

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Intel chief: Cyber bigger threat than terror

*Tribune Washington Bureau*

WASHINGTON — Despite the danger posed by the Islamic State and other extremist groups, the nation's top intelligence official warned Thursday that sophisticated cyberattacks such as the recent hack of Sony Pictures posed a greater threat to the United States.

The threat comes not just from foreign spies and hackers trying to steal trade secrets, but from government-backed intrusions that siphon vast wealth and valuable data from U.S. computer systems.

"Although we must be prepared for a catastrophic large-scale strike, a so-called cyber Armageddon, the reality is that we've been living with a constant and expanding barrage of cyberattacks for some time," James R. Clapper, director of national intelligence, told the Senate Armed Services Com-

mittee in a hearing on worldwide threats.

Clapper said Russia was playing a growing role, warning that the threat from hackers working for the Russian government "is more severe than we have previously assessed," though he declined to provide details in public. The governments of China, North Korea and Iran also have infiltrated U.S. digital networks, he said.

For the first time last year, foreign governments launched cyberattacks designed to obliterate U.S. computer data, Clapper said.

Last February, hackers erased hard drives and froze servers running slot machines and loyalty rewards programs at Las Vegas Sands Corp. casinos in Las Vegas. Clapper confirmed Thursday that Iran was behind the hacking operation.

Security experts theorize that Sands was targeted because the casino company's owner, con-

servative billionaire Sheldon Adelson, had said in 2013 that a "mushroom cloud" could rise over Tehran if it continued its nuclear development program.

Clapper described North Korea's digital assault on Sony Pictures as "the most serious and costly cyberattack against U.S. interests to date."

In November, hackers infiltrated the company's servers to wipe clean computers and released sensitive data, including Social Security numbers, embarrassing emails and the salaries of top executives. The FBI said the North Korean government wanted to prevent the studio from releasing "The Interview," a film that mocked leader Kim Jong Un. Sony has spent at least \$15 million to repair the damage.

Under pressure to improve the government response, President Barack Obama ordered the creation of an agency to analyze threat data collected by the Na-

tional Security Agency, the Pentagon, the Homeland Security Department, the FBI and other government entities, as well as private industry. The new Cyber Threat Intelligence Integration Center, as it is called, will report to Clapper.

In response to questions, Clapper acknowledged that the U.S. also had built "offensive capabilities" to sabotage adversaries' computer networks. But he said officials were still trying to develop doctrine for when, and how aggressively, the government should launch digital counterattacks.

Clapper also warned of the growing flow of foreigners joining Islamic State and other militant groups in Iraq and Syria. While most are from Muslim countries, about 3,400 hold Western passports. He said about 180 Americans had gone or tried to go to the war zones, up from about 100 a year ago.

## US may be underestimating Mosul fight, experts say

*McClatchy Foreign Staff*

IRBIL, Iraq — U.S. commanders pressing for an attack on Mosul perhaps as early as this spring may be underestimating the importance of the city to its Islamic State occupiers, who are likely to put up a huge fight to retain their control, experts who've studied the extremist organization say.

Iraqi officials have been resisting what a U.S. Central Command briefer said last week were plans for the assault to begin in April or May and to involve an Iraqi force of about 25,000.

"The mark on the wall that we are still shooting for is the April-May time frame," the Centcom official, who spoke only anonymously under the conditions of the briefing, said in a conference call last Thursday. "As we dialogue with our Iraqi counterparts, we want them to go in that time frame, because as you get into Ramadan and the summer and the heat, it becomes problem-

atic if it goes much later than that."

In televised comments that aired Tuesday night in Baghdad, Iraq's defense minister, Khaled Obeidi, blasted the briefer, saying it was irresponsible to alert the enemy to possible plans and that the decision on the timing of such an operation would be made by Iraqi officials in Iraq, not American officials in the United States.

"A military official should not disclose the date and time of an attack," Obeidi said. "The timing is up to (Iraqi) military commanders. Where this American official got his information from, I don't know."

But another aspect of the Centcom briefing has raised concerns among analysts experienced with the Islamic State and its tactics and motivations: the briefer's assertion that Mosul's defense is in the hands of only 1,000 to 2,000 Islamic State fighters. That number underestimates how crucial Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city, is to the Islamic State's key goal: building a caliph-

ate that erases long-established borders and attracts the support of Muslims from throughout the world.

"The conquest of Mosul marked the beginning of the formation of major contiguous territory spanning the Iraq-Syria borders," said Aymenn al-Tamimi, an expert on the Islamic State who's with the Middle East Forum, a U.S.-based research center. "The capture of Mosul was undoubtedly the main factor that led to the caliphate declaration."

With the legitimacy of the group's cross-border claim of authority at stake, analysts said they found it unlikely that the Islamic State would easily give up control of Mosul or dedicate such a small force to protecting it. Many hundreds of Islamic State troops were committed to the failed effort to capture Kobani, a far less important city on the Syria-Turkey border, and Kurdish forces only 12 miles from Mosul report near-daily attacks by hundreds of Islamic State troops.

# Afghan avalanches, flooding take toll

The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — The death toll from severe weather that caused avalanches and flooding across much of Afghanistan has jumped to more than 200 people, and the number is expected to climb with cold weather and difficult conditions hampering rescue efforts, relief workers and U.N. officials said Friday.

After days of severe weather across the central and north-eastern provinces, the U.N.'s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported 229 people dead in at least 18 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, with hundreds more left homeless after avalanches destroyed their homes. Many more remained cut off from help as roads were blocked by deep snow from heavy storms early this week, it said.

Extremely cold temperatures were expected in many parts of the country in coming

days, OCHA said.

Officials said the harsh conditions and lack of machinery were hampering efforts to reach people trapped, injured or dead. The army and some international agencies were delivering food, medicines, clothing and shelter to some of the hardest-hit areas, including far northern Badakhshan and Panjshir in the northeast.

Mohammad Aslam Syas, deputy chief of the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority, said the army was distributing supplies to people in areas of Panjshir, 60 miles northeast of the capital Kabul, because it was still unreachable by road.

He said 165 people were so far known to have died in the province when avalanches on Tuesday buried homes in the northern Panjshir Valley. "Helicopters are dropping medicines, blankets and other necessary items to remote areas of Panjshir," he said.

# Ukraine, rebels pull heavy weapons back

The Associated Press

NOVOAMVROSIIVSKE, Ukraine — Ukrainian and Russian-backed separatist forces drew back some heavy weapons from the front line in the east Friday in compliance with a cease-fire deal, although officials in Kiev accused rebels of falling short of requirements.

Separatist fighters moved rocket launchers to a location 43 miles back from the line of contact with Ukrainian forces as required by the peace agreement. Associated Press journalists in the morning followed four trucks carrying Grad launchers from the rebel stronghold of Donetsk to a cement factory in the village of

Novoamvrosiivske, near the Russian border.

AP reporters also saw Ukrainian troops pulling back 100 mm anti-tank guns from the front line near the town of Artemivsk. The required withdrawal distance for weapons varies depending on their power and range.

The weapons seen by AP represent only a minute fraction of the firepower believed to be at either side's disposal, and an exhaustive assessment by international monitors is expected in the coming days.

The pullback of heavy weapons was supposed to have started over a week ago under a deal agreed by the leaders of Russia and Ukraine.

# USS Makin Island returns to San Diego

BY JENNIFER HLAD

Stars and Stripes

ABOARD THE USS MAKIN ISLAND — As the USS Makin Island made its way around Point Loma and into San Diego Bay on Wednesday morning, sailors took advantage of the cellphone signal to text loved ones awaiting their arrival.

A tugboat pulled the amphibious assault ship into Pier 13 as family members on shore shouted, waved and held up signs for their sailors, who stood at parade rest along the edges of the flight deck. When they were released from formation, sailors cheered, and a few began singing the theme song from "Team America: World Police."

About 1,900 sailors with the Makin Island Amphibious Ready Group had returned home to Naval Base San Diego after a seven-month deployment that sailors called rough but rewarding.

The deployment was the first for Petty Officer 3rd Class Lindsey Thompson, an aviation ordnanceman from Jefferson, Ore. While it was cool to see other parts of the world, she said, it "also gave me a greater respect for America."

But port calls weren't the only high point for Thompson and Seaman Kateley Boardman. The two helped build bombs used in airstrikes against Islamic State militants in Iraq.

They said they didn't know what the bombs were going to be used for when they were

building them, but were excited when they found out they had made a contribution to Operation Inherent Resolve.

Most of the time, they're just down in the magazine, they said, which is a stressful environment without a lot of connection to the outside world.

During the seven months away from home, the Makin Island made stops in Hong Kong, Singapore, Oman and Hawaii, but also spent 115 straight days at sea, sitting off the coast of Yemen. Typically, a ship on deployment goes into port every 30 days or so, said Capt. Jon Rodgers, the ship's commander.

The Makin Island, USS San Diego and USS Comstock also rescued 11 researchers with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration who were trapped on Pacific atolls during a hurricane in August.

The ship was also involved in other rescue attempts.

In October, a Marine Osprey crewmember was lost at sea after he and another Marine had to bail out shortly after takeoff from the Makin Island.

In December, Navy SEALs were able to reach Luke Somers, an American journalist, and South African teacher Pierre Korkie, who were being held in an al-Qaida compound in Yemen, but both were shot by their captors.

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## Gunman kills 7, self in rampage in Missouri

TYRONE, Mo. — A gunman killed seven people and wounded an eighth in an overnight house-to-house rampage in a small Missouri town before apparently committing suicide, authorities said Friday.

The victims were found in four homes in Tyrone, about

40 miles north of the Arkansas line. The 36-year-old gunman was discovered in a neighboring county, dead of what appeared to be a self-inflicted gunshot wound, Missouri Highway Patrol Sgt. Jeff Kinder said.

Kinder gave no information on a motive for the shootings or whether the gunman and the victims were connected.

From The Associated Press

# Cavs stretch streak to 18 of 20

The Associated Press

CLEVELAND — LeBron James says he isn't about personal statements. He made one anyway Thursday night.

James scored a season-high 42 points and the Cleveland Cavaliers beat the Golden State Warriors 110-99 for their 18th victory in 20 games.

James added 11 rebounds, outplaying fellow MVP candidate Stephen Curry and leading Cleveland past the team with the NBA's best record for its 11th straight home victory.

James downplayed any talk that the performance may put him in the lead for MVP consideration.

"That's not why I'm here," he said. "I've got to be the MVP for these guys, the 14 guys in the locker room. When I'm on the floor I'll try to do everything I can to help this team win."

The Cavaliers did get a bit of bad news. All-Star guard Kyrie Irving, who scored 24 points, injured his left shoulder and didn't travel with the team to Indiana for Friday night's game. A team spokesman said Irving was scheduled to have an MRI on Friday and was doubtful against the Pacers.

Irving left the game in the third quarter and went to the locker room, but returned early in the fourth.

Curry scored 18 points, but had only six after the first quarter and was 5-for-17 from the field.

"I hope it's not handed out on this one game," Curry said of the MVP talk. "I hope it's about the body of work. Tonight just wasn't my best game. Shots that I normally make didn't fall tonight."

David Lee led Golden State (44-11) with 19 points.

James was out with knee and back injuries when the teams met Jan. 9, a 112-94 win for Golden State. Although the four-time MVP hit 15 of 25 from the field Thursday, the back apparently is still an issue. James stretched out on the floor instead of sitting on the bench when he had a rest in the fourth quarter.

"It tightened up a little bit," James said. "It's a little tight right now. I'll get some treatment tonight and some more tomorrow."

Added Cavs coach David Blatt: "If he plays like that with a sore back, imagine how well he'll play when he doesn't have a sore back."

Kevin Love added 16 points for the Cavaliers.

If the matchup between the team with the best record and the hottest team in the league was a preview of the NBA Finals, the advantage went to the Cavaliers.

Cleveland, leading 61-56 at halftime, took control in the third quarter. James scored 12 points, including two three-pointers, and found Timofey Mozgov for an open jumper to push the lead to 86-70.

"We're not going to win every game," Kerr said. "This is the NBA. I don't look at this like a plague or anything. It's just part of the grind of the season."

Kerr was given a technical foul in the second quarter and had to be separated from official Bennett Salvatore after Draymond Green was assessed a technical in the third.

The game was tied eight times and featured 12 lead changes in the first half.

James scored 13 points in the first quarter and finished the half with 24. Curry made three three-pointers in the opening period.

Curry missed Sunday's game at Indiana with a sore right foot, but returned to score 32 points Tuesday at Washington.

Green added 16 points for Golden State, but Klay Thompson was held to 13 on 5-for-13 from the field.

Center Kendrick Perkins, signed by Cleveland on Tuesday, entered the game midway through the second quarter and received a loud ovation in his home debut. He committed two fouls in 2:13 and was pulled.

#### Tip-ins

**Warriors:** Golden State has three more stops on its season-high, six-game trip. ... Kerr picked up his eighth technical of the season, tying him for second in the league among coaches. ... Kerr said he will likely rest C Andrew Bogut and F Andre Iguodala at some point during the trip.

**Cavaliers:** Perkins committed two fouls in 2:10 in his first game against Detroit. ... Cleveland plays eight of its next 10 on the road, a challenging stretch that includes games at Houston, Toronto, Dallas, San Antonio and Miami. ... F Shawn Marion (strained left hip) missed his fourth straight game.

#### Not so fast

Hall of Famer Magic Johnson tweeted that the Cavaliers would "definitely" be in the NBA Finals. James isn't ready to make that proclamation. "It means nothing, really," he said. "As a team we have to go out and play. Words can only take you so far, no matter who they come from."

# No. 21 SMU rolls past Memphis

The Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Once SMU figured out how to attack Memphis' box-and-one defense, the No. 21 Mustangs were able to pull away in the second half.

Nic Moore, the target of the single defender, scored 14 of his 16 points in the final 20 minutes and the Mustangs beat Memphis 66-57 on Thursday night.

"The second half, we did a better job of recognizing what they were in," coach Larry Brown said after his Mustangs won their fifth straight. "They did a lot of things to take Nic out of the game. Five assists, no turnovers, made big shots. He was great."

Moore's three-pointer with 3:27 left capped a 15-4 run for the Mustangs (23-5, 14-2 American Athletic Conference), breaking open a 48-all game near the midway point of the second half. Ryan Manuel and Yanick Moreira added 11 points each to help the Mustangs win their 21st in 23 games. SMU has won seven straight road games after opening 1-3.

#### No. 3 Gonzaga 59, San Diego

**39:** Przemek Karnowski scored 11 of his 14 points in the second half, Domantas Sabonis added 11 off the bench, and the Bulldogs overcame a sluggish first half to beat the visiting Toreros for their 22nd straight victory.

With the West Coast Conference regular-season title already wrapped up, Gonzaga (29-1, 17-0) was mostly uninspired for the first 20 minutes against San Diego before pulling away in the second half. Karnowski scored eight points in the first 6 minutes of the second half and the Bulldogs' superior size on the interior overcame an off shooting night from the outside.

#### No. 7 Arizona 82, Colorado

**54:** Stanley Johnson scored 11 of his 15 points in the second half and the visiting Wildcats beat the struggling Buffaloes.

Kaleb Tarczewski scored 14 points on his 22nd birthday and Gabe York also had 14 points for Arizona. The Wildcats have won five straight and can clinch the Pac-12 title with a win at Utah on Saturday.

Arizona (25-3, 13-2) led by 12 at halftime and made it 43-30 at the start of the second half. Tarczewski then scored eight straight points to give the Wildcats a 51-32 lead with 14:30 left.

Colorado (12-15, 5-9) had trouble taking care of the ball in the second half. The Buffs committed four turnovers in the first 20 minutes and coughed it up six times in the first 10 minutes of the second half.

#### No. 13 Utah 83, Arizona State 41:

Delon Wright scored 12 points to help the host Utes rout the Sun Devils.

Utah (22-5, 12-3 Pac-12) put away the game in the first half with a 41-9 advantage. Center Jacob Poeltl finished with eight points, six rebounds and six blocks.

Gerry Blakes scored 12 points for Arizona State (15-12, 7-7).

# OKC loses despite Westbrook's triple-double

The Associated Press

PHOENIX — Point guard matchups don't get much better than the one Thursday night in Phoenix.

Russell Westbrook got the triple-double, Eric Bledsoe got the victory.

Westbrook scored 39 points in his 12th career triple-double but missed what would have been the game-tying layup with 5.7 seconds left in overtime, and the Suns beat Oklahoma City 117-113 to snap the Thunder's seven-game winning streak.

"It was an epic battle," Phoenix's P.J. Tucker said. "They both played really well, we just came out on top."

Bledsoe just missed a triple-double with 28 points, 13 rebounds and nine assists. He took 22 fewer shots than Westbrook and made one fewer basket.

According to information provided to the Suns by Elias, it was the third time in NBA history that opposing players totaled at least 28 points, 13 rebounds and nine assists in the same game.

Oklahoma City coach Scott Brooks called Westbrook "as quick and as powerful as any guard in this league."

Westbrook missed his first eight shots and made 12 of a career-high 38. He was 1-for-10 from three-point range, but scored

31 in the second half and overtime of his fourth triple-double this season.

"Honestly, I think I was actually shooting too much," Westbrook said. "I think I got to do a better job of trusting my teammates more. I am not saying I don't, but consistently trusting them regardless of what is going on, regardless of the time, score and possession. Just find a way to trust them and let them make some plays as well."

Bledsoe was the last Phoenix point guard standing after Goran Dragic and Isaiah Thomas were traded away last Thursday, and he's trying to assume a bigger leadership role, even with the arrival of fellow point guard Brandon Knight.

"I just tried to show a little more enthusiasm," Bledsoe said. "My teammates, they feed off of that. That's what my coaches have been telling me, that's what my team has been telling me, just step up and that's what I'm trying to do."

Markieff Morris scored 29 for the Suns, who pulled within 1½ games of the Thunder for the eighth and final playoff spot in the Western Conference.

The Thunder were without Kevin Durant for the fourth straight game.

"They are a good team, even without Durant," Suns coach Jeff Hornacek said. "They've got players out there that can really play. I just give them all the credit. I

thought they played a great game."

Bledsoe's driving reverse layup put the Suns up 115-111 with 1:51 left in overtime.

Alex Len blocked D.J. Augustin's shot and Dion Waiters threw the ball away for the Thunder before Westbrook's drive cut it to 115-113 with 35 seconds left.

Serge Ibaka blocked Bledsoe's shot, resulting in a 24-second shot clock violation. Westbrook broke free on a drive to the hoop but missed, crashing to the court. P.J. Tucker's two free throws for the Suns completed the scoring.

Phoenix was playing for the second night in a row, winning at Denver on Wednesday, but there was no sign of a lack of energy.

Each team converted a three-point play in the final 20.5 seconds of regulation. Markieff Morris sank a 13-footer from the lane, was fouled by Andre Roberson, and made the free throw to put Phoenix up 109-106. But Westbrook drove to the hoop, scored and was fouled by Tucker. The free throw tied it at 109 with 13.4 seconds left in the fourth quarter.

The Suns couldn't get off a decent shot on their last possession and the game went into overtime.

"It's going to be who is making their shots down the stretch," Brooks said. "I thought they did a good job of playing their style and we didn't."



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# Judge rules for RB Peterson

The Associated Press

In NFL limbo for the last five-plus months, Adrian Peterson's future with the Minnesota Vikings is still in question.

The path toward resolution of his status has been cleared, though the clash between league and the union over the personal conduct policy persists.

Commissioner Roger Goodell and the NFL were handed a second high-profile legal defeat Thursday, when U.S. District Judge David Doty overruled league arbitrator Harold Henderson's December denial of the six-time Pro Bowl running back's appeal.

Doty ruled that Henderson "failed to meet his duty" in considering Peterson's punishment, for the child abuse charge that brought national backlash for the league on the heels of the bungled handling of the assault case involving former Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice.

Doty said the league cannot retroactively apply the standards of its new, tougher personal conduct policy to an action by Peterson that occurred before the policy was in place. The league suspended Peterson through at least April 15 under the new standard, which arose from the furor over the handling of the assault involving Rice. But Doty said in his 16-page ruling that Henderson "simply disregarded the law of the shop and in doing so failed to meet his duty" under the collective bargaining agreement.

NFL Players Association executive director DeMaurice Smith said in a statement Doty's decision was a "victory for the rule of law, due process and fairness."

The NFL promptly filed its protest to the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals. The league also returned Peterson to the exempt list he spent two months on last season pending completion of the process. The NFL also said further arbitration proceedings in front of Henderson could be held before an appeal is heard by the 8th Circuit.

"Judge Doty's order did not contain any determinations concerning the fairness of the appeals process under the CBA, including the commissioner's long-

standing authority to appoint a designee to act as hearing officer," NFL spokesman Brian McCarthy said. "Even so, we believe strongly that Judge Doty's order is incorrect and fundamentally at odds with well-established legal precedent governing the district court's role in reviewing arbitration decisions."

The Vikings chimed in a little later with moral support of Peterson, whom they have heaped praise on in recent weeks in obvious attempt to either welcome him back or enhance his trade value.

"Adrian Peterson is an important member of the Minnesota Vikings, and our focus remains on welcoming him back when he is able to rejoin our organization," the Vikings said. "Today's ruling leaves Adrian's status under the control of the NFL, the NFLPA and the legal system, and we will have no further comment at this time."

Peterson's return to the exempt list was just as critical of a development in this saga as was Doty's ruling. Being on the exempt list means the Vikings can now have direct contact with Peterson, which they couldn't while the suspension was in effect. Also, when the market opens March 10, they'd be allowed to trade him if they wanted. They could release him or try to restructure his contract at any time.

Peterson's existing deal is through 2017, carrying a \$15.4 million salary cap hit for 2015. If the Vikings cut him, they'd owe him no more money and take only a \$2.4 million hit to their salary cap. Peterson has no contractual leverage, but he has expressed uneasiness about returning to the only team he's ever played for. He told ESPN in a recent interview that he felt betrayed by some members of the organization during the process in which Goodell placed him on the exempt list, essentially paid leave, while the child-abuse case played out in court in Texas.

In the Rice case, Goodell changed a two-game ban to an indefinite suspension. But the arbitrator in Rice's appeal, former U.S. District Judge Barbara Jones, ruled that decision was "arbitrary" and an "abuse of discretion." Rice was seen on surveillance video knocking out the

woman who's now his wife with a punch in an elevator.

The NFL argued that the ruling by Jones was irrelevant to the Peterson case, but Doty disagreed.

"The court finds no valid basis to distinguish this case from the Rice matter," he said.

The injuries to Peterson's son, delivered by a wooden switch that Peterson was using for discipline, occurred in May. Goodell's announcement of the enhanced policy came in August. The NFLPA argued the league could not retroactively apply the new policy, which increased a suspension for players involved with domestic violence from two games to six games.

"Our collective bargaining agreement has rules for implementation of the personal conduct policy and when those rules are violated, our union always stands up to protect our players' rights," Smith said. "This is yet another example why neutral arbitration is good for our players, good for the owners and good for our game."

Doty said Henderson erred in purporting to rely on factual differences in the cases of Rice and Peterson yet failing to "explain why the well-recognized bar against retroactivity did not apply to Peterson." The Rice decision aside, Doty said, Goodell should have understood his duty to only apply the new policy moving forward.

Doty's courtroom has long been a ground zero of sorts for NFL labor matters, and his ruling pattern has favored the union more often than not.

Still, his latest rebuke of the NFL came as a surprise because it defied a collectively bargained arbitration process.

"There's no doubt that generally speaking judges don't like to overturn decisions of arbitrators," said Thomas Wassel, a labor and employment attorney and partner at Cullen and Dykman in New York.

"That's a general principle in all of labor law. ... Unless the court ruled the arbitrator clearly exceeded his authority legally or was biased in some way, even if the judge disagrees with the decision, they're not supposed to overrule the arbitrator."

# McIlroy brushes off rough start at Honda

The Associated Press

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. — Rory McIlroy is playing so well that he can easily manage a smile even on the bad days.

One of those occasions came Thursday on his way to the 15th tee at the Honda Classic. He was playing alongside Dustin Johnson and Brooks Koepka, the star group at PGA National with scores that sure didn't resemble it.

Johnson, a contender at Pebble Beach and Riviera, already was 8-over par. Koepka, the Phoenix Open champion, was 5-over par. McIlroy, who missed going out-of-bounds on the previous hole by a mere 18 inches and still made bogey, also was at 5-over par.

"Walking from 14 green to 15 tee, I said to Brooks, 'Let's just make a couple birdies on the way in, try and get something out of it,'" McIlroy said. "Luckily, I was sort of able to do that. But it was tough. When nothing is going your way and you don't really have anything to feed off, you don't see many good shots and guys ... we're all struggling. It was a grind out there. We'll all go home and put our feet up and get ready for tomorrow."

McIlroy got a rude welcome to his first competition of the year in America. His first shot was out of play and led to double bogey. A birdie-birdie finish enabled him to salvage a 3-over 73, his highest opening-round score to par in seven months. Then again, that's a span of only nine tournaments.

And he was in the middle of the pack on this wind-blown day, still only eight shots behind Jim Herman.

The relentless wind had gusts approaching 35 mph. And with the amount of water hazards at PGA National, the scoring was tough. Only 19 players broke par. Seventeen players had a nine-hole score of 40 or higher. Only three holes — the two par 5s and No. 9, which played downward — had an average score under par.

Herman didn't mind the wind, though he moved to south Florida more than a decade ago and was surprised earlier in the week when there was hardly any wind at all. Even with a 65, it still wasn't easy. He twice saved par from the fairway and rolled in a 35-foot birdie putt on the 16th hole.

"I don't mind it blowing," Herman said. "I feel like I can control the golf ball pretty well with my iron game. So yeah, it was OK that the wind was blowing."

Brendan Steele pitched in from about 35 yards to save bogey on the 14th hole, a key moment in his round of 66. Martin Flores, Kapalua winner Patrick Reed and Padraig Harrington were at 67. U.S. Open champion Martin Kaymer was among those at 68.

Harrington would seem to feel at home in these conditions. On a day when the gusts were relentless, they still would be considered a wee breeze in Ireland. Except that the Irishman has spent the last four weeks in gorgeous, calm weather on the West Coast.

"If I had come from Ireland, I probably would be thinking it was a nice day," Harrington said. "But having played the last four weeks over here, even I was struggling and questioning and doubting myself out there. I found it very difficult."

# Dubnyk, Wild top Predators

The Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Minnesota Wild have been playing very well since trading for Devan Dubnyk in January. Winning in the toughest building this season in the NHL has given them another nice confidence boost.

Nino Niederreiter scored two goals, and the Wild beat Nashville 4-2 Thursday night, handing the Predators only their fourth regulation loss on home ice this season.

"I do feel that we deserved to win tonight," Wild coach Mike Yeo said. "We did a lot of good things."

Dubnyk made 27 saves as he improved to 14-3-2 since being acquired by Minnesota in mid-January. With the win, the Wild moved back into the final wild-card spot in the Western Conference.

**Canadiens 5, Blue Jackets 2:** Carey Price made 25 saves to extend his franchise-best road winning streak to 10 games for visiting Montreal.

P.K. Subban had a goal and two assists, rookie Jacob De La Rose scored twice, Andrei Markov had a goal and an assist, and Max Pacioretty also scored. Montreal got its seventh win in 10 games.

**Blackhawks 3, Panthers 0:**

Corey Crawford earned his second shutout of the season in visiting Chicago's win over Florida.

Brandon Saad and Teuvo Teravainen scored goals before Jonathan Toews added an empty-netter with 46.8 seconds left.

**Rangers 4, Coyotes 3:** Lee Stempniak broke a tie with 2:14 left, netting his second goal of the game, and Chris Kreider also scored twice for host New York, which won its fourth straight.

In sending the Coyotes to their eighth straight loss, Stempniak backhanded in a rebound of his own shot on the doorstep.

**Sabres 6, Canucks 3:** Torrey Mitchell scored a pair of goals for host Buffalo. It was Mitchell's first goal since Nov. 22, and his first multi-goal night since March 23, 2011.

Chris Stewart, Andrej Meszaros, Brian Flynn and Brian Gionta also scored for the Sabres, who were without their two leading scorers, Tyler Ennis and Zemgus Girgensons, due to injury.

**Maple Leafs 3, Flyers 2:** In its first game without the traded David Clarkson, Jonathan Bernier made 47 saves

and host Toronto beat Philadelphia.

The win came mere hours after the Leafs dealt Clarkson to the Columbus Blue Jackets for injured winger Nathan Horton.

**Blues 2, Jets 1 (SO):** Alexander Steen got the winning goal in the shootout. Vladimir Tarasenko also scored in the tiebreaker for visiting St. Louis.

Patrik Berglund had St. Louis' goal in regulation, and Brian Elliott finished with 30 saves through overtime.

**Senators 1, Kings 0:** Andrew Hammond made 35 saves to earn his second consecutive shutout in his fourth career start, and visiting Ottawa snapped Los Angeles' eight-game winning streak.

Mike Hoffman scored early in the third period for the Senators. Ottawa hadn't won at Staples Center since Jan. 11, 2000.

**Red Wings 3, Sharks 2:** Luke Glendening scored with 1:15 remaining, completing a comeback victory for visiting Detroit.

Pavel Datsyuk and Temu Pulkkinen also scored for the Red Wings, who had lost their last two games. Jimmy Howard made 20 saves for the win, just his fourth in 14 career games against San Jose.