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Senate confirms Carter to lead DOD

BY JON HARPER

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Ashton Carter cleared the final hurdle to becoming the next secretary of defense Thursday when the Senate approved his nomination by President Barack Obama.

He was confirmed by an overwhelming vote, with 93 senators voting in favor and only five against. A simple majority is needed to confirm a Cabinet secretary nominee.

The lawmakers voting against

Carter were Sens. Roy Blunt, R-Mo.; Mike Crapo, R-Idaho; Mark Kirk, R-Ill.; John Boozman, R-Ark.; and James Risch, R-Idaho.

Carter's confirmation seemed to be a foregone conclusion heading into the roll call. He has been widely praised by both Republicans and Democrats. Following a smooth confirmation hearing last week, the Senate Armed Services Committee voted 25-0 to send his nomination to the Senate floor.

His easy confirmation process stands in sharp contrast to that of outgoing Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, who saw his nomination filibustered two years ago after a poor confirmation hearing performance. The former Army sergeant and Republican senator had previously made controversial remarks about Israel and other issues, which drew fire from lawmakers. Some even suggested that he had cozy ties with America's adversaries.

Some outside observers are not thrilled about Carter taking over the Pentagon. The Project on Government Oversight, a watchdog group, decried his ties to the defense industry in a blog post last month. "Carter's nomination serves to illustrate how the government allows members of the policy establishment to straddle both sides, and how it's become a fixture of the military-industrial-congressional complex."

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CIA scales back presence in Yemen amid turmoil

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The closure of the U.S. Embassy in Yemen has forced the CIA to significantly scale back its counterterrorism presence in the country, according to current and former U.S. officials, who said the evacuation represents a major setback in operations against al-Qaida's most dangerous affiliate.

The spy agency has pulled dozens of operatives, analysts and other staffers from Yemen as part of a broader extraction of roughly 200 Americans who had been based at the embassy in Sanaa, officials said. Among those removed were senior officers who worked closely with Yemen's intelligence and security services to target al-Qaida operatives and disrupt terrorism plots often aimed at the United States.

The departures were triggered by mounting concerns over security in Yemen's capital, Sanaa, where Houthi rebels have effectively toppled the government.

Britain and France said Wednesday that they also would close their embassies, as news

Marines disable weapons

Stars and Stripes

Marine guards disabled all of their personal weapons before leaving Yemen as part of the evacuation of the U.S. Embassy in the capital of Sanaa, the military said Wednesday.

A statement from the Marine Corps released Wednesday said none of the weapons belonging to the embassy's Marine security detachment were handed over to anyone upon departure.

"All crew-served weapons were destroyed at the embassy prior to movement,"

footage showed Houthi fighters driving off in vehicles that U.S. diplomats had abandoned at an airport during their exodus.

The collapse of Yemen's government already had disrupted some U.S. counterterrorism operations in Yemen. The closure of the U.S. mission compounds the challenges and "is extreme-

the statement said. "None of them were 'handed over' in any way to anyone. The destruction of weapons at the embassy and the airport was carried out in accordance with an approved destruction plan."

Officials said the Marines left the embassy on Tuesday with only personal weapons. Upon arriving at the airport, they removed the bolts and smashed them with sledge hammers and then did the same to the weapons' bodies. They later flew out on commercial aircraft.

ly damaging" to the CIA's mission in Yemen, said a former senior U.S. official involved in the effort. That person said that the embassy had served as the primary base in Yemen for U.S. intelligence operations and that "the political turmoil in Sanaa and the closure of the embassy all play into the hands" of al-

Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, or AQAP, as the Yemeni franchise is known.

U.S. officials emphasized that not all CIA personnel were withdrawn from Yemen, saying that the agency would try to salvage an intelligence network that it had assembled in cooperation with Yemen, Saudi Arabia and other allies during the past five years.

But officials acknowledged that key intelligence arrangements and relationships have been severed at least temporarily. The embassy's closure, for example, involved the departure of key CIA and U.S. military personnel who in recent years have worked alongside Yemeni and Saudi counterparts at a counterterrorism center in Sanaa.

Senior U.S. lawmakers warned of significant damage to counterterrorism efforts.

"The coup in Yemen and the deteriorating security situation in Sanaa are particularly concerning because they will hinder the United States' campaign against al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula," Rep. Devin Nunes, R-Calif., said Wednesday in a written statement.

VA chief to Iraq War vet: 'What have you done?'

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert McDonald on Wednesday asked a Republican lawmaker who served in both Iraq wars, "What have you done?" as the two men sparred over huge cost overruns at a troubled Denver VA hospital.

McDonald was defending the VA's budget at a hearing when he and Colorado Rep. Mike Coffman tussled over construction delays and cost increases at the long-delayed hospital project.

After a few minutes of arguing, McDonald snapped at Coffman: "I've run a large company, sir. What have you done?"

Coffman, an Army veteran, did not respond at the hearing. But the four-term lawmaker said in a statement later that he could tell McDonald a few things he hasn't done.

"I have never run a federal agency that tolerates corruption the way the VA has. I've never built a hospital that's years behind schedule and hundreds of millions over budget. And I've never been a skill for inept bureaucrats who allowed American heroes to die on a medical waiting list," he said.

The dust-up started when Coffman criticized the VA for citing its legal efforts to defend the Denver hospital project as a major accomplishment.

Panel: Tricare in 'death spiral'

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The military's Tricare health insurance is a broken system that is now in a "death spiral" and must be replaced, a congressional review commission told the House on Wednesday.

The insurance has been veering toward less choice and access since it was created and now falls far behind other networks in its number of providers and ability to incorporate new types of medical care, members of the Military Retirement and Compensation Modernization Commission testified before an Armed Services subcommittee.

The testimony is the beginning of hearings on Capitol Hill so lawmakers can consider legislation to overhaul the health coverage, troop retirement sys-

tem and other compensation that the Pentagon says is growing too expensive to sustain. The Senate has also planned a series of subcommittee hearings to weigh a number of the commission recommendations, including a complete restructuring of the 20-year military retirement system.

Commission member Stephen Buyer warned House lawmakers that the Pentagon and contractors will likely try to persuade them the Tricare system is not in trouble and they should not believe the claims.

"Tricare is a broken system ... do not get sucked into the status quo," Buyer said.

He said the essential problem with the military's system is that it has driven down costs by reducing its reimbursements to health care providers below that paid to Medicare, the gov-

ernment-subsidized insurance system that functions as a measuring stick for the industry.

The low payments have driven doctors and providers out of the system, said Buyer.

Furthermore, the system is very slow to cover new and emerging procedures for military patients because updates are done rarely on a cyclical schedule, said commission member Peter Chiarelli, a retired general.

The commission is proposing replacing the health insurance with a wider selection of private plans for troops and their families, similar to what is offered to civilian employees. It would result in about a \$5 increase per year for a policy that costs \$535, and would save the military about \$6 billion to \$7 billion per year.

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Widow of slain sniper testifies at trial

The Associated Press

STEPHENVILLE, Texas — The widow of the Navy SEAL depicted in the Oscar-nominated film "American Sniper" clutched military dog tags and told jurors about her final moments with her husband, just hours before he and a friend were slain at a Texas gun range.

Taya Kyle was the first prosecution witness called Wednesday in the murder trial of the ex-Marine accused of fatally shooting Kyle and his friend,

Chad Littlefield, two years ago. The trial in the small town of Stephenville, Texas, about 30 miles from the rural luxury resort where the men were killed, has attracted national attention with the recent release of the blockbuster movie based on the memoir of the sniper who served four tours in Iraq.

Defense attorneys are seeking an insanity defense for Eddie Ray Routh, 27, who faces life in prison without parole if convicted of capital murder. Kyle had taken the troubled

Marine to the shooting range after Routh's mother asked Kyle if he could help him.

Taya Kyle paused and then her voice broke when a prosecutor asked her to give jurors the name of the man she'd married.

"I'm not nervous, just emotional," she told the prosecutor.

She told jurors that as her husband left to go to the shooting range on Feb. 2, 2013, "We just said we loved each other and gave each other a hug and kiss, like we always did."

Japan's first lady tours USS George Washington

BY ERIK SLAVIN
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The USS George Washington played host Thursday to Japan's first lady and U.S. Ambassador to Japan Car-

oline Kennedy, completing one of its highest-profile ship tours before the aircraft carrier leaves Japan later this year.

Akie Abe, wife of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, spent a few hours aboard talking with

sailors, checking out the flight line and purchasing some Navy gear in the ship store, among other activities.

The tour began with three of the approximately 500 women serving aboard the carrier sharing an overview of the

ship's firefighting capabilities.

In recent years, Abe has been outspoken in her support for more women to be active in the job market, despite Japan's male-dominated business culture.

All-Star weekend brings best to NYC

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Think basketball is bad in New York now? Marv Albert remembers when fans would go to Madison Square Garden and wouldn't even stick around to watch the Knicks.

The days of NBA doubleheaders there are long gone — a good thing, so both of New York's bumbling ballclubs can't lose at the same place on the same day.

Fans in the Big Apple remain just as passionate about good basketball as they were then, when the chance to see someone like Bill Russell made the opening act the main event. They get their chance this weekend when the NBA All-Star festivities come to town, and locals say the enthusiasm can't be diminished no matter how many games the Knicks or Nets have lost.

"I don't think it matters because you have all these great stars coming there and I think it's going to be a wild scene, both Saturday in Brooklyn and then Sunday at the Garden," said Albert, a New York native and longtime

Knicks broadcaster who will call the game on TNT.

Breaking from what had become standard procedure of taking the mid-winter showcase to a warm-weather city, the NBA decided to stay home in 2015 and show off two of its flashiest arenas: Brooklyn's Barclays Center, opened in 2012, and famed Madison Square Garden, recently renovated over the course of three years, and both with \$1 billion price tags.

The buildings may be magical, but the basketball is miserable. The Knicks are headed toward their worst season ever with a 10-41 record entering Monday, while the Nets were 21-29, though still in the playoff race thanks to the mediocrity of the Eastern Conference.

Subway stations and trains have been decorated with pictures of the NBA's best, but there's nothing the league can do to clean up the Knicks and Nets. No matter, says Commissioner Adam Silver.

"I know that as a New Yorker, I don't think interest in people's favorite teams wanes necessarily because the team isn't successful in a particular year," he said last month at a press conference before a game in London.

Brooklyn gets the Friday and Saturday events, All-Star Saturday being highlighted by a three-point contest featuring Golden State teammates Stephen Curry and Klay Thompson, and Atlanta sharpshooter Kyle Korver. The game Sunday is at MSG, "the world's most famous arena" where Joe Frazier beat Muhammad Ali in the "Fight of the Century," and Willis Reed gamely limped out of the tunnel to play in Game 7 against the Lakers and spark the Knicks to the 1970 NBA championship.

The building remains revered by today's players, no matter how bad the Knicks team is that's waiting when they get there.

"Regardless of what the Knicks or the Nets are doing, the city is the Mecca of basketball," said TNT analyst Kenny Smith, who grew up in Queens before winning two NBA titles in Houston.

"I think that the city will be excited, regardless of what the Knicks, the Nets, St. John's, Fordham University or any other teams are doing. It's a city game. We own that and we love it, and we relish the fact that we are that."

Woods won't return until game is ready

The Associated Press

PEBBLE BEACH, Calif. — Tiger Woods said Wednesday his game is "not acceptable" to compete in tournaments and he will return when he thinks it is.

Hopeful of having injuries behind him, Woods made a horrific start to the new year. He shot a career-high 82 in the second round of the Phoenix Open to miss the cut by 12 shots. And then he withdrew after 11 holes of ordinary golf at Torrey Pines because of tightness in his back from a fog delay.

Woods said on his website the last two weeks have been disappointing, especially at Torrey Pines, where he is an eight-time winner. He said he never wants to withdraw, but recent injuries have allowed that to happen too often.

Woods said his latest injury was not related to the back surgery he had last spring, and that he is feeling better every

day with physical therapy.

"Right now, I need a lot of work on my game, and to still spend time with the people that are important to me," Woods said. "My play, and scores, are not acceptable for tournament golf. Like I've said, I enter a tournament to compete at the highest level, and when I think I'm ready, I'll be back."

Woods is not playing Pebble Beach or Riviera, and said he would practice next week at his home and at The Medalist "getting ready for the rest of the year."

He said he wants to play the Honda Classic, which starts Feb. 26, but he won't be there unless his game is tournament ready.

"That's not fair to anyone," Woods said. "I do, however, expect to be playing again very soon."

Ernie Els, who has known Woods longer than any other active PGA Tour player, heard about his woes while playing in Dubai and later saw highlights.

"As competitive as we are, we don't want to see anyone suffer like that," said Els, who has finished second to Woods more than any other player. "We've got to do our stuff in public. I don't care if you're Tiger Woods, Ernie Els or whoever. If you have some error in your game, you get exposed."

Woods, the winner of 79 PGA Tour events and 14 majors, has never looked this bad on the golf course. He had back surgery to relieve a pinched nerve a week before the Masters and missed three months (including the first two majors), and then he took four months off at the end of last year to regain strength and get his back fully healed.

Woods is at No. 62 in the world, his worst ranking since before he won his first PGA Tour event in 1996. He is not eligible for the World Golf Championship at Doral.

"I am committed to getting back to the pinnacle of my game," Wood said.

Karl goes to Kings

The Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif.— The Sacramento Kings have reached an agreement in principle with George Karl to become their third coach this season.

A news conference to introduce Karl would be scheduled when the agreement was finalized, the NBA team said on Thursday.

Karl, ranked sixth on all-time wins by NBA coaches, is expected to coach the Kings in their first game following the All-Star break at home against Boston on Feb. 20.

The Kings surprisingly fired coach Michael Malone in December after an 11-13 start in his second season, even though they had shown progress until All-Star center DeMarcus Cousins was sidelined by viral meningitis. Malone was replaced by Tyrone Corbin, but the Kings said on Thursday that Corbin was relieved of his duties.

Corbin will remain with the Kings as an adviser to the front office, general manager Pete D'Alessandro said in a statement.

D'Alessandro and assistant general manager Mike Bratz are among those who worked with Karl in Denver, and team adviser Chris Mullin played for him with the Golden State Warriors from 1986-88.

Karl, working as a TV analyst, last coached in the 2012-13 season, when he was chosen as the NBA coach of the year with Denver before being fired following a first-round playoff loss to Golden State.

The 63-year-old Karl, a cancer survivor, has 1,131 victories as a coach, with stops in Cleveland, Golden State, Seattle and Milwaukee, earning a reputation for turning around teams.

Sacramento present a challenge, as the Kings are headed for a ninth straight losing season.

Adams puts transfer rule under scrutiny

The Associated Press

Vernon Adams passed for 658 yards and six touchdowns against Montana State the past two seasons, leading Eastern Washington to a victory each time.

Still, Bobcats coach Rob Ash is disappointed to see Adams transfer from the Big Sky to the Pac-12 and wants Football Championship Subdivision coaches to push to change the rule that allows the dynamic quarterback to play for Oregon next season.

"We're Division I like the other level," Ash said in a telephone interview. "Our guys need to start and finish at the same school. We cannot be perceived as a farm system or Triple-A ballclub or anything like that."

Adams signed a grant-in-aid agreement

with Oregon, hoping to take advantage of an NCAA rule that allows athletes who have graduated to switch schools and be immediately eligible to play. Most transfers must sit out a season.

The rule was put in place to allow athletes to pursue graduate degrees that were not offered at their schools, but it has turned into college football free agency.

"I'm really opposed to this rule the way it's starting to be manipulated by FBS schools," said Ash, who has never had a losing record in eight seasons at Montana State. "As FCS coaches, we need to lobby now to get this rule changed. It's going to be potentially a very difficult, bad situation for FCS with really good players that we recruit, we develop, being tempted to move on for that fifth and final year."

Big Sky Commissioner Doug Fullerton said that might not be necessary. He expects all transfer rules to be examined and reformed as the NCAA moves to become more "student-athlete-centric."

Fullerton agreed the grad transfer rule has morphed into something it was not intended to be. Adams could spend one semester at Oregon and then leave to pursue a professional football career.

While Eastern Washington has not stood in Adams' way, school officials are not happy with that their opening opponent next season poached their All-American.

The graduate transfer rule also doesn't sit well with many at the FBS level.

"It smacks of hired gun, for one thing," Big 12 Commissioner Bob Bowlsby said. "There typically are no good academic reasons for the transfer."



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No. 2 Virginia barely holds off NC State

The Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — Second-ranked Virginia survived its first test without injured starter Justin Anderson.

Malcolm Brogdon scored 15 points to help the Cavaliers hold off North Carolina State 51-47 on Wednesday night.

Mike Tobey scored nine of his 11 after halftime for the Cavaliers (22-1, 10-1 Atlantic Coast Conference), who improved to 9-0 in true road games this season.

"To kind of struggle along and have to grind it out ... validates that, hey, look you can do this," coach Tony Bennett said. "We've just got to do it a little better."

The Cavaliers missed Anderson, their No. 2 scorer at 13.4 points and the league's top three-point shooter at 48 percent. He broke a finger on his shooting hand last weekend against Louisville and will be out 4-6 weeks. The injury required surgery and left him on the bench with his left hand heavily bandaged as junior Evan Nolte started in his spot.

"I think in the beginning of the game it was a little bit of an adjustment for us to play without him, but as the game went on we kind of got into a little bit of a groove," Tobey said. "And going forward it's a tough win for us and I think it kind of gives us confidence to play without him."

Tobey had a three-point play for a 42-37 lead with 4:44 left, then threw down a dunk off pass from Brogdon to make it 45-42 with 1:18 left.

Finally, after Trevor Lacey missed a drive in the final seconds for the tie, Tobey rebounded in traffic and hit two free throws with 7 seconds left to make it a two-possession game again. Brogdon hit two more with 1.4 seconds left to seal

the win.

No. 6 Villanova 74, Providence 68: Ryan Arcidiacono scored 20 points, Daniel Ochefu had 19 and visiting Villanova held off upstart-minded Providence.

Darrun Hilliard added 16 points to help the Wildcats (22-2, 9-2 Big East) win their fifth straight.

No. 9 Louisville 69, Pittsburgh 56: Montrezl Harrell had 28 points and 12 rebounds, and the junior forward led a 22-2 second-half run that helped host Louisville beat Pittsburgh.

Strong shooting positioned the Panthers to take control with a 45-39 lead before the Cardinals (20-4, 8-3 Atlantic Coast Conference) answered with an energetic 14-1 run that included several baskets set up by their trademark pressure defense.

No. 13 Northern Iowa 83, Illinois State 64: Seth Tuttle scored 23 points and host Northern Iowa rolled past Illinois State for its 12th straight victory.

Deon Mitchell had 12 points for the Panthers (23-2, 12-1 Missouri Valley Conference), who matched top-ranked Kentucky with their 23rd win.

No. 15 Wichita State 74, Indiana State 57: Fred VanVleet followed up a triple-double with 21 points, and host Wichita State cruised to an easy win.

Darius Carter added 17 points and Tekele Cotton finished with 16 as Wichita State (22-3, 12-1 Missouri Valley) beat the Sycamores (12-13, 8-5) for the fifth straight time.

No. 19 Maryland 68, Indiana 66: It was only fitting that a game featuring 18 lead changes and seven ties came down to the final shot.

Or, rather, two shots. Melo Trimble and Dez Wells each scored 18 points, and host Maryland edged Indiana.

La Salle 74, No. 20 VCU 69 (20T): Jordan Price scored 34 points, including 12 in the second overtime, and grabbed 18 rebounds to lead visiting La Salle.

Price, who also had five assists, hit a three-pointer with 29 seconds left in regulation to force overtime.

No. 21 West Virginia 76, Kansas State 72: Reserve forward Brandon Watkins scored a career-high 14 points and host West Virginia squandered a double-digit lead before recovering.

West Virginia (19-5, 7-4 Big 12) got plenty of scoring from its deep bench to snap a two-game skid and hand the Wildcats their fifth straight loss.

No. 23 Ohio State 75, Penn State 55: Sam Thompson scored a career-high 22 points and D'Angelo Russell flirted with his second straight triple-double to lead host Ohio State.

Russell, the nation's top freshman scorer, added 17 points, six rebounds and seven assists for Ohio State (19-6, 8-4 Big Ten), which has won five of six.

Boise State 67, Air Force 42: James Webb III had 17 points and matched a season high with 15 rebounds to lead host Boise State.

Derrick Marks added 13 points as the

Broncos (18-6, 8-3 Mountain West) set a school record with their eighth consecutive victory.

Matt Mooney scored 12 points to lead Air Force (11-13, 4-9), which lost for the seventh time in 10 games.

Bucknell 52, Navy 51: Ryan Frazier scored 19 points — with 15 coming in the second half — as visiting Bucknell rallied after the break to edge Navy.

Frazier was 3-for-7 from the field overall — including a pair of three-pointers — and 11-for-13 from the free throw line.

Holy Cross 73, Army 64: Justin Burrell scored 26 points, 19 coming in the second half, and grabbed five rebounds to lead host Holy Cross.

Malcolm Miller and Eric Green scored 10 apiece for the Crusaders (10-13, 5-8 Patriot League).

Tanner Plomb had 19 points, Cox added 17, six assists and five rebounds and Kyle Wilson pitched in 15 points for the Black Knights (14-10, 5-8).

San Diego State 67, Wyoming 41: San Diego State (19-6, 9-3) celebrated the legacy of late two-sport star Tony Gwynn and then raced past Wyoming to take sole possession of first place in the Mountain West Conference.

Gwynn, who played basketball and baseball at SDSU, died of cancer June 16. He was in his 12th season as SDSU's baseball coach.

Georgia 62, Texas A&M 53: Kenny Gaines scored 15 points, on 6-of-12 shooting, and Charles Mann added 14 to help visiting Georgia.

The game was tied midway through the second half before the Bulldogs reeled off eight consecutive points.

Cavs rout Heat to stay hot

The Associated Press

CLEVELAND — LeBron James scored 18 points against his former Miami teammates and Cleveland had six others score in double figures as the Cavaliers beat the Heat 113-93 Wednesday night for their 14th win in 15 games.

Timofey Mozgov scored 20 and Tristan Thomson 17 in Cleveland's final home game before the All-Star break. The Cavs were to play at Chicago on Thursday before the season's extended respite.

With the win, the Cavs avenged an emotional Christmas Day loss in Miami — James' first game against the team he led to two NBA titles and four straight Finals. Cleveland is a very different team these days, improved by two major trades and James again playing at his unrivaled levels.

Hassan Whiteside had 17 points and 14 rebounds for the Heat, who were again without All-Star Dwyane Wade. He missed his seventh straight game with a strained right hamstring.

Cavaliers forward Kevin Love sat out most of the second half after he was accidentally poked in the right eye by Mario Chalmers. Love was reaching for a rebound when he was swiped by Chalmers with 9:48 left in the third quarter. Love went down immediately in pain, and as he was checked by the medical staff, his teammates looked on with concern.

Love was escorted to the locker room and didn't return. The Cavs said he has a corneal abrasion.

Celtics 89, Hawks 88: Evan Turner made a running scoop shot with 0.2 seconds left to give host Boston its only lead of the game, and the Celtics sent Atlanta to just their third loss of the calendar year.

Jared Sullinger had 17 points and 15 rebounds for the Celtics, who have won four of five but still remain out of playoff position.

Warriors 94, Timberwolves 91: Andre Iguodala and Leandro Barbosa led a dominant effort from Golden State's reserves and Klay Thompson hit a big three-pointer down the stretch to close out a long road trip with a victory over host Minnesota.

Magic 89, Knicks 83: Nik Vucevic had 28 points and 18 rebounds, and host Orlando held off New York.

Victor Oladipo added 19 points and Willie Green 13 off the bench. It helped offset a third-quarter injury to starting forward Channing Frye, who left with a dislocated left index finger.

Raptors 95, Wizards 93: DeMar DeRozan hit a tiebreaking jump shot with 12 seconds left and Toronto headed into the All-Star break on a winning note, beating visiting Washington.

Spurs 104, Pistons 87: Danny Green scored 19 points and Tony Parker added 17, and San Antonio easily brushed aside host Detroit.

Pacers 106, Pelicans 93: David West and George Hill each scored 17

points and Indiana went into the All-Star break with its fourth victory in the last five games, pounding host New Orleans.

The Pelicans played without All-Star Anthony Davis, who missed his second straight game with sprained right shoulder, and without sharp-shooting forward Ryan Anderson, who missed his second game in a row with a sore right elbow.

Thunder 105, Grizzlies 89: Kevin Durant scored 26 points and Russell Westbrook added 24 to help the host Oklahoma City defeat Memphis.

Bucks 111, Kings 103: Brandon Knight scored 20 points, powering a third-quarter surge that helped host Milwaukee to a victory over a Sacramento team on the brink of yet another coaching change.

Mavericks 87, Jazz 82: J.J. Barea scored 15 of his season-high 22 points in the third quarter and Dallas held on for a victory against visiting Utah.

Trail Blazers 102, Lakers 86: LaMarcus Aldridge had 18 points and 12 rebounds and host Portland extended Los Angeles' road losing streak to a franchise-record 11 games.

Clippers 110, Rockets 95: DeAndre Jordan had 24 points and 20 rebounds, Jamal Crawford and J.J. Redick each had 20 points, and Los Angeles beat visiting Houston.

Ward boosts Caps past Sharks in OT

The Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Joel Ward was standing in his favorite spot on the ice, which meant good fortune for the Washington Capitals.

Ward scored with 2:18 remaining in overtime to lift the Capitals past the San Jose Sharks 5-4 on Wednesday night.

"As soon as the rebound popped out I knew that's Ward-o's house," Capitals forward Jay Beagle said. "He loves being in front and he banged it home."

Beagle, who scored twice, was part of the winning play. He was about to take a shot and then heard Mike Green call for the puck. Green's shot ricocheted off the pads of Sharks goalie Antti Niemi and Ward was in perfect position to end the game.

John Carlson and Troy Brouwer also scored for the Capitals, who have won four of their last five.

Canucks 5, Blackhawks 4 (OT): Daniel Sedin scored his second goal at 1:20 of overtime, and Vancouver recovered after blowing a late two-goal lead, beating host Chicago.

Penguins 4, Red Wings 1: Blake Comeau scored and picked up an assist in his return from an upper body injury, and Pittsburgh dominated visiting Detroit.