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Survey: Commandos say no to women in special ops jobs

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The men in the military's most dangerous jobs care little about political correctness or gender equality. And they have a message for their political leadership.

When they are fighting in the shadows or bleeding on the battlefield, women have no place on their teams.

In blunt and, at times, profanity-laced answers to a voluntary survey conducted by Rand Corp., more than 7,600 of America's special operations forces spoke with nearly one voice. Allowing women to serve in Navy SEAL, Army Delta or other commando units could hurt their effectiveness and lower the standards, and it may drive men away from the dangerous posts.

An overwhelming majority of those who agreed to respond to the survey said they believe women don't have the physical strength or mental toughness to do the grueling jobs.

Some of the broader conclusions of the survey, taken from May through July 2014, were disclosed by The Associated Press earlier this year, but the detailed results and comments written by respondents had not been released.

The Pentagon released the survey and other documents when Defense Secretary Ash Carter announced last week that he was opening all combat jobs to women. That decision was based on recommendations by the military service secretaries and the leaders of the Army, the Navy, the Air Force and Special Operations Command. Only the Marine Corps asked to exempt women from certain infantry

and front-line positions, but Carter denied that request.

Half the men who got the 46-question survey responded to it, and Rand did not identify any of them. In some cases, people who feel most strongly about an issue are more inclined to answer surveys.

Some 85 percent of the respondents said they oppose opening the special operations jobs to women, and 70 percent oppose having women in their individual units. More than 80 percent said women aren't strong enough and can't handle the demands of the job. And 64 percent said they aren't mentally tough enough.

"I weigh 225 pounds, and 280 pounds in full kit, as did most of the members of my ODA (a 12-man Army Green Beret unit)," one respondent said. "I expect every person on my team to be able to drag any member of my team out of a firefight. A 130 pound female could not do it, I don't care how much time she spends in the gym. Do we expect wounded men to bleed out because a female soldier could not drag him to cover?"

Another said politicians don't win the covert wars.

"Gender equality is not an option when the bullets are flying," he said. "Most males in the area of the world I work in would rather back hand a female than listen to her speak. There is a reason we send men to do these jobs."

Some saw it as inevitable.

"This integration will happen eventually and we might as well embrace it while we have current solid leadership and incoming solid leadership at the top to facilitate the transition," one said.

The deep challenges the survey revealed with integrating women into tight-knit commando teams are not lost on the Pentagon. Gen. Joseph Votel, head of U.S. Special Operations Command, posted a memo and a video online last week after Carter's announcement, explaining the decision and vowing that the qualifying standards for special operations jobs will remain the same.

He noted that women already have moved into some special operations jobs, including as helicopter pilots and crew, members of cultural support teams in Afghanistan and in civil affairs and information operations.

And he added, "If candidates meet time-tested and scientifically validated standards, and if they have proven that they have the physical, intellectual, professional, and character attributes that are so critical to special operations, they will be welcomed into the special operations forces ranks."

The Rand report noted that many of the men had little experience working with women in combat. And special operations officials have said they expect the challenges can be overcome with training and direction over time.

The services have until Jan. 1 to submit implementation plans that would address such issues.

The bulk of those who responded to the survey were young, white, married men. They worry that having women in their small teams could fuel jealousy at home or create problems with sexual harassment or illicit affairs. And they rely on and trust their teams and units as family.

'Offensive' cadet photos spark probe, Citadel says

Associated Press

CHARLESTON, S.C. — South Carolina's military college The Citadel announced Thursday it is investigating after photos surfaced on social media of cadets dressed all in white with pillowcases over their heads, images that evoke the Ku Klux Klan.

"A social media posting, which I find offensive and disturbing, was brought to my attention this morning," retired Air Force Lt. Gen. John Rosa, the president of the college, said in a statement.

The statement said the school has started proceedings to suspend the eight students involved.

The college said the seven students wearing the pillowcases were freshmen. The eighth student in the photos is an upperclassman.

The photos show the students wearing both white T-shirts and white pants with the pillowcases on their heads.

"Preliminary reports are cadets were singing Christmas carols as part of a 'Ghosts of Christmas Past' skit," Rosa's statement said.

University spokesman Brett Ashworth said "at this point, there is no evidence that this was hazing." He said the college is looking into both who took the photograph and how it came to be posted on social media sites.

'ISIL czar' tasked with coordinating US response

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama's new "ISIL czar," Robert Malley, has a long and sometimes controversial history at the center of U.S. policymaking in the Middle East. He's now taking on one of the toughest jobs in Washington: getting the struggling campaign against Islamic State militants on track while Obama refuses to entertain any wholesale strategy change.

Nearly 25 years after they were students together at Harvard Law School, these days Obama and Malley cross paths mostly in the Situation Room, where Malley's role is to ensure the countless U.S. agencies fighting the Islamic State group work in tandem. At stake is an extremist threat that has started exporting violence from Syria and Iraq into the West, raising fears that the U.S. is losing a battle that Obama concedes will still be raging when he leaves office.

Elevated to the role with little fanfare in late November,

Malley's appointment reflected an attempt to show that when it comes to the Islamic State group, Obama wasn't leaving anything to chance. The White House said Malley will serve as counterpart to Brett McGurk, the State Department official tasked with outreach to some five-dozen countries contributing to Obama's coalition.

For Malley, the promotion completed an unusual return to the highest echelon of government, seven years after a political stir over revelations he'd met with the militant group Hamas.

At the time, Malley was working for the International Crisis Group, a nonprofit that studies violent conflicts like the one that has divided Israelis and Palestinians for generations.

Malley said then that he'd never hidden the meetings, which he argued were appropriate for a researcher in his capacity. Still, the incident was one of many in Malley's career that pointed to a willingness to engage with less-than-savory characters.

Poll: Republican voters see Trump as competent

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republican voters in the United States don't think the party's presidential front-runner Donald Trump is likable. They don't think he's compassionate. And many don't consider him particularly honest.

But he's overwhelmingly viewed as decisive and competent. And that's what matters most — at least for now — to Republicans.

A new Associated Press-GfK poll finds that 8 in 10 Republican registered voters call Trump very or somewhat decisive. That's top in the field for the businessman, whose blunt

style was featured for years on reality TV. At the same time, it finds much resistance to him from the country at large.

In the new national survey, three-quarters of Republicans said Trump would have a chance of winning the general election if nominated, significantly more than say so of any other GOP candidate.

Beyond Republicans, 58 percent of all Americans have an unfavorable view of him. That's the worst favorable rating of any candidate in either party, a reminder that decisiveness alone may not be enough to help Trump prevail in next fall's general election if he represents the Republicans in the ballot.

Taliban claim deadly Kabul bomb attack

BY HEATH DRUZIN

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — A car bomb rocked Kabul, and militants stormed a guesthouse Friday evening in a deadly attack claimed by the Taliban in the heart of the Afghan capital, according to police at the scene.

Intermittent gunfire could be heard following the blast in the upscale Shir Pur neighborhood, where many diplomats, other foreigners and prominent Afghan officials live. Police said the attackers were barricaded inside the guesthouse and may have occupied other nearby buildings.

One security guard was killed by the blast, Afghan Interior Ministry spokesman Sediq Sediqqi said. He would not confirm whether there were foreigners in the house nor whether hostages were being held, as the Taliban claimed.

Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy said in a tweet that one Spanish policeman had been injured, though he refuted that the Spanish Embassy was the target.

Afghan Deputy Interior Minister Gen. Ayub Salangi said security forces had killed two attackers, had wounded another

and that Afghan troops were continuing to search for more attackers.

At least eight Afghans, five civilians and three members of the security forces arrived at a hospital run by the nongovernmental organization EMERGENCY. All had light injuries from the car bomb blast.

Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid said militants attacked a guesthouse occupied by foreigners, killed a number of foreigners inside and took others hostage. He gave no numbers.

The attack comes on the heels of a Taliban siege of the Kandahar Airport earlier this week that left 50 people dead and raised fresh questions about the capabilities of the Afghan security forces, who are battling insurgents largely on their own now that international forces have vastly scaled down their troop levels. Both attacks come long after the traditional warm-weather fighting season, when violence generally dips in the fall, when many insurgents head back to safe havens in Pakistan.

Roughly 10,000 U.S. troops remain in Afghanistan, largely in a training-and-advisory role, though a large proportion of them are also conducting counterterrorism operations.

Canadian PM Trudeau welcomes Syrian refugees

TORONTO — The first Canadian government plane carrying Syrian refugees arrived late Thursday in Toronto where passengers were greeted by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who is pushing forward with his pledge to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of February.

The flight from Jordan carrying 163 refugees arrived just before midnight carrying the first of two large groups of Syrian refugees to arrive in the coun-

try by government aircraft.

Trudeau greeted some of the families to come through processing. The first family was Kevork Jamkossian, a gynecologist from Aleppo, wife Georgina Zires, a lab technician, and their 16-month-old daughter, Madeleine.

"We really would like to thank you for all this hospitality and the warm welcome," the father said to Trudeau through an interpreter. "We felt ourselves at home."

"You are home. Welcome home," Trudeau responded.

From The Associated Press

Cardinals clinch playoff berth

Associated Press

GLENDALE, Ariz. — Dwight Freeney has been harassing NFL quarterbacks for 14 years.

Add Teddy Bridgewater to the list. Freeney knocked the ball out of Bridgewater's hand as the Minnesota quarterback prepared to pass. Arizona's Calais Campbell recovered with 5 seconds to go and the Cardinals escaped with a 23-20 victory over the Vikings on Thursday night.

"Freeney is a heck of a player," Minnesota tight end Kyle Rudolph said, "and he's been doing that for a long time."

The Vikings, as they did much of the night, moved swiftly downfield to the Arizona 31, well within Blair Walsh's range for a game-tying field goal.

But it never came to that, thanks to the 35-year-old Freeney, who didn't sign with Arizona until Oct. 13.

"That's why I came back, because moments like this, you can't duplicate those in life," Freeney said. "...Yeah, it was one of my spin moves. It's funny because I spun three times on that series."

The third time was a charm. Carson Palmer threw for 310 yards and two touchdowns and the Cardinals (11-2) won their seventh in a row and clinched a spot in the playoffs.

"We don't know where or when, but we're in," coach Bruce Arians said.

The Cardinals' goal is at least a No. 2 seed in the NFC West, which would mean a first-round bye. With this victory, Arizona pulled 2½ games ahead of Green Bay and three ahead of Minnesota for that No. 2 spot with three to play.

Palmer even had a 6-foot-5, 331-pound receiver. Left guard Mike Lupati caught a deflected pass and carried it for an 11-yard gain to help set up what proved to be a 47-yard game-winning field goal with 1:25 left.

Minnesota (8-5) fell a half-game behind Green Bay for first place in the NFC North.

Here are five things to take from a wild game.

Bridgewater's big night: The fumble aside, Bridgewater had one of the best games of his young career.

He completed 25 of 36 passes for a career-high 335 yards and a touchdown.

Inspirational defeat: The Vikings were coming off an embarrassing 38-7 home loss to Seattle and they didn't have four starters on defense.

It seemed pre-game to be a recipe for a one-sided defeat. But Minnesota gave Arizona fits all night.

"I thought our team resembled more of what I am used to seeing," Vikings coach Mike Zimmer said. "We played with a lot of physicality, a lot of heart, a lot of effort."

Most impressive was the 11-play, 88-yard drive that Bridgewater engineered in the fourth quarter, capped by his 7-yard touchdown pass to Mike Wallace that tied it at 20-20 with 4:50 to play.

"I think we took a big step as a unit," Bridgewater said. "We showed we're capable of doing some great things. Whenever we're clicking on all cylinders we're a tough team to stop."

Palmer hits 4,000: Palmer passed 4,000 yards in a season for the fifth time

in his career, third in the last four years. He became the first player with multiple 4,000-yard seasons for the Cardinals. He's easily on pace to top his career best of 4,274 yards set two years ago in his first season in Arizona.

Palmer's touchdown passes were his 30th and 31st of the season, breaking the franchise record of 30 TDs set by Kurt Warner in Arizona's 2008 Super Bowl season.

"Kurt has been a great player for a long time, in a bunch of leagues it seems like," Palmer said. "I've been a fan of his, the way he played the game. To break that record is a tremendous honor."

Costly mistakes: The Vikings lost three fumbles. The Cardinals had no turnovers.

That statistic goes a long way in explaining Arizona's victory.

Deone Bucannon knocked the ball from Darius Wright's hands deep in Cardinals territory in the first half. Later, Adrian Peterson lost the ball trying to pitch it on a reverse and Alex Okafor recovered for the Cardinals. Finally, the strip of Bridgewater that saved the win for Arizona.

Peterson's night: Peterson said earlier this week that the Vikings were "outplayed and outcoached" in the blowout loss to Seattle. He undoubtedly was not pleased with just eight carries for 9 yards in that contest.

He carried 23 times for 69 yards Thursday night, but 38 of them came on four carries on the Vikings' opening possession, culminating in his 9-yard run for his 100th career touchdown. After that drive, he managed just 31 yards on 19 attempts.

Namajunas takes out VanZant

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Rose Namajunas finished Paige VanZant with a modified rear naked choke midway through the fifth round of a grueling UFC Fight Night bout on Thursday night.

Namajunas (5-2) largely dominated every round, but VanZant repeatedly escaped trouble. After surviving innumerable big strikes and several submission attempts, VanZant (6-2) couldn't escape the final choke.

Michael Chiesa finished Jim Miller with a choke in the second round of an entertaining lightweight fight at the Chelsea venue in the Cosmopolitan hotel.

Touted teenage lightweight Sage Northcutt also won his second UFC fight as the promotion kicked off an MMA extravaganza on the Las Vegas Strip with the first of three packed fight cards in three days.

Featherweight contenders Frankie Edgar and Chad Mendes meet in a main event Friday night at the Cosmopolitan. UFC 194 at the MGM Grand Garden Arena on Saturday night features Jose Aldo's featherweight title defense against Conor McGregor and unbeaten Chris Weidman's middleweight defense against Luke Rockhold.

UFC champions Holly Holm and Joanne Jedrzejczyk watched from cageside as Namajunas and VanZant put on a thriller in the first non-title women's fight to headline a UFC card.

Namajunas controlled VanZant from the opening minutes of the meeting between top strawweight title contenders, but Thug Rose had to go deep into the final round to earn her second win in just over two months.

VanZant got dropped on the canvas early in the first round, and Namajunas opened a major cut on VanZant's right cheek with a flurry of elbows. Namajunas nearly finished late in the third when she leaped on VanZant's back and pulled them both backward to the ground, but VanZant escaped with a completely bloody face.

Namajunas nearly landed two armbars in the fourth round, but VanZant wriggled out of both submission attempts despite getting dominated again.

Namajunas had 10 months of inactivity after losing her title shot in the finale of "The Ultimate Fighter" last December. But the skilled 23-year-old could be closing in on another title shot after thrashing the 21-year-old VanZant, one of the UFC's most heavily promoted prospects.

While she was outclassed, VanZant showed remarkable toughness in a bout that left the fighters embracing afterward.

Chiesa (13-2) extended his rise with a resourceful win over the veteran Miller (25-7). Chiesa turned the fight with style, warding off Miller's kneebar attempt and landing several huge head shots before the finishing choke.

Chiesa celebrated his fourth win in five fights by scaling the cage and yelling, "I love you, Mom!"

Monken, Army ready for Navy challenge

Associated Press

WEST POINT, N.Y. — Jeff Monken looked around Foley Athletic Center, his Army Black Knights sitting quietly on the indoor turf after one of their final practices before Saturday's big game against Navy.

"Be excited for the chance to prove yourselves," Monken said in a firm but calm voice. "I know we're going to win."

Recent history indicates that's going to be a stiff challenge. Navy (9-2) is ranked No. 21, has won the past 13 games between the archrivals, and is an overwhelming favorite to beat Army (2-9).

9-2 vs. 2-9. 22-point underdog. Seems like a sizable mismatch on paper.

Not in minds of the Black Knights, who have come tantalizingly close to winning in three of the past four meetings with Navy: 27-21 in 2011, 17-13 the next year, and 17-10 last December.

"I know nobody gives us a chance, but our guys believe in each other," said Monken, a former assistant at Navy. "I believe in this team. We've come close enough in enough ballgames this year. We're probably a much better football team than 2-9, but we're 2-9 and that's where it stands."

"But in this game and this rivalry, it's a game in itself. I don't think that (the record) much matters."

What does matter these days at West Point is what the players say Monken has accomplished in two seasons at the helm. His first team won four games and, though the record in 2015 is worse, morale remains high for a team that has had only one winning season since the 1996 squad won a school-record 10 games under Bob Sutton.

Perhaps that's because several of the losses this fall — six by a combined 26 points — easily could have been wins for a team that had more than 70 freshmen on the preseason roster.

"He (Monken) has done a great job," said junior linebacker Jeremy Timpf, who last year had 102 tackles and already is one of just 34 players in academy history with over 200 tackles. "There's a lot of discipline being instilled in us. All the guys have bought into his philosophy and his goals and his plan."

Senior Kelvin White, a 6-foot-3, 258-pound tight end and former quarterback says he, like his teammates, thinks about the Navy game every week of the season.

"I wanted to change the culture a little bit," White said. "Maybe our record hasn't

showed it, but we have a lot of things that coach Monken has instilled in us. I think that's going to help us a lot going forward. He came in and had to be really hands-on with the last class because he had to set the culture that he wanted."

"With our class, 2-9 isn't a winning culture, but we do things that championship teams do," White said without elaborating. "Unfortunately, we haven't been able to get the results that we want, but Rome wasn't built in a night. We just have to keep building on what we have."

That low-key approach Monken used in addressing the team on Tuesday night isn't commonplace. How could it be when former fullback Mike Viti is now on the staff? Viti, who was regimental commander and team captain his senior year (2008) and served combat duty in Afghanistan after graduation, completed a 4,414-mile trek right before the Army-Navy game in Baltimore a year ago to stress awareness for America's fallen soldiers in war since 9/11.

In other words, intensity is always up. "Coach Viti might be the most intense person I've ever met,"

Senior Kelvin White — a 6-foot-3, 258-pound tight end and former quarterback — said. "When you see him out here, your switch is immediately on."



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Durant's triple-double lifts OKC

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Four-time scoring champion Kevin Durant set up a rare triple-double with his passing.

The Thunder forward had five assists in the first quarter. He finished with 25 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists in his seventh career triple-double, and Oklahoma City beat the Atlanta Hawks 107-94 on Thursday night.

Durant approached this game differently than the Thunder's loss in Atlanta on Nov. 30. He took four fewer shots and had four more assists than that night.

"I just try to play the game and make it simple for myself," he said. "I knew last time they were expecting me to be aggressive and score every time I got the ball, so I tried to switch the game up."

Russell Westbrook had 23 points and 10 assists. It was just the second time both Durant and Westbrook had at least 10 assists in the same game, and the first time it happened in a win.

"I think it's contagious when your top guys do that," Durant said. "Russell did a great job of setting the tone, and I was able to be aggressive and make some plays."

Durant got his final assist on a pass to Westbrook for a three-pointer with 1:14

remaining.

Serge Ibaka matched a season high with 23 points and grabbed 10 rebounds for the Thunder, who won their third straight.

Kent Bazemore scored 22 points and Jeff Teague had 18 for the Hawks, who had won their previous two games. Kyle Korver added 12 and Thabo Sefolosha finished with 11.

The Thunder outrebounded the Hawks 52-34.

Bulls 83, Clippers 80: Pau Gasol scored 24 points as host Chicago beat Los Angeles to end a three-game losing streak.

The Bulls caught a big break midway through the third quarter when Clippers All-Star Blake Griffin was ejected for a hard foul against Taj Gibson, and they came away with the win after blowing a 16-point lead.

Jimmy Butler finished with 14 points after pouring in a career-high 36 the previous night against Boston. Derrick Rose scored all of his 11 points in the second half, and Gibson finished with 12 points and eight rebounds.

Griffin led the Clippers with 18 points. Chris Paul scored 12 but missed the tying three-point attempt, while DeAndre Jordan added 10 points and 14 rebounds. The Clippers hit 10 of 22 three-pointers

but came up short after winning three straight and six of seven.

Nets 100, 76ers 91: Andrea Bargnani scored a season-high 23 points, and Thaddeus Young had 18 points and 11 rebounds as Brooklyn beat Philadelphia.

The Nets won for the sixth time in their last seven home games. The 76ers fell to 0-13 on the road.

Shane Larkin scored 14 points and Bojan Bogdanovic had 10 for Brooklyn.

Jahlil Okafor had 22 points and 10 rebounds, and T.J. McConnell scored 17 points for Philadelphia.

Kings 99, Knicks 97: Rajon Rondo had 16 points, 12 assists and a jaw-dropping dunk in the fourth quarter that led host Sacramento over New York.

Rondo added nine rebounds to finish just shy of his fifth triple-double of the season. DeMarcus Cousins had 27 points and 11 rebounds for the Kings, who have just their second winning streak of the season. Sacramento also won three in a row in November.

Carmelo Anthony had 23 points and 14 rebounds but missed a potential game-winning three-pointer at the buzzer for the Knicks, who have lost four straight and eight of the past 10 games.

Cyclones rally past rival Iowa

Associated Press

AMES, Iowa — There isn't a team in the country that's better at big comebacks than Iowa State.

The fourth-ranked Cyclones pulled off another stunner Thursday, beating back the rival Hawkeyes with a furious late surge.

Monte Morris hit a runner with nine seconds left and Iowa State rallied from a 20-point deficit to down Iowa 83-82.

Morris and Jameel McKay each had 20 points for the Cyclones (8-0), who scored the game's final nine points to remain unbeaten.

But rallies like that are nothing new for these Cyclones, who roared back from 21 down to stun Oklahoma and 17 down to beat Kansas in the Big 12 Tournament title game last March.

"As long as there is time on the clock, we always have a chance to win," McKay said.

It took a huge spurt just to get the Cyclones in position to steal another one.

A 30-11 run brought Iowa State within 82-81 with 51 seconds left. Morris then drove the lane and floated in the go-ahead shot, which the Cyclones made stand with one final defensive stop.

Jarrod Uthoff scored 30 of his 32 points in the first half for Iowa (7-3), which has lost seven straight in Ames.

"We couldn't get stops," Iowa coach Fran McCaffery said. "They did a really good job capitalizing on our mistakes."

This was Iowa State's first major test in a season that promises to be full of them.

But the Cyclones couldn't find anyone early on who could slow down Uthoff.

They won anyway. Iowa's size gave Iowa State plenty of problems early. The Hawkeyes hit 13 of their first 14 shots inside the three-point line.

Uthoff, fresh off scoring a career-high 27 points on Monday, had 20 points in the first 12 minutes — hitting his first eight shots to help Iowa take a 37-19 lead.

Peter Jok then opened the second half with four straight threes to help put Iowa back on top 62-42.

The Cyclones finally figured out how to slow Uthoff down in the second half, and that blistering late run got them within a point.

Matt Thomas hit a three with 59 seconds left to make it 82-79. Georges Niang then hit a pair of free throws, and Morris capped off the comeback with a shot that Cyclones fans won't soon forget.

"That's 'Big Game Tay,'" McKay said, referencing Morris's nickname. "We all wanted him to take the shot. As long as he was taking it, it was going in. He's that confident of a dude."

Jok had 18 points for Iowa. The Hawkeyes' three losses have come by a combined 12 points.

Thomas scored 19 for the Cyclones, and Niang had 16. Coach Steve Prohm is now the first Iowa State coach to start his tenure with eight consecutive wins.

"This was a great moment, a neat moment," Prohm said.

Iowa State's fans stormed the court after the win, which may have proved costly to longtime Des Moines Register reporter Randy Peterson. He was carried off on a stretcher with what the paper called an apparent broken leg.

Flames ruin Ristolainen's hat trick

Associated Press

CALGARY, Alberta — Some key members of the Calgary Flames sat Thursday night with the flu. Things looked even direr when Johnny Gaudreau left with an apparent injury in the first period.

Gaudreau returned and put Calgary ahead near the end of a wild third period, Sean Monahan had two goals and an assist and the Calgary Flames overcame Rasmus Ristolainen's hat trick in a 4-3 victory over the Buffalo Sabres.

Gaudreau exited after being shaken in a collision but returned for the second period. In the third period, he worked a give-and-go with Monahan, then zipped a low shot through Chad Johnson's pads with 4:50 left for the 4-3 lead.

"It wasn't one of our best games but we found a way," said Monahan, who tied a career-high for points in a game. "When you make costly mistakes like that, it obviously hurts you, but right now we have that confidence in this room we're gonna come back in games and tonight we did it again."

Markus Granlund also scored in Calgary's fourth straight win. Jonas Hiller stopped 27 shots.

Ristolainen scored three goals in the final period, including a tying tally with 5:45 remaining. That one came when he banked a shot from the corner off the skates of Flames defenseman Dennis Wideman and past Hiller.

Karri Ramo was supposed to start his 16th game in his last 17 but came down with a worse flu than what was already ailing Hiller, who had to leave practice early on Wednesday and was not on the ice at the morning skate Thursday.

"You should've been in the locker room around 5:30, quarter-to-6 when the medical staff runs in the coach's office saying 'Guys are puking everywhere,'" Hartley said. "You have Karri Ramo in the laundry room and you have Jiri Hudler in the doctor's room and they're throwing up and they're white like ghosts and suddenly you look at Jonas Hiller and he's coming in, and he's whiter than a snowman."

Monahan has eight goals and 14 points in his last 14 games, including seven points (three goals, four assists) in his last four.

In the season's first 14 games, he had just two goals and eight points. Monahan is now tied with Gaudreau for the team lead with 10 goals.

"Mony's a great student. He pays attention, he works at his game in practice and obviously he is showing progress and he deserves it," Flames coach Bob Hartley said.

The Flames have won eight in a row at home for the first time since Feb. 23 to March 27, 2013. The franchise record is 10 straight.

In the six-team logjam behind Los Angeles in the Pacific Division, the Flames are tied with Edmonton for fewest points, yet are just four points back of second-place Vancouver and with two games in hand.

Panthers 4, Capitals 1: Jaromir Jagr moved into a share of fourth on the career goals list with a first-period score that sparked host Florida to a win over Washington.

Jagr gave the Panthers the lead 51 seconds into the game. Dmitry Kulikov's long shot from the point was deflected by Jagr and bounced into the net. The goal was Jagr's first since Nov. 21 and the 731st of his career, tying him for fourth on the career list with Hall of Famer Marcel Dionne.

Logan Shaw, Aaron Ekblad and Brandon Pirri also scored for the Panthers and Jonathan Huberdeau had two assists. Al Montoya had 19 saves.

Alex Ovechkin scored for Washington and Philipp Grubauer stopped 23 shots in his first start in nine games.

Predators 5, Blackhawks 1: James Neal, Craig Smith and Filip Forsberg each scored in the first period as host Nashville beat Chicago even though Patrick Kane extended his club-record points streak to 24 games.

Kane scored his 18th goal this season at 5:43 of the third. He'll have a chance Friday night against Winnipeg back in

Chicago to match Sidney Crosby's 25-game streak, set in 2010-11, for the longest since 1992-93.

Jets 6, Blue Jackets 4: Mathieu Perrault had a goal and three assists, and Dustin Byfuglien and Drew Stafford each had a goal and two assists as host Winnipeg held off Columbus.

Rookie Connor Hellebuyck made 25 saves and improved to 4-0-0.

Curtis McElhinney stopped 29 shots for Columbus and fell to 0-5-1. McElhinney started in place of Sergei Bobrovsky, who suffered a groin strain on Tuesday and is expected to be out three weeks.

Red Wings 3, Canadiens 2: Darren Helm's second goal with 6:01 left in the third period broke a tie and lifted host Detroit to a comeback win.

Helm scored 1:12 after Justin Abdelkader pulled Detroit into a 2-all tie, scoring off his right skate on a goal that stood after video review.

Petr Mrazek made 21 saves for the Red Wings, whose 12-game point streak matches their longest since 2010.

The Atlantic Division-leading Canadiens have lost four straight, their worst skid in a season that started with a 9-0 record and 18 wins in their first 24 games.

Flyers 4, Blues 2: Claude Giroux capped Philadelphia's three-goal second period with his 11th of the season in a win over host St. Louis.

Michael Raffl and Matt Read also scored in the second and Ryan White added an empty-net goal to help the Flyers snap a two-game skid. Michael Neuvirth made 35 saves.

Robby Fabbri and David Backes scored and Brian Elliott made 25 saves for the Blues. St. Louis has lost four of five games in December.

Lightning 4, Senators 1: Nikita Kucherov had two goals and Ben Bishop made 30 saves as host Tampa Bay beat Ottawa.

Valtteri Filppula and J.T. Brown also scored for the Lightning.

Ottawa got a goal from Cody Ceci.