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Campbell: US should stay in Afghanistan

By COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The United States should retain an American troop presence in Afghanistan through the next five years to ensure Afghan security forces can effectively fight the Taliban and other insurgents, the top U.S. commander there said Tuesday.

Army Gen. John Campbell, the commander of U.S. Forces Afghanistan and NATO's Resolute Support mission, told the House Armed Services Committee that Afghan leaders are "skeptical we will continue to be there" beyond the end of 2016.

In addition, Campbell said President Barack Obama's plan to draw down to 5,500 troops by the end of 2016 from the 9,800 servicemembers in Afghanistan now, would leave the United States with "a very limited ability" to conduct its counterterrorism operations and its mission to train, advise and assist Afghan security forces. The 5,500 troops would focus primarily on targeting al-Qaida and Islamic State terrorists, he said.

Campbell intends to retain 9,800 troops at least through the end of the summer fighting season and begin removing troops no later than October.

"The United States must continue to show flexibility with our mission in 2016 and beyond," Campbell said during his testimony. "As the commander ... I'm assessing the ways that we ensure that 2016 is not a repeat of 2015 based on conditions and performance of Afghan security forces during this winter lull.

"I'm also reviewing how well those forces will likely perform in 2017 and the United States and coalition resources that

US airstrikes destroy militant radio station

By SLOBODAN LEKIC

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — An Islamic State radio station in eastern Afghanistan that has been on the air for several months has been destroyed in a U.S. airstrike, officials and media reports said Tuesday.

"The Daesh FM radio station was destroyed in an attack by jets" on Monday, said Hazarat Husain Mashraqiwal, police spokesman for Nangarhar province. Daesh is an acronym for the Islamic State group.

Attaullah Khogyani, spokesman for the governor of Nangarhar province, told various media outlets that 29 members of the Islamic State group, including five who worked for the station, were killed in the strikes.

The mobile station, known as the Voice of the Caliphate, was based in the remote

Achin district of Nangarhar province, along the mountainous border with Pakistan. It began intermittent broadcasts in late 2015.

The Afghan Defense Ministry confirmed that the station had been taken off the air but provided no further details.

Citing an unnamed U.S. military official, The Associated Press reported that the radio station was destroyed by two U.S. airstrikes.

Col. Michael Lawhorn, a spokesman for U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, said the U.S. carried out two counterterrorism strikes in the Achin district of Nangarhar province, but declined to confirm that they had targeted the station. He added that this was not the first time U.S. aircraft had struck terrorist targets in that area.

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are required for their continue development."

Campbell, who has led the mission in Afghanistan since August 2014, will retire in the coming months. Army Lt. Gen. John W. "Mick" Nicholson Jr. has been nominated to succeed him, pending Senate confirmation. Nicholson, testifying last week before the Senate Armed Services Committee, said the security situation in Afghanistan had "deteriorated" during the last year, and he vowed to provide his own recommendations on the needed number of

American troops in Afghanistan within 90 days of taking command, which is expected to occur in March.

Campbell said setbacks faced last year by the Afghan security forces in northern and southern Afghanistan were "disappointing." But he said the Afghans quickly rebounded in their first year leading combat operations in their own country. Insurgents control or influence only 26 of 407 district centers in Afghanistan and the government controls 70 percent of the country's inhabited areas, Campbell said.

"The enemy and naysayers predicted the collapse of the Afghan government and security forces ... instead the Afghan security forces fought for their country," Campbell said. "They did not fall ... They inflicted higher casualties on their enemy while enduring a higher operational tempo with significantly reduced coalition support."

The majority of the failures of the Afghan National Security Forces in recent months — such as the short-lived loss of control of the city of Kunduz in October and the more recent struggles against the Taliban in Helmand province — were the result of poor leadership, Campbell said. The Afghan army has fired 92 general officers, which includes a commander in Helmand. The changes show the Afghanistan government's commitment to its security, the general said.

"Now more than ever, the United States should not waiver on Afghanistan," Campbell said. "... This kind of change takes time."

The Afghans require American help in many areas including gathering intelligence, building its aviation programs and developing the systems to construct and maintain an enduring military, he said.

But some lawmakers on Tuesday questioned America's seemingly unending commitment to the nearly 15-year-old war in Afghanistan.

"The United States was supposed to leave Afghanistan in 2017; now it could take decades, 20, 30, 40 years," said Rep. Walter Jones, R-N.C. "We've been making progress for 14 years, and now we're talking about more years to train the Afghan security forces. The American people are sick and tired ... it has just got to come to an end."

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Marines, Army: Women should sign up for draft

WASHINGTON — The Marine Corps commandant and Army chief of staff told the Senate on Tuesday that they believe women should be required to sign up for the military draft now that they are being integrated into all combat positions.

Marine Gen. Robert Neller and Army Gen. Mark Milley testified there should no longer be an exemption for women in the Selective Service program. Navy Secretary Ray Mabus said the opening of combat roles has raised the need for a national debate. The service leaders were called before the Senate Armed Services Committee for a hearing on the ongoing effort to open about 225,000 combat military jobs to female troops.

“Every American that is physically qualified should register for the draft,” said Neller, who had requested but was denied exclusions of women in some Marine combat jobs.

From staff reports

Navy to teach more art of celestial navigation

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The Navy is returning to its roots and teaching sailors how to navigate using the sun, moon and stars.

Celestial navigation is an art that harkens back to the time before the U.S. was founded. It was long considered one of the most important educational requirements for mariners, but was largely discontinued a decade ago by the Navy as navigation relied more heavily on computers and global positioning systems. In 2011, navigators and assistant navigators once again began receiving celestial navigation training at the Navy’s Surface Warfare Officers School in Newport, R.I., said Lt. Cmdr. Kate Meadows, a spokeswoman for the Naval Education and Training Command. Starting this summer, the training will be required for enlisted quartermasters in C-School programs.

From staff reports

Cruz tops Trump, Rubio in Iowa; Clinton, Sanders virtually tied

Associated Press

MANCHESTER, N.H. — A victorious Sen. Ted Cruz, of Texas, and buoyant Sen. Marco Rubio, of Florida, emerged from Iowa with compelling claims to the outsider and mainstream mantles in the fractured Republican primary as the presidential race shifted overnight to New Hampshire.

Democrats were girding for a protracted slugfest between Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., and Hillary Clinton, locked in a virtual tie.

Cruz emerged with a comfortable lead Monday night to win the country’s leadoff vote in what had been a close race until the end.

“We’ve built our campaign as a movement for Americans to organize, rallying and banding together against the disaster of the Washington cartel,” Cruz told The Associated Press as he made his way to New

Hampshire.

Donald Trump, uncharacteristically humble after a second-place Iowa finish, was headed for far friendlier territory in New Hampshire, where the billionaire firebrand has been running strong.

Amid a historically large turnout in Iowa, the unexpected benefactor was Rubio, who came within striking distance of Trump. Republicans had already been looking to New Hampshire to winnow their congested field, and the Florida senator’s strong showing bolsters his case that Republicans should coalesce behind him as the mainstream alternative to the rowdier Trump or Cruz.

“We have taken the first step, but an important step, to winning the nomination,” Rubio told supporters in Des Moines.

Monday’s Democratic contest was a cliffhanger — “The results tonight are the closest in Iowa Democratic caucus his-

tory,” said state party chairman Andy McGuire — a far cry from the coronation for Clinton that most Democrats once expected.

Even with an elaborate campaign operation and backing from most Democratic Party leaders, Clinton was unable to stem a flood of enthusiasm from young and liberal voters for Sanders, the eccentric Vermont senator whose viability in a general election is still deeply questioned.

Cruz, the conservative known for his scorched-earth approach to compromise, hoped his triumph in the Iowa caucuses would bolster his standing as the top choice of Republicans seeking an agitator to upend the legacy of eight years under President Barack Obama. Having run a textbook Iowa campaign targeting rural and evangelical voters, Cruz faced a steeper climb in New Hampshire, with its tradition of favoring more mainstream candidates.

Marine commander fired days before crash

Associated Press

HONOLULU — A Marine general fired the commander of a Hawaii helicopter squadron days before two of the unit’s helicopters crashed and killed all 12 Marines on board.

Brig. Gen. Russell Sanborn, commander of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, lost confidence in the ability of Lt. Col. Edward Pavelka to lead Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 463, Marine spokesman 1st Lt. Joseph Butterfield said Monday.

Butterfield said in a statement he wouldn’t release further details because they may become relevant to ongoing investigations.

Pavelka was relieved on Jan. 11. Two aircraft from the squadron crashed on Jan. 14. Pavelka was replaced by Lt. Col. Eric Purcell, who spoke at a Jan. 22 memorial for the Marines.

The Coast Guard initially reported that the choppers had collided, but the Marines said later it wasn’t yet known if there was a collision. The cause remains under investigation.

The firing was first reported by the Marine Corps Times. Pavelka declined to comment when reached by telephone.

Butterfield said the Marine Corps holds all

Remains found at site

Some remains have been retrieved from the site of two downed Marine Corps helicopters off Hawaii’s North Shore, a Honolulu newspaper reported.

Twelve Marines died in the Jan. 14 crash, which remains under investigation.

The deceased Marines’ families have been given information about the remains, the Star-Advertiser newspaper reported.

Debris from the two CH-53E helicopters is concentrated about two miles offshore from Waimea Bay, strewn in an area 300 feet beneath the surface. High waves have hindered search and recovery efforts.

From staff reports

Marines, especially commanders, responsible for maintaining “complete accountability and responsibility in upholding the highest standards for combat readiness and proficiency.”

Media Day goes prime time

Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — What happens when you put Peyton Manning, Miss Universe, an orange-and-blue leprechaun and 200 TV cameras into the same room?

Answer: Super Bowl Opening Night.

The NFL took a good idea gone surreal — what used to be known as “Media Day” — gave it a new name, added a live cover band and moved the whole thing to prime time Monday to kick off Super Bowl week between the Denver Broncos and Carolina Panthers.

This new and amped-up interview-fest came complete with a guy walking around inside an inflatable football and a newly choreographed players’ introduction that involved all 60 players from each team walking out onto a four-story-high catwalk.

“I had no idea that was a bridge we were standing on,” said Manning, getting ready for his fourth Super Bowl.

And yet, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

“Will you kiss my wife?” one questioner shouted to Panthers QB Cam Newton, who answered his hour’s worth of questions with a sports-drink-themed towel wrapped around his head.

“I don’t think I can do that,” Newton said.

Suffice to say, Manning and Newton — one a five-time MVP, the other a strong favorite to win his first later this week — couldn’t have seen a lot of this coming, no matter how hard they prepared.

Who would play you in a movie? “Maybe a young Robert Redford,” Manning said.

Another reporter — or make that, person with a credential — asked Manning to look into the camera and wish a Happy

Chinese New Year to all his friends in that part of the world.

At one point, a reporter from a Spanish-language station cranked up some bass-heavy music and pleaded with Newton to dance.

He passed. “Got to be feeling it,” he explained.

All of this thoughtfully brought to prime time by the NFL for the first time in the 50-year history of the Super Bowl.

For decades, Media Day was a Tuesday-at-noonish affair — scheduled so as not to interrupt the teams’ schedules and to give writers the rest of the week to craft the stories.

But this year, the NFL moved it to Monday night, where minor details like dress code, off-color banter and 8-year-olds asking football players questions after bedtime barely raise an eyebrow.

NFL spokesman Michael Signora described the scheduling change as one that allows “more fans (to) experience what has grown to become a very unique, popular Super Bowl event.”

Conveniently, the NFL-owned NFL Network captured all the action live.

Surprising they didn’t do this earlier. It’s a nod to the reality that “Media Day” has long been a “journalism-free zone” — one in which fans have willingly, for the last five years, paid money for tickets that allow them to sit in the stands and watch the madness unfold.

Speaking of which ...

Late in the Broncos session, Rocky the Leprechaun — a regular at Broncos games over the years — laid a dollar bill out on the blue carpeting of SAP Center and waited to see if someone would pick it up. Several minutes passed. Nobody did.

“Crazy to see that,” he said.

What makes this week so great?

“There’s a lot of happiness,” said the gnome-turned-sociologist. “This world needs all the happiness it can get.”

Only one team will be happy come Sunday night. The Panthers are favored. Manning is a sentimental favorite; at 39, many people expect he’ll retire after this one.

That was one of the few actual news angles being worked on during Denver’s hour of fun behind the mic.

“I haven’t made up my mind and I don’t see myself knowing until the season’s over,” Manning said.

Miss Universe, one of the 5,500 “reporters” with credentials for Super Bowl-week festivities, answered more questions than she asked. Most had to do with Steve Harvey. “Yes, I am the real Miss Universe,” she said, referencing Harvey’s embarrassing gaffe a few weeks back.

Harvey was a no-show at this one.

No one missed him.

From the costumes, to the beauty queens, to the guys dressed up like the Swedish Chef from the Muppets, this prime-time special had pretty much everything — except for Donald Trump, who was waiting on caucus results in Iowa.

Manning was asked to recollect a meeting with Trump a few years back. Maybe someday, Newton will meet The Donald, too.

“I tell kids, that oval-shaped pigskin can take you a lot of places,” said the Panthers quarterback, who won the national college championship with Auburn a few years back. “It’s taken me to the White House.”

And to this place. Kickoff is less than a week away.

Elway: No pressure on Peyton

Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — John Elway realizes as well as anyone just how difficult a decision it is for an elite quarterback to retire, and he has no plans of putting pressure on Peyton Manning to make up his mind right away.

Still, the Denver Broncos are going to do whatever they can to keep backup Brock Osweiler around, too, and not lose him in free agency.

“It’s one that is going to change his life, whether it be this year, next year or the year after,” Elway, the franchise’s general manager and vice president said from his seat in the stands at Monday’s Super Bowl media night. “It’s always a hard decision. We’ll give him plenty of time. ... Bottom line is Peyton’s going to make the best decision for him.”

Elway said that no matter what Manning decides, Osweiler is in the plans going forward. He started seven games this season for the AFC champions as Manning struggled while dealing with a foot injury, passing for 1,967 yards and 10 touchdowns with an 86.4 quarterback rating.

“We’re hoping to get something done with Brock this offseason,” Elway said. “Obviously Brock is a guy that came in and played very well for us this year. We wouldn’t be here without him. We needed both quarterbacks. We wouldn’t be here without both of them.”

Deciding between two talented quarterbacks is a great problem to have.

Manning didn’t offer any hints Monday night.

“I haven’t made my mind up and I don’t see myself knowing that until after the season’s over,” the five-time MVP said.

Even Elway struggled to make the final call to walk away for good — yet he won’t begin to compare the circumstances of his own farewell to Manning’s situation at this stage.

Elway went out a Super Bowl winner and Super Bowl MVP after the 1998 season with a win against Atlanta, but still ran his retirement thoughts by his father as a sounding board. Elway said “it was very nice to have” the positive memories of going out on top.

“I was 95 percent there, but then it still took me a long time to get that last 5 percent, because it’s a big decision and something that you’ve done your whole life and now you’re not going to be able to do it anymore,” Elway said. “Whether it’s 80 percent or 95 percent, whatever that last step is — however big it is — is always really hard.”

Notes: The Broncos’ buses were involved in a chain-reaction accident on their way back to their team hotel in Santa Clara following their first practice at Stanford Stadium on Monday.

Team spokesman Patrick Smyth said nobody was injured in the accident on the southbound lanes of U.S. Route 101, but he had no information on what caused the fender bender.

Newton helped lure Oher to Panthers

Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — When Cam Newton discovered the Carolina Panthers planned to make a run at signing Michael Oher last offseason, he texted the free agent offensive tackle: “I need you. I don’t want you. I NEED you.”

Newton had sent text messages before to potential free-agent prospects — but this time he was desperate.

The Panthers weren’t planning to resign struggling left tackle Byron Bell, and Newton needed someone to protect his blind side. He thought Oher, the main character in the popular movie by that name, would be a perfect fit.

The fifth-year quarterback turned out to be right.

Oher is having his best statistical season, and the Panthers (17-1) are the highest-scoring offense in the league and will play the Denver Broncos in the Super Bowl on Sunday.

“Yeah, it meant a lot,” Oher said emphatically Monday night. “I mean, it’s Cam Newton. You get a text from Cam Newton telling you that he needs you, well, you

appreciate that. It’s definitely something that resonated with me.”

Turns out Newton had inside knowledge on Oher.

Newton’s younger brother Cecil, an offensive lineman, had been teammates with Oher with the Baltimore Ravens and raved to his brother about Oher’s work ethic and professionalism.

Newton bought in — and so did the Panthers.

Oher signed a two-year, \$7 million contract with Carolina, a move that wasn’t particularly popular with Panthers fans considering he’d struggled in 2014 with the Tennessee Titans and been released one year into a three-year contract.

“I got killed on that one,” Panthers general manager Dave Gettleman said.

But Oher has been solid.

In fact, he’s been more than solid, helping the Panthers finish second in the NFL in rushing and helping Newton achieve an MVP-type season with 45 combined touchdowns.

Oher played in 98.4 percent of the team’s snaps this season and allowed a career-low four sacks — tied for eighth-

fewest in the league — and was penalized only three times for 25 yards, according to STATS.

“He’s been a key asset to say the least,” Newton said.

Panthers center Ryan Kalil said Oher had the perfect personality to fit in on Carolina’s comedic offensive line.

He and his teammates regularly tease Oher about “The Blind Side” — a movie Oher doesn’t particularly like because he felt it portrayed him as a kid who doesn’t like football.

Panthers right tackle Mike Remmers is the first to text Oher to tell him when the movie is on TV — and it seems to be on all the time.

Remmers also regularly recites lines from the movie, drawing a roll of the eyes from Oher.

“Michael Oher has a great personality and an incredible work ethic,” Kalil said. “You talk about trying to add talent to your football team, but you also want good character guys who will rub off on the younger guys and show guys what it means to be a pro — and Michael Oher is the epitome of that.”



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Cavs end drought in Indiana

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Cleveland's Kyrie Irving spent the break between regulation and overtime urging his teammates to close out Monday night.

He spent the next 5 minutes demonstrating what he meant.

The All-Star guard scored six of his 25 points in overtime and made four free throws in the final minute to help the Cavaliers pull out a 111-106 victory over the Pacers for their fifth straight win and their first in Indianapolis in six years.

"We gave ourselves a chance, now it was time to lock in and do what we were supposed to do," Irving said, describing the animated conversation. "We got stops and, obviously, they were making shots so it was going to be tough down the stretch, but we just wanted to get out and run."

While the Cavs didn't exactly run away in overtime, Irving made sure they had the upper hand.

He had plenty of help, too.

LeBron James finished with 24 points, 12 rebounds and six assists, though he scored only seven points after hurting his right shoulder in the third quarter. The four-time MVP continued playing with what he called a stinger and made an 11-foot jumper with 1:40 left in overtime to finally give the Cavs the lead for good.

Kevin Love and J.R. Smith each scored 19 points, while Tristan Thompson finished with 14 points and 12 rebounds — marking the seventh time this season all five Cleveland starters reached double figures. Irving delivered the game's biggest plays, scoring four straight in overtime to finally give Cleveland a three-point lead, and the free throws that essentially sealed it.

"We're just learning how to win, that's

all," James said. "We're learning how to win in tough situations and tonight was one of those."

It sure didn't look like the game would be too tough after the Cavs shot 61.9 percent in the first half and took a 60-49 half-time lead.

But Indiana rallied by limiting the surging Cavs to just 15 points in the third quarter as it took a 79-75 lead.

They didn't trail again until James' layup with 1:16 left in regulation made it 94-93, but they retook the lead on George Hill's three-pointer and had a chance to win it when Monta Ellis badly missed a mid-range jumper at the buzzer.

Thunder 114, Wizards 98: Russell Westbrook had his seventh triple-double of the season and host Oklahoma City beat Washington.

Westbrook had 17 points, 13 rebounds and 11 assists and got the best of his matchup with Washington point guard John Wall. It was the 26th triple-double of Westbrook's career, and he has two straight and four in his past 10 games.

Grizzlies 110, Pelicans 95: Zach Randolph had 22 points and 12 rebounds and visiting Memphis beat New Orleans for its 10th victory in 12 games.

Jeff Green scored 24 points for Memphis, and Vince Carter added 13, including a pair of back-breaking threes in the last three minutes.

Spurs 107, Magic 92: LaMarcus Aldridge scored a season-high 28 points and San Antonio beat Orlando to remain undefeated at home.

Aldridge shot 9-for-13 from the field in leading San Antonio to its 26th straight home victory to open the season. Patty Mills matched a season-high with 22 points, going 3-for-4 on three-pointers.

Nuggets 112, Raptors 93: Nikola Jokic had 27 points and 14 rebounds, and

host Denver ended Toronto's 11-game winning streak.

Jokic's totals were season highs for the rookie. He had 23 points and 12 rebounds against San Antonio on Nov. 28.

Jazz 105, Bulls 96 (OT): Gordon Hayward had 27 points and 12 rebounds, Rodney Hood added 19 points and host Utah beat Chicago.

Rudy Gobert had 16 points and 12 rebounds to help Utah win its third straight.

Kings 111, Bucks 104: Rudy Gay had 32 points, nine rebounds and six assists and host Sacramento snapped a five-game losing streak by beating Milwaukee.

Sacramento won minus All-Star center DeMarcus Cousins, who sprained his left ankle in Saturday's loss at Memphis. The Kings are 2-7 this season without Cousins, with both wins coming against the Bucks.

Hawks 112, Mavericks 97: Jeff Teague scored a season-high 32 points, Kyle Korver added 16 points and host Atlanta beat Dallas to snap a three-game skid.

Teague went 12-for-15 from the field with a career-high five three-pointers, and reserve guard Dennis Schroder finished with 14 points. Atlanta entered the game having lost five of six to drop to fifth place in the Eastern Conference.

Pistons 105, Nets 100: Andre Drummond had 21 points and 18 rebounds, Reggie Jackson scored 19 points and Detroit beat host Brooklyn.

Drummond fell just shy of an NBA-high sixth 20-point, 20-rebound game of the season but delivered the tiebreaking basket on a dunk with 1:30 remaining. Jackson added a couple of clutch baskets as the Pistons avoided a third straight loss.

Cardinals stun No. 2 Tar Heels

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Louisville's last game left a lot of room for improvement, with guard Damion Lee looking to make amends for a subpar performance.

Facing No. 2 North Carolina offered plenty of motivation for Lee and the 19th-ranked Cardinals, who recovered from a loss with a performance they and a sell-out crowd celebrated.

Lee scored 24 points, including two free throws with 8.3 seconds remaining, to help Louisville beat North Carolina 71-65 on Monday night and end the Tar Heels' 12-game winning streak.

After scoring just six points in Saturday's loss to then-No. 11 Virginia, Lee lifted the Cardinals to a hard-fought victory over the first-place Tar Heels by making 8 of 12 shots, including consecutive three-pointers that helped provide a 55-50 lead with 9:35 remaining.

Chinanu Onuaku and Trey Lewis then combined for Louisville's next eight points, with Onuaku's three-point play making it 63-55 with 5:15 left and giving Louisville some needed breathing room with the Tar Heels hanging tough. Ray Spalding scored and Lewis followed with a big layup and then two free throws with 26 seconds left for a four-point lead.

The Tar Heels missed three shots before Onuaku came up with a rebound and Lee was fouled. The graduate transfer sealed the win by making two more at the free-throw line as Louisville (18-4, 7-2 Atlantic Coast Conference) handed the Tar Heels (19-3, 8-1) their first conference loss.

Onuaku had 12 points and 10 rebounds — his eighth double-double this season — and Donovan Mitchell added 10 points. Lewis had nine for the Cardinals, who shot 53 percent in the second half and 43 percent overall.

Justin Jackson scored 16 points and Brice Johnson had 15 for North Carolina, which shot just 35 percent from the field and committed 16 turnovers.

Houston 71, No. 12 SMU 68: Devonta Pollard scored 23 points and Damyean Dotson added 13 as the host Cougars rallied to hand the Mustangs their second loss of the season.

Pollard and Dotson keyed a 21-4 run midway through the second half for Houston (16-6, 6-4 American), which defeated a ranked team for the first time since beating No. 25 SMU in February 2014.

Texas 67, No. 15 Baylor 59: Connor Lammert had 15 points, including a clutch three-pointer in the final minute, and the visiting Longhorns won for the sixth time in their last seven games.

After Rico Gathers, Baylor's big man, fouled out and Taurean Prince committed a turnover, Lammert's three from the right wing with 44 seconds left put Texas (15-7, 6-3 Big 12) ahead 62-56.

Navy 64, Army 50: Will Kelly scored 15 points with 10 rebounds to lead the visiting Midshipmen over the Black Knights.

Tilman Dunbar had 13 points and nine rebounds, while Shawn Anderson had 12 points for the Midshipmen (16-7, 7-3 Patriot).

Army (12-10, 3-7) was led by Tanner Plomb with 14 points. Plomb, Army's leading scorer (21.8 points), made his return from missing five games with injury. Luke Morrison added 11 points.

The Black Knights shot less than 28 percent and went 6-for-28 from beyond the arc. Senior Dylan Cox had three assists, tying him with Randy Cozzens for the most in program history (430).

Focus turns to NHL playoff races

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The NHL playoff race doesn't really get rolling until after the All-Star break, and almost every team still harbors postseason hopes — some more realistic than others.

The division races only determine playoff seeding in the NHL, and it's almost considered a weakness to ascribe too much importance to the regular season. But you can't win the Stanley Cup if you can't make the postseason tournament, which makes the next 9½ weeks vital for everybody.

Most of the leading contenders in the division races have already emerged.

The Washington Capitals have opened a formidable 15-point lead in the Metropolitan Division and an 11-point lead on Atlantic Division leader Florida for the top overall seed in the Eastern Conference.

The defending champion Chicago Blackhawks lead the West thanks in part to a tremendous 12-game winning streak, but Dallas, Los Angeles and San Jose aren't letting the Hawks get away from the pack.

The race for eighth is even more vital in each conference, and only a handful of teams aren't in that peloton.

The individual statistical races are also well under way, and a skinny American goal-scorer in Chicago is threatening to skate away with it all.

Here are five races to watch in the second half of the NHL season:

Crown them: The Los Angeles Kings have won two Stanley Cup titles in the past four seasons, but this Second Six franchise has won only one division title in its 49-year history. The Kings have been alone atop the Pacific standings since Nov. 25. A recent stumble in Los Angeles' consistent play allowed San Jose to pull within seven points at the break, but the Kings openly acknowledge the Pacific title as a goal for a team that has won everything else.

Big numbers: Patrick Kane has never won the Art Ross Trophy as the NHL's top scorer, but the Blackhawks star is turning this race into a laughter with 73 points in just 53 games. Kane hit the All-Star break with a 15-point lead on Dallas captain Jamie Benn, who won the Ross Trophy last season with a mere 87 points — which Kane might have by March. Kane also leads the Richard Trophy race with 30 goals, two more than Benn.

Panther punch: The Panthers are another franchise with just one division title in their history, but the BB&T Center rafters might have some more drapery this spring. Florida is the feel-good story of the NHL season, and coach Gerard Gallant's club hit the All-Star break with a five-point lead over Tampa Bay and Detroit in the Atlantic. The Panthers won the Southeast in 2012 but haven't won a playoff round since 1996. Holding off the star-studded Lightning in the regular

season would be good practice to end that 20-year drought.

On the edge: Some big-name players must rally their clubs soon just to make the postseason. League MVP Carey Price has been out since late November with a lower-body injury, and Montreal has dropped precipitously in its goalie's absence. The Canadiens are tied with top defenseman Erik Karlsson's Ottawa Senators in fifth place in the Atlantic. Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin hit the break with their Pittsburgh Penguins clinging to the final playoff spot in the East. Edmonton's Taylor Hall, Winnipeg's Blake Wheeler and Calgary's Johnny Gaudreau are all top-10 NHL scorers, but they face uphill climbs to make the postseason.

Race for last: There's another race going on, and the prize isn't the Stanley Cup. It's Auston Matthews, the 18-year-old center from Scottsdale, Ariz., currently playing in Switzerland's top league while he waits to be the probable No. 1 pick in the upcoming NHL Draft. Toronto, Columbus and Edmonton hit the All-Star break in a three-way tie for the NHL's fewest points, but Buffalo, Philadelphia, Winnipeg and Calgary are still contenders for a shot at Matthews. This competition is wide open — although if the Oilers get the No. 1 pick for the fifth time in seven years, the rest of the league might riot.