pitted during a caution five laps earlier.

Some other things from Texas:

Points race: Busch took over the season points lead, six ahead of Johnson and seven ahead of Kevin Harvick, the previous points leader. Harvick finished 10th at Texas, which is one of the four active tracks where he hasn't won. He's 0 for 27 there.

After the rain: The first five laps of the race were then run under caution while some jet dryers completed their work and the cars got some heat on the track with chilly temperatures in the upper 50s. There was also a scheduled competition caution 25 laps after that.

With his wife: Tony Gibson, crew chief for Kurt Busch's No. 41 Chevy, was there for Saturday night's race after missing the team's first two days in Texas to be with his wife, Beth, who was being treated for a colon infection in a North Carolina hospital. Gibson said he would be returning to the hospital after the race to be with his wife of 25 years.

Up next: Bristol Motor Speedway next Sunday. Harvick won from the pole at the .533-mile last spring, when the first Bristol race was held before Texas.

Ex-Saints DE Smith killed after car crash

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Former New Orleans Saints player Will Smith was shot and killed Saturday in what appeared to be a road rage incident that has shocked fans of the much-beloved athlete.

An emailed statement from New Orleans city coroner Jeffrey C. Rouse said that Smith died "of multiple gunshot wounds" after a traffic accident in the city's Lower Garden District. The former defensive end was 34 years old.

New Orleans Police Department spokesman Tyler Gamble on Sunday identified the suspect as Cardell Hayes, 29. Gamble said the investigation was ongoing but did not release further details. Online court records show Hayes pleaded guilty in 2014 to one count each of possessing an illegal weapon and possessing drug paraphernalia.

A tweet from the verified account of Greg Benschel, Saints vice president of communications and broadcasting, expressed condolences to Smith's family.

The Smith family released a statement through a public relations firm.

"On behalf of the Smith family, we are thankful for the outpouring of support and prayers. We ask that you continue to respect the family's privacy as they grieve the loss of a devoted husband, father and friend," the statement read.

Smith appeared to be the victim of a road rage accident.

The former defensive end was driving in a Mercedes late Saturday through the Lower Garden District, an upscale part of the city, when his vehicle was hit from behind by another vehicle, an orange Hummer H2, police said.

That caused Smith's vehicle to hit a gray Chevrolet Impala in front of him. Two acquaintances of Smith's were in the Impala but not injured.

At some point in the ensuing incident, Smith and Hayes — the driver of the Hummer — exchanged words, police said. That's when police say Hayes pulled out a gun and shot Smith multiple times.

Smith's wife, who was traveling with him, was shot in the leg. She was taken to a local hospital for treatment. Police said Smith died at the scene.

Police said they recovered the weapon and took Hayes into custody.

Smith led the Saints with a career-high 13 sacks in 2009, when the club won its only Super Bowl. Smith's career sack total ranks fourth in Saints history. He had 457 career tackles, 20 forced fumbles, seven fumble recoveries and two interceptions.

Off the field, Smith took an active role in trying to improve the lives of children in New Orleans. He established a foundation called, Where There's A Will, There's A Way, in 2007. Its stated mission is "to motivate, educate and provide opportunities for women and children."

Smith leaves behind his wife, Racquel, and three children.

Spieth looks to overcome late slip

Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Jordan Spieth couldn't fight the feeling he should be hitting 3-wood when he lined up his tee shot on the 17th tee box at the Masters. He hit driver anyway.

What ensued over the next half hour promised to turn Sunday into a much different experience than he enjoyed last year at Augusta National.

The defending champion blocked the tee shot on 17 and made bogey Saturday, then followed with another blocked tee ball on 18 that led to a double-bogey.

A lead that had grown as large as four shots dwindled to one. A chance to play defense and stroll through the pines for the final round, the way he did last year en route to his record-tying title, will instead be a battle to stave off 10 players within five shots.

"If I'm at 5 or 6 under, that certainly brings anyone who is over par almost out of the tournament," Spieth said.

Instead, a round of 1-over 73 left him at 3 under and clinging to a one-shot lead over Masters rookie Smylie Kaufman, whose 69 was the best score on a wind-whipped day at Augusta — and one of

only five rounds under par.

Bernhard Langer, the 58-year-old, two-time champion, and Hideki Matsuyama are another shot back.

Sunday's forecast calls for highs in the upper 60s and, for the first time this week, calm winds. In other words, good-scoring conditions.

"Someone gets on a run and shoots 6, 7 under, I know I have to shoot a significant under-par round in order to win this tournament," Spieth said, "when I could have played a different style of golf, like I did on Sunday last year."

Last year, he tied the Masters record by finishing at 18-under par. Nobody drew closer than three shots of Spieth on the last day, and he won by four.

A look at some of the players trying to prevent Spieth from becoming the first back-to-back winner at the Masters since Tiger Woods in 2001 and 2002:

Kaufman: He loves bowling and playing the Masters on his Xbox at his parents' home near Birmingham, Ala., where he still lives. On Sunday, he tees off in the final group of the real Masters — one shot behind Spieth. He shot 69 on Saturday — the only player to break 70. At 24, he is less than two years older than Spieth.

They played a lot of golf against each other as juniors. The series standings: "He's probably 1,000 to zero," Kaufman said. If he could get on the board Sunday, he'll become the first Masters rookie to win since Fuzzy Zoeller in 1979.

Langer: Get ready to party like it's 1993. That's when Langer won the second of his two green jackets. At 58, he would smash the record for oldest player to win the Masters on this, the 30th anniversary of Jack Nicklaus' stunning victory here at age 46. And yet, would it be that big a shock? Langer is in terrific shape and was putting lights-out Saturday. He only needed 27 strokes on the greens to shoot his 70, tied with Danny Willett for fewest putts on the day. "I would say I'm surprised, except, doesn't he win every event on the Champions Tour?" Spieth said. Pretty much. He's won 25 times since joining in 2008.

Matsuyama: The 24-year-old is only two shots back and is trying to become the first male Japanese player to win a major. He could have been in better shape heading into the final round. He made a birdie on No. 14 to get to 3 under, but made three-putt bogeys on 16 and 17 to finish two shots behind.



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Royals shut out winless Twins

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Ian Kennedy followed up an unimpressive spring with a strong regular season debut with the Kansas City Royals.

Kennedy pitched 6²/₃ scoreless innings and the Royals hit their first three home runs of the season to beat the winless Minnesota Twins 7-0 Saturday night.

"There was a little more added to it, coming to a new team that's the defending world champs," said Kennedy, who was 0-3 with a 6.30 in spring games. "You want to do well. It adds a little more to it in your first outing for them."

The Twins fell to 0-5 for the first time since the Washington Senators moved to Minnesota in 1961.

Kennedy (1-0), signed by the Royals to a five-year \$70 million contract in January, limited the Twins to five hits — including four singles, before being pulled after 109 pitches with two out in the seventh. He walked one and struck out seven.

"This is the pitcher we signed," Royals manager Ned Yost said. "We don't even look at spring training numbers. He was on top of his game."

Mike Moustakas and Lorenzo Cain hit successive home runs in the fourth for the first hits off Twins left-hander Tommy Milone, while Kendrys Morales homered in the sixth off Casey Fien.

"Even those two home runs I felt were two pretty well-placed pitches," Milone said. "Just good hitters. They were either waiting for it or good adjustments."

Milone (0-1) allowed four runs — two earned — and four hits in 42²/₃ innings.

Twins shortstop Eduardo Escobar committed two errors — one fielding and one throwing — leading to the two unearned runs in the fifth.

"Everything went wrong that could," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. Paulo Orlando, who was making his first start of the season, had three hits, including an RBI single in the three-run sixth and scored on Alcides Escobar's two-out triple.

Chien-Ming Wang, who won 38 games for the Yankees in 2006-07, pitched a scoreless ninth, his first big league appearance since Aug. 24, 2013, while with Toronto.

Phillies 1, Mets 0: Vince Velasquez's

first pitch in his Philadelphia debut was a fastball. So was his second and his third.

The 23-year-old right-hander opened with 16 consecutive fastballs against host New York, all from 92-95 mph. He struck out a career-high nine over six innings and Ryan Howard's opposite-field home run in the fifth inning off Bartolo Colon provided enough offense their first victory this season.

Yankees 8, Tigers 4: CC Sabathia pitched into the seventh inning in his return for New York, and Alex Rodriguez and Carlos Beltran homered in the cold to lift the Yankees past host.

Sabathia (1-0) allowed three runs and four hits in six-plus innings in his first start since missing the postseason last year while undergoing alcohol rehabilitation. He retired the first nine batters he faced and had only one really messy stretch, in the fourth. Rodriguez gave the Yankees a 1-0 lead in the first with his 688th career homer, and Beltran hit a two-run shot in the fifth.

The temperature at game time was 31 degrees, the coldest in Comerica Park history, according to STATS.

Dodgers 3, Giants 2: Madison Bumgarner hit another home run off Los Angeles star Clayton Kershaw, but both aces were done by the time Charlie Culberson hit a go-ahead double in the 10th inning to lift the visiting Dodgers over San Francisco.

Chris Hatcher (1-0) retired pinch-hitter Joe Panik on a called third strike to send the game into extras, then Kenley Jansen finished for his second save. The Dodgers were on the other side of a 3-2 result in 10 innings a night earlier.

Bumgarner struck out eight and Kershaw had five Ks in his eight innings for another impressive duel between the ace left-handers.

Astros 6, Brewers 4: Colby Rasmus hit two home runs and a sacrifice fly to lead Houston past host Milwaukee.

Tyler White kept up his torrid start for Houston with a sacrifice fly in the first and followed Rasmus in the fifth with his third home run. White is 10-for-15 (.667) so far in his rookie season.

Red Sox 8, Blue Jays 4: Dustin Pedroia had three hits and two RBIs and Rick Porcello pitched six innings to win his season debut to lead visiting Boston.

Jose Bautista hit a pair of two-run home

runs, his first two of the season, but the Blue Jays lost their fourth straight.

Reds 5, Pirates 1: Eugenio Suarez drove in three runs with a single and a homer, and ace-by-default Raisel Iglesias made another solid start as host Cincinnati handed Pittsburgh its first loss.

At 4-0, Pittsburgh was off to its best start since 2003. The Pirates also had their top starter making his debut — Gerrit Cole (0-1) was pushed back in the rotation after developing a sore ribcage during spring training. He still couldn't beat the Reds, falling to 0-5 in seven starts against them.

Cardinals 12, Braves 2: Pitcher Carlos Martinez drove in two runs, matching the total he allowed in six innings, and visiting St. Louis beat Julio Teheran and winless Atlanta.

At 0-4, Atlanta is the only NL team without a victory this season.

Rangers 4, Angels 1: Adrian Beltre homered and doubled twice, leading Cole Hamels and visiting Texas to the win.

The Rangers, however, lost catcher Robinson Chirinos to a broken right forearm. He left in the middle of the game.

Padres 16, Rockies 3: Matt Kemp homered twice and drove in six runs and visiting San Diego ended Trevor Story's home run streak.

Story, who had gone deep six times for the Rockies since making his debut on opening day, was the first major leaguer to homer in each of his first four games. That run ended with a 1-for-5, three-strikeout performance — the shortstop also made his first error.

White Sox 7, Indians 3: Avisail Garcia hit a three-run home run in the decisive seventh inning, ace Chris Sale overcame two home runs to stay unbeaten and Chicago rallied past visiting Cleveland.

Cubs 4, Diamondbacks 2: Arizona ace Zack Greinke got off to a rough start and lost again, with Kris Bryant and Chicago beating the host Diamondbacks.

Athletics 6, Mariners 1: Rich Hill struck out 10 batters over six innings to give Oakland's overworked bullpen a break, Josh Reddick homered for the second straight game and the Athletics beat host Seattle.

Warriors hold on to edge Grizzlies

Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tennessee — Draymond Green scored on a tip-in in with 1 minute left, and the Warriors rallied from 10 points down early in the fourth quarter and beat the Memphis Grizzlies 100-99 on Saturday night to tie at least one NBA record held by the 1995-96 Michael Jordan-led Chicago Bulls.

Golden State now has 33 road wins, tying those Bulls, who went 33-8 away from Chicago. The Warriors (71-9) visit the Spurs on Sunday night, and their next win will tie the Bulls' NBA single-season record of 72 victories — but the Warriors have lost 33 straight in San Antonio.

Green finished with 23 points and grabbed 11 rebounds, Klay Thompson had 20 points and Stephen Curry 17.

Bulls 105, Cavaliers 102: Jimmy Butler scored 21 points, rookie Cristiano Felicio added a career-high 16 and host Chicago Bulls kept its playoff hopes alive with a victory over Cleveland.

Hawks 118, Celtics 107: Paul Millsap had a season-high 31 points and 16 rebounds, Jeff Teague added 24 points and Atlanta beat visiting Boston.

Suns 121, Pelicans 100: Archie Goodwin scored 24 points and Mizra Teletovic added 22 to lead visiting Phoenix past New Orleans.

Kings 114, Thunder 112: Rudy Gay scored 24 points, including two free throws with 1 second left, for the Sacramento Kings, who celebrated the final game at Sleep Train Arena with a victory over Oklahoma City.

Timberwolves 106, Trail Blazers 105: Karl-Anthony Towns hit a turnaround hook shot with 1.8 seconds left and Minnesota held off a furious rally by host Portland.

Caps' Holtby, Ovechkin reach milestones

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Alex Ovechkin had three goals to reach 50 for the seventh time, Braden Holtby won his 48th game to tie the NHL single-season record and the Washington Capitals dashed the St. Louis Blues' Central Division title hopes with a convincing 5-1 victory on Saturday night.

Vladimir Tarasenko started the scoring with his 40th after getting the tying and winning goals in an overtime victory Thursday night at Chicago. The Blues did little else in their regular season finale and finished with the third seed in the Western Conference, pitting them against the Blackhawks in the first round of the playoffs.

Ovechkin is the third player in NHL history with seven 50-goal seasons, joining Mike Bossy and Wayne Gretzky.

Stars 3, Predators 2: Jason Spezza

scored three times, including the winner with 1 minute remaining, and host Dallas beat Nashville to clinch the Central Division title and the top seed in the Western Conference playoffs.

Rangers 3, Red Wings 2: Kevin Hayes scored with 5:38 remaining and Antti Raanta made 31 saves, leading host New York over Detroit.

Even with the loss, the Red Wings reached the playoffs for a 25th consecutive season when Ottawa beat Boston.

Jets 4, Kings 3: Los Angeles blew a three-goal lead and its chance to clinch the Pacific Division title, losing to visiting Winnipeg on Mark Scheifele's shootout goal.

Sharks 1, Coyotes 0: Joe Pavelski scored on a power play 7:29 into the third period and Martin Jones made 20 saves to lift host San Jose over Arizona in the regular season finale for both teams.

Senators 6, Bruins 1: Host Boston lost

starting goalie Tuukka Rask to illness 90 minutes before the face-off, blew their regular-season finale midway through the game and said goodbye to the playoffs before the day was over.

Panthers 5, Hurricanes 2: Florida finished off its record-setting regular season by scoring three times in the first 8 minutes in a win over visiting Carolina.

Flyers 3, Penguins 1: Wayne Simmonds scored two goals, Steve Mason stopped 18 shots and host Philadelphia clinched a playoff berth.

Ducks 5, Avalanche 3: Jakob Silfverberg scored twice and Corey Perry had three assists, leading visiting Anaheim to the victory.

Canadiens 5, Lightning 2: Alex Galchenyuk and Max Pacioretty each scored twice to reach the 30-goal mark and host Montreal ended the regular season with a victory over Tampa Bay.

Blue Jackets 5, Blackhawks 4 (OT):

Scott Hartnell scored a power-play goal at 2:28 of overtime, and host Columbus rallied for a win over depleted Chicago.

Sabres 4, Islanders 3 (OT): Brian Gionta scored twice, including the deciding goal with 2:14 left in overtime, to lead visiting Buffalo over New York.

Flames 2, Wild 1: Patrick Sieloff scored the go-ahead goal in his first NHL game and Niklas Backstrom made 35 saves against his former team, leading Calgary over host Minnesota.

Devils 5, Maple Leafs 1: Adam Henrique scored twice and Kyle Palmieri once to become New Jersey's first 30-goal scorers in four years in a victory over visiting Toronto.

Canucks 4, Oilers 3 (SO): Emerson Etem scored in the seventh round of the shootout, and host Vancouver beat Edmonton in the finale of a disappointing season for each team.