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Missile interceptor site under Navy control

BY STEVEN BEARDSLEY
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — The U.S. Navy formally assumed control of its missile interceptor site in Romania on Friday, months before the system is expected to be functional.

Despite a presidential mandate that the Aegis Ashore interceptor site at the Romanian air base in Deveselu be operational by the end of 2015, the system has yet to reach that status or to be tied into the larger NATO ballistic-missile defense infrastructure, officials said. Reaching an initial operating capacity is expected to take several more months.

The base in Romania, consisting of a battery and a radar, is one of two land-based interceptor facilities being built for the

European Phased Adaptive Approach, the Obama administration's program to protect cities and U.S. military bases in Europe from so-called rogue states such as Iran and North Korea. The other site, now under construction in Redzikowo, Poland, is scheduled to become operational in 2018.

Other parts of the shield include a radar facility in Turkey, a command node in Germany and four American ballistic-missile defense ships stationed in Rota, Spain.

Friday's ceremony, quiet in comparison to the fanfare that greeted those warships, comes as the U.S. and Russia increasingly coordinate on another issue — Syria, where a civil war has killed hundreds of thousands and has given ground to the Islamic State group.

The ceremony, held in Romania at the U.S. Embassy in Bucharest, was attended by Missile Defense Agency Director Vice Adm. James Syring and Vice Adm. James Foggo III, commander of Navy ships and assets in Europe and Africa.

Syring's agency is responsible for developing the interceptor and declaring it complete for operations. Foggo's command, U.S. 6th Fleet, will staff and operate the system.

The Aegis Ashore system resembles its counterpart at sea, all the way down to the four-story deckhouse that houses the high-powered SPY-1 radar. The site will hold 24 SM-3 Block IB missiles designed to destroy short- and medium-range ballistic missiles.

Russia has opposed NATO's missile defense shield since it

was announced by the administration of President George W. Bush, which planned for a more elaborate system of long-range interceptors based in Poland and the Czech Republic. Moscow argued that neither Iran nor North Korea possessed missiles with ranges capable of reaching Europe. Russia also has criticized the sites as a threat to its strategic nuclear arsenal in the country's west, a claim the U.S. says is technically impossible.

The Navy has been developing the 269-acre site at Deveselu Air Base since October 2013, the first new base built by the service in decades. It formally took control of the base — Naval Support Facility Deveselu — last year, installing both a commanding officer and a small security complement.

beardsley.steven@stripes.com

Japan's Cabinet OKs \$320M for MCAS Iwakuni

BY ERIK SLAVIN
AND HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Japan's Cabinet approved a revised 2015 defense budget Friday with an additional \$320 million for Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, which is slated to receive the Navy's Carrier Air Wing 5 as early as 2017.

The move of the wing from Naval Air Facility Atsugi, which was delayed three years after an initial 2014 target date, is now progressing rapidly, Japanese officials said.

"Additional cost is budgeted ahead of the schedule based on the progress of facility development at Iwakuni," a Japan Defense Ministry spokesman told reporters on condition of anonymity.

The spending package approved Friday also includes \$7.4 million for restoring 128 acres of land transferred in March to the Japanese government from Camp Foster on Okinawa. Another \$2.5 million will be spent on the U.S. Navy tarmac within Kadena Air Base on Okinawa, Japanese officials said.

The Japan Self-Defense Forces also will receive funding for disaster relief and anti-terrorism equipment, according to the budget package.

U.S. Forces Japan officials confirmed Friday that 2017 remains the tentative date for the Carrier Air Wing 5 move.

Navy officials in Japan were not immediately available for comment on the Atsugi-to-Iwakuni transfer. Marine public affairs officials at Iwakuni referred questions to the Japa-

nese government.

Japanese officials have come under political pressure in recent years over aircraft noise coming from NAF Atsugi, which is also home to Japanese Self-Defense Forces aircraft.

In July, a Tokyo High Court ruling upheld a lawsuit filed by thousands of nearby residents that would pay out \$76 million in compensation for the noise.

Carrier Air Wing 5, which serves as the Yokosuka-based aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan's air component, is part of the wider realignment of U.S. forces in the Asia-Pacific region.

The changes include more advanced ships and other hardware being transferred to the region, as well as reassignment of thousands of Okinawa-based Marines to Guam sometime

during the next decade.

In 2013, U.S. Forces Japan told Stars and Stripes that delays in moving support facilities, securing land rights and building on- and off-base housing at Iwakuni forced Japanese and U.S. officials to revise the Iwakuni transfer to 2017.

The move is expected to roughly double the Iwakuni Marine base's population to about 10,000 people.

The Cabinet will submit its revised defense budget to the Diet next month.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's ruling coalition holds a commanding majority in the Diet, making passage of the budget likely.

Stars and Stripes reporter Tyler Hlavac contributed to this report.
slavin.erik@stripes.com
kusumoto.hana@stripes.com

US: Bombers didn't mean to fly over island

Associated Press

BEIJING — The United States said its two B-52 bombers had no intention of flying over a Chinese-controlled, man-made island in the South China Sea, after Beijing accused Washington of “a serious military provocation” in the waters with overlapping claims.

China's Defense Ministry on Saturday accused the U.S. of deliberately raising tensions in the region, where China has been aggressively asserting its claims to virtually all islands, reefs and their surrounding seas. It reiterated it would do whatever is necessary to protect China's sovereignty.

Pentagon spokesman Mark Wright said that the Dec. 10 mission was not a “freedom of navigation” operation, and there was “no intention of flying within 12 nautical miles of any feature,” indicating the mission may have strayed off course.

The U.S. uses preplanned freedom of navigation operations to assert its rights to “innocent passage” in other country's territorial waters.

“The United States routinely conducts B-52 training missions throughout the region, including over the South China Sea,” Wright said in an email to The Associated Press. “These missions are designed to

maintain readiness and demonstrate our commitment to fly, sail and operate anywhere allowed under international law.”

The U.S. takes no official stance on sovereignty claims in the South China Sea, through which \$5 trillion in international trade passes each year. However, Washington insists on freedom of navigation and maintains that China's seven newly created islands do not enjoy traditional rights, including a 12-nautical-mile territorial limit.

China's Defense Ministry demanded Washington take measures to prevent such incidents and damage to relations between the two nations' militaries.

Longtime prisoner detained by Israel killed

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Samir Kantar, a Lebanese who was convicted of carrying out one of the most notorious attacks in Israeli history and spent nearly three decades in an Israeli prison, has been killed by an Israeli airstrike near the Syrian capital, the Lebanese Shiite Hezbollah group said Sunday.

Hezbollah said Kantar, known in Lebanon as “The Dean of Lebanese Prisoners” for being the longest-held prisoner in Israel, was killed along with eight others in the strike in the Damascus suburb of Jaramana Saturday night.

Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV said two Israeli warplanes that violated Syrian airspace fired four long-range missiles at the residential building in Jaramana. It aired footage of what it said was the building, which appeared to be destroyed. Kantar's brother, Bassam, confirmed his “martyrdom” in a Facebook post on Sunday.

Syrian state news agency SANA said Kantar was killed in a “terrorist and hostile missile attack on a residential building.”

Ex-DOD chief Hagel rips White House

The Washington Post

When Chuck Hagel resigned as defense secretary last year, the narrative was clear: President Barack Obama and he did not see eye-to-eye on how to prosecute the war against the Islamic State group, so Hagel needed to go. White House officials, speaking anonymously, said at the time that the president had lost faith in Hagel's ability to lead — a charge that Hagel's advisers brushed aside.

Now, a little over a year later, Hagel is swinging back. In an interview with Foreign Policy magazine published Friday, he said he remains puzzled why White House officials tried to “destroy” him personally in his last days in office, adding that

he was convinced the United States had no viable strategy in Syria and was particularly frustrated with National Security Adviser Susan Rice, who he said would hold meetings and focus on “nit-picky” details.

“I eventually got to the point where I told Susan Rice that I wasn't going to spend more than two hours in these meetings,” Hagel told Foreign Policy. “Some of them would go four hours.”

Hagel said the administration struggled with how to handle Syria — hardly a surprise, given the way Obama said in August 2012 that it would be a “red line” for the United States if Syria moved or used its chemical weapons stockpiles, but did not intervene militarily the fol-

lowing year when Syria did so. Hagel said that hurt Obama's credibility, even if declared stockpiles eventually were removed through an agreement reached with Damascus.

“Whether it was the right decision or not, history will determine that,” Hagel told Foreign Policy. “There's no question in my mind that it hurt the credibility of the president's word when this occurred.”

The White House declined to comment on the article. However, an administration official disagreed anonymously with many assertions in Hagel's interview. Waiting before launching cruise missiles provided a window for the chemical weapons agreement reached, the official said.

\$5K reward offered for ‘affluenza teen’

The Washington Post

A payday awaits anyone who can help the U.S. Marshals service find an infamous teen who is suspected of violating his probation and possibly fleeing the country.

Agents are offering a \$5,000 reward for information that leads to the whereabouts or arrest of Ethan Couch, 18, the Texan who has become known

as the “affluenza teen.”

According to CNN, Terry Grisham, a spokesman for the Tarrant County Sheriff's Office, said, “You can run, but you're always going to be looking over your shoulder. We're not going to give up. We're going to come after you. We're going to find you, wherever you are.”

Couch first made headlines in 2013 when he avoided jail time for a DUI manslaughter con-

viction that killed four people after his lawyers successfully argued that the teen's privilege kept him from knowing right from wrong. Couch's family is reported to be worth millions of dollars, thanks in part to a booming sheet-metal business.

Couch was sentenced to 10 years of probation but failed to appear at a Dec. 11 hearing after a video emerged claiming to show him playing beer pong.

Utah holds off BYU in Las Vegas Bowl

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Utah took advantage of a disastrous start by BYU in the Las Vegas Bowl, scoring five first-quarter touchdowns on turnovers — including two interceptions by Tevin Carter — before holding on to beat the Cougars 35-28 on Saturday.

Carter returned one of the picks for a touchdown and another to the 1 as No. 20 Utah romped to a 35-0 first-quarter lead in the first meeting of the two heated rivals outside of the state of Utah. BYU turned the ball over the first five times it had the ball, with freshman quarterback Tanner Mangum throwing three interceptions and fumbling once.

That was all the scoring Utah (10-3) did, and it nearly cost the Utes the game. Mangum would bring BYU (9-4) back, throwing two touchdown passes and rushing for another with 3:23 left to get the Cougars within one score, but BYU never got the ball back.

Bronco Mendenhall's last game as BYU coach was almost over even before some of the fans settled into their seats, thanks to an opportunistic Utah defense that forced Mangum to fumble on the third play of the game. Midway through the first quarter, the Utes were already up 28-0.

After the game, BYU said it hired former Cougars running back Kalani Sitake as head coach. Sitake was Oregon State's assistant head coach and defensive coordinator.

Mendenhall, who is leaving BYU (9-4) after 11 seasons to coach at Virginia, failed in his try at win No. 100 at the school. Mendenhall, who wanted to coach the bowl game before leaving, finished his BYU career with a 99-43 record.

Camellia Bowl

Appalachian State 31, Ohio 29: At Montgomery, Ala., Zach Matics capped a wild Camellia Bowl with a 23-yard field goal on the final play to lift Appalachian State past Ohio.

The Mountaineers (11-2) moved from their own 21 in the final 1:42 after rallying from a 24-7 deficit in the fourth quarter only to lose the lead again. It was their first bowl game since moving up to FBS.

Quarterback Taylor Lamb had a 32-yard scramble then handed off to backup tailback Jalin Moore several times. Moore had a tackle-breaking 15-yarder and a 6-yarder to set up the kick by Matics, who missed two earlier attempts.

A safety and Josiah Yazdani's 21-yard field goal had given Ohio (8-5) the lead in a game where the Bobcats scored two defensive touchdowns after a sluggish start.

MVP Marcus Cox gained 162 yards on 24 carries for Appalachian State, which set a Sun Belt Conference record for wins in just its second season in FBS.

New Orleans Bowl

Louisiana Tech 47, Arkansas State 28: At New Orleans, Kenneth Dixon had 215 yards from scrimmage and scored four times to become the NCAA's career touchdowns leader, and Louisiana Tech beat Arkansas State 47-28 in the New Orleans Bowl.

Dixon caught six passes for 113 yards and touchdowns of 9 and 59 yards. He carried 21 times for 102 yards, including scoring runs of 8 and 4 yards.

He has 87 touchdowns and 522 points, putting him two TDs and 10 points ahead of Navy quarterback Keenan Reynolds, who plays Monday in the Military Bowl.

Jeff Driskel, a transfer from Florida, closed out his college career by passing for 458 yards and three touchdowns for Louisiana Tech (9-4), which had 687 total yards in finishing a second straight season with a bowl victory.

The loss snapped an eight-game winning streak for Arkansas State (9-4), the Sun Belt Conference champion. Blaise Taylor had a 98-yard kickoff return TD for Arkansas State in the fourth quarter, but by then it was too late to mount a comeback.

New Mexico Bowl

Arizona 45, New Mexico 37: At Albuquerque, N.M., Anu Solomon threw two touchdowns passes and ran for another score to help Arizona hold off pesky New Mexico in the New Mexico Bowl.

Jared Baker ran for 107 yards and three touchdowns, and Cayleb Jones had 182 yards receiving and a touchdown. Linebacker Scooby Wright III, who battled injuries all season, came back for the bowl game and had two sacks and 11 solo tackles. After the game, Wright said he will enter the NFL draft.

New Mexico quarterback Lamar Jordan rushed for three touchdowns and threw a 92-yard touchdown pass to Delane Hart-Johnson before leaving the game in the third quarter with a knee injury. Arizona held star running back Jhurrell Pressley to 75 yards rushing and no touchdowns.

Cure Bowl

San Jose State 27, Georgia State 16: At Orlando, Fla., Kenny Potter scored on a 42-yard run and threw a 1-yard touchdown pass to Josh Oliver in San Jose State's comeback victory over Georgia State in the inaugural Cure Bowl.

Austin Lopez kicked a pair of 19-yard field goals, and Tyler Ervin returned a punt 85 yards for a touchdown for the Spartans (6-7). Ervin had 30 carries for 132 yards to become San Jose State's single-season rushing leader with 1,601. He also set the mark for most all-purpose yards in a season.

San Jose State was one of three teams given bowl berths despite losing records. The Spartans were awarded their post-season spot based on their Academic Progress Rate of 975.

Georgia State's Nick Arbuckle threw for 208 yards and two touchdowns, including a 19-yard scoring pass to Todd Boyd that gave the Panthers (6-7) a 16-13 lead early in the fourth quarter. Arbuckle also threw a 38-yard touchdown pass to Donovan Harden, and set a Sun Belt Conference record for single-season passing yards with 4,368.

Celebration Bowl

North Carolina A&T 41, Alcorn State 34: At Atlanta, Tarik Cohen rushed for 295 touchdowns and three touchdowns of 73 or more yards Saturday, and North Carolina A&T used a slew of big plays for a win over Alcorn State.

The Celebration Bowl, matching champions of the two historically black Division-I conferences, had four scoring plays in the first quarter cover a combined 315 yards.

Cohen's 73-yard scoring run with 4:17 left in the game was the game-winner, although Alcorn State threatened the Aggies till the end. Only when Lenorris Footman's fourth-and-goal pass from the 9-yard-line sailed over a receiver with nine seconds left was North Carolina A&T (10-2) safe.

No. 4 Kentucky upset by Ohio State

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Keita Bates-Diop scored 14 points and Ohio State held off a furious second-half rally by No. 4 Kentucky for a 74-67 victory Saturday in the CBS Sports Classic at Barclays Center.

The Buckeyes (6-5) led by 16 points with 11:26 to play but had to withstand not only the Wildcats' rally but a crowd of 16,311 mostly Kentucky fans making so much noise it sounded like Rupp Arena.

Freshman Jamal Murray had a season-high 33 points for the Wildcats (9-2) and kept the rally going with three-pointer after three-pointer. He finished 7 of 9 from beyond the arc, all the makes in the second half.

No. 1 Michigan State 78, Northeastern 58: Denzel Valentine scored 17 points and Michigan State beat host Northeastern to improve to 12-0.

No. 2 Kansas 88, Montana 46: Perry Ellis had 18 points and nine rebounds for

host Kansas.

No. 3 Oklahoma 87, Creighton 74: Buddy Hield scored a career-high 33 points to help host Oklahoma pull away.

Northern Iowa 81, No. 5 Iowa State 79: At Des Moines, Iowa, Wes Washpun scored a career-high 28 points and had 11 assists and Northern Iowa upset Iowa State for its second win over a top-five opponent this season.

No. 6 Maryland 82, Princeton 61: Jake Layman scored a season-high 19 points and Robert Carter fueled a second-half surge that enabled host Maryland to pull away.

Utah 77, No. 7 Duke 75 (OT): At New York, Kyle Kuzma scored 21 points to lead Utah past Duke in the Ameritas Insurance Classic.

No. 8 Virginia 86, No. 12 Villanova 75: Anthony Gill scored 22 points and London Perrantes had 15 of his 19 in the second half to help Virginia hold off visiting Villanova.

No. 17 Butler 74, No. 9 Purdue 68: At Indianapolis, Roosevelt Jones scored 19 points, Tyler Lewis had 17 and Butler beat Purdue, sending the Boilermakers to their first loss of the season.

No. 10 Xavier 85, Auburn 61: Jalen Reynolds had a season-high 18 points as Xavier's front line dominated, and the Musketeers got their best start in school history by beating visiting Auburn.

No. 11 North Carolina 89, No. 22 UCLA 76: At New York, Brice Johnson scored 27 points, the second straight game he set his career high, and beat UCLA in the CBS Sports Classic at Barclays Center.

No. 13 Arizona 82, UNLV 70: Dusan Ristic scored a career-high 20 points, Ryan Anderson had 17 points and 13 rebounds, and Arizona outlasted visiting UNLV.

No. 14 Providence 73, Rider 65: Ben Bencil had 19 points and 12 rebounds and host Providence beat Rider in the Friars'

second straight game with star Kris Dunn.

No. 15 Miami 85, College of Charleston 63: Ja'Quan Newton scored a career-high 20 points, Sheldon McClellan added 14 and host Miami returned from an 11-day break to beat College of Charleston.

No. 24 Texas A&M 80, No. 16 Baylor 61: Jalen Jones and Danuel House scored 17 points apiece for host Texas A&M.

No. 19 Louisville 78, Western Kentucky 56: Quentin Snider scored 16 points for host Louisville, and Trey Lewis and Damion Lee each added 15 points.

No. 21 George Washington 87, Saint Peter's 74: Tyler Cavanaugh scored 18 points, and Patricio Garino added 16 for host George Washington.

No. 23 Cincinnati 69, VCU 63: Troy Caupain and Farad Cobb had 15 points apiece for visiting Cincinnati.



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Jets keep pressure on in AFC wild card

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Ryan Fitzpatrick threw his first interception in almost a month and probably should have ended up with one or two more.

Still, the New York quarterback was on target when he needed to be, and the Jets kept the pressure on Pittsburgh and Kansas City in the race for two wild-card spots in the AFC.

Randy Bullock kicked a 40-yard field goal with 36 seconds left and the Jets moved a half-game ahead of the Steelers and Chiefs with a 19-16 victory over the Dallas Cowboys on Saturday night.

Fitzpatrick's 43-yard pass to Kenbrell Thompkins put the Jets (9-5) in position for their first four-game winning streak since 2010.

"Kind of had tough sledding for a while," Fitzpatrick said. "There's going to be adversity throughout the game and I thought that was a great sign for us to show that the belief is always there. This is a winning football team."

Kellen Moore replaced an ineffective Matt Cassel at quarterback and gave the Cowboys (4-10) a spark, but it wasn't enough to keep last year's NFC East champions from being eliminated with two games remaining.

Eric Decker caught a 3-yard scoring pass to set a franchise record with Brandon Marshall with 21 combined touchdowns receiving as the Jets won their fourth

straight for the first time since 2010.

Fitzpatrick threw his first interception since Nov. 22 to give the Cowboys a field goal and a 13-9 lead in the third quarter, but came back to direct a 70-yard drive to Decker's score. He finished 26 of 39 for 299 yards.

"He made some timely throws," Jets coach Todd Bowles said. "He took a bunch of hits during the game. They weren't clicking like they have been the last couple of weeks, but he was calm and he was good and the guys believed in him."

Decker and Marshall broke the franchise mark of 20 combined TDs that they shared with Art Powell-Don Maynard (1960) and Al Toon-Wesley Walker (1986).

Dan Bailey tied it at 16 on a 50-yard field goal that caromed through off the right upright with 1:55 remaining. Moore got the tying drive going by sneaking a pass behind Buster Skrine for a 23-yard gain to Cole Beasley.

The first play after a near-fumble by Fitzpatrick on a sneak for a first down was held up on review, Thompkins got behind rookie cornerback Byron Jones along the sideline before stepping out of bounds at the Dallas 26.

The last chance for the Cowboys ended on Moore's third interception when his desperation heave for Dez Bryant went over the outstretched arm of the All-Pro receiver and was caught by Marcus Williams. The Cowboys had four interceptions overall.

"We all start with aspirations," said Jason Garrett, who

had already clinched his first losing season as Dallas coach. "For some teams it works out and you get to play in the playoffs. For us this year that is not going to happen. But that doesn't diminish the work everyone has put in."

Cassel was replaced after two bumbling plays in the first half.

On the first, he stumbled trying to change directions after faking a throw and threw to blindly to a spot where Darrelle Revis was by himself for the easy interception. Cassel came out the series after taking a 19-yard sack, which wasn't long after he left the field to loud boos following a three-and-out.

Moore played in the regular season for the first time in four years in the NFL. His second pass was intercepted by Marcus Gilchrist, but he rebounded to beat a New York blitz by slinging the ball in the flat to Bryant, who got around Revis for the touchdown and a 10-9 lead.

Moore, the fourth quarterback used by Dallas this year with Tony Romo twice breaking his left collarbone, had a chance to add to that lead but threw his second interception to Calvin Pryor in the end zone in the third quarter.

But Fitzpatrick then threw it directly to Terrance Mitchell for the first interception by a Dallas cornerback this season. Mitchell was signed to the practice squad and activated this week after a hamstring injury sidelined Morris Claiborne.

Benn, Spezza help Stars rout division leader Habs

Associated Press

DALLAS — Jamie Benn had two goals and an assist on Saturday night, and he was just as good without the puck.

In a battle of division leaders, the Dallas Stars scored within the first 2 minutes of each period and beat the Montreal Canadiens 6-2.

"We're focusing on good starts," Benn said. Jason Spezza gave the Stars a lead they never lost with his goal just 1:34 into the game.

"[Spezza] got a pretty nice goal early to fire us up and win the crowd," Benn said. "We found a way to score a few in the second."

Benn regained the NHL lead with 22 goals, passing the Blues' Vladimir Tarasenko.

Benn's teammates also were impressed with their captain's leadership and a big hit on Montreal's Jeff Petry.

"There's no doubt about it, [Benn is] our leader," Spezza said. "He senses the urgency when the team's dipping. He can take over games at certain times."

The Canadiens' Daniel Carr scored their first power-play goal in eight games to pull within 3-1 midway through the second period. As Montreal tried to clear the puck from its zone, Benn belted Petry into the boards. It was one of a team-leading four hits by Benn, and he also blocked a shot.

The puck then went to Tyler Seguin, who skated from the left corner to the middle of the left faceoff circle and sent a shot past Canadiens goalie Mike Condon.

Central Division-leading Dallas improved to 24-7-2 and reached a league-high 50 points in only 33 games.

Montreal leads the Atlantic Division despite losing seven of its last eight games. This loss kicked off an eight-game trip.

"We lost some games at home that we believe we were playing some really good hockey," Montreal coach Michel Therrien said. "It's not the same thing tonight."

Blackhawks 3, Sabres 2 (SO): Patrick Kane made his Buffalo homecoming a winning one by scoring the tying goal in the final minute and then adding the lone shootout goal.

Kane tied it with 34 seconds left while the Blackhawks enjoyed a 6-on-3 advantage.

Avalanche 5, Oilers 1: Semyon Varlamov made

39 saves, Jarome Iginla scored his 598th career goal and host Colorado earned its fifth consecutive win.

Varlamov tied his career high with his sixth victory in a row and improved to 7-1 in December.

Blues 3, Flames 2: Vladimir Tarasenko had a goal and two assists, lifting host St. Louis.

Colton Parayko and Jori Lehtera also scored and Brian Elliott made 36 saves for the Blues (20-10-4), who have won three straight.

Maple Leafs 5, Kings 0: Jonathan Bernier stopped 26 shots in his first win of the season as host Toronto beat Los Angeles.

Coyotes 1, Islanders 0: Louis Domingue stopped 25 shots for his first NHL shutout, Oliver Ekman-Larsson scored and host Arizona bounced back from its worst defensive performance of the season to beat slumping New York.

The Coyotes stymied the Islanders despite entering the night allowing a league-worst 4.6 goals per game in December.

Ducks 2, Devils 1: Chris Stewart and Ryan Kesler each scored first-period goals and Frederik Andersen stopped 21 shots as visiting Anaheim beat New Jersey.

Mike Cammalleri scored late in the third period to spoil Andersen's shutout bid. Keith Kinkaid made 16 saves for the Devils.

Hurricanes 2, Penguins 1: Jordan Staal and John-Michael Liles scored first-period power-play goals to lead visiting Carolina over struggling Pittsburgh.

The Penguins have lost five straight, including four since hiring Mike Sullivan as coach to replace the fired Mike Johnston.

Blue Jackets 3, Flyers 2 (SO): Brandon Dubinsky scored in the sixth shootout round, rookie Joonas Korpihalo got his first NHL win for host Columbus.

Cam Atkinson also scored in the shootout for Columbus.

Predators 3, Wild 2: Mike Ribeiro had a goal and an assist to lead host Nashville.

Filip Forsberg and James Neal also scored for the Predators, who snapped a three-game losing streak. Shea Weber had two assists, and Pekka Rinne stopped an early penalty shot.

Melo helps Knicks to 4th straight win

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Carmelo Anthony scored 27 points and the New York Knicks beat the weary Chicago Bulls 107-91 on Saturday night for their fourth straight victory.

A night after losing a four-overtime game in Chicago, the Bulls started well and had a strong third quarter, but the rest of the night mostly belonged to the Knicks.

Arron Afflalo added 18 points for New York, which got back to .500 at 14-14 after winning just 17 games last season. Lance Thomas scored 13 off the bench.

Joakim Noah had a season-high 21 points for the Bulls in his first start of the season. Rookie forward Bobby Portis had the best night of his brief career with 20 points and 11 rebounds.

Thunder 118, Lakers 78: Kevin Durant had 22 points and eight rebounds, Enes Kanter had 19 points and 14 rebounds and Oklahoma City beat Los Angeles for its eighth straight home win. Russell Westbrook added 13 points and 11 assists for his 18th double-double of the season for Oklahoma City. The Thunder won for the fifth straight time against the Lakers.

Kobe Bryant sat for Los Angeles with a sore right shoulder. Lou Williams scored 20 points and Jordan Clarkson added 15, but the Lakers lost for the 15th time in 17 games.

Rockets 107, Clippers 97: Dwight Howard had 22 points and 14 rebounds and Houston built a huge lead early and rolled over visiting Los Angeles.

Houston led by as many as 26 points in the first half and was up by 12 after three quarters. The Rockets opened the fourth with an 8-2 run to make it 91-73. Marcus Thornton highlighted that spurt when he drove into the lane, evaded Blake Griffin and finished with a layup.

Houston pushed the lead to 95-76 with about 7½ minutes left when Howard blocked a shot by Austin Rivers, and Trevor Ariza grabbed the ball and dished it to Howard, who finished with a dunk on the other end.

Grizzlies 96, Pacers 84: Marc Gasol had 19 points and 12 rebounds, Matt Barnes finished with 15 points and 10 rebounds and host Memphis beat Indiana.

Mike Conley added 20 points and eight assists as the Grizzlies snapped a two-game skid. Mario Chalmers had 12 points for Memphis and Jeff Green added 11.

Paul George led the Pacers with 29 points, despite going 8 of 22 from the field. The loss snapped Indiana's three-game winning streak.

Wizards 109, Hornets 101: John Wall had 27 points and 12 assists, Garrett Temple scored a career-high 21 points and host Washington beat Charlotte.

Wall scored 20 points in the first half and then drilled a key jumper with just over 2 minutes left in the game after the Hornets nearly erased a 15-point deficit. Cody Zeller's layup cut the lead to 99-98 with 2:24 to play.

Jared Dudley matched a season high with 19 points and Marcin Gortat had 18 points for Washington.