

# STARS AND STRIPES®

Wednesday, January 6, 2016

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Navy leader: Nukes key to US survival

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In his blueprint for a stronger Navy, the sea service's new top boss, Adm. John Richardson, is blunt about what he thinks matters most: nuclear punch.

Battling terrorists is today's problem, but in looking toward a farther horizon, Richardson wants a Navy built to counter unpredictable future threats from other countries such as North Korea, which on Wednesday announced its first hydrogen bomb test. No. 1 on Richardson's list is a new fleet of nuclear-armed submarines, known as "boomers," that prowl the oceans as the quiet centerpiece of the nation's nuclear force. The Navy plans to replace the current fleet of

14 Ohio-class boomers, which began service as early as 1981, with 12 next-generation subs.

"This is foundational to our survival as a nation," Richardson writes in what he calls his design for the future, released Tuesday.

It also is a gigantic investment, estimated at \$100 billion. Even one of the project's biggest supporters, Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., calls the cost "staggering." And it happens to be just one of three efforts by the Pentagon to modernize the U.S. nuclear "triad" — new long-range bomber aircraft, new or upgraded land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles and new missile-toting submarines. The price tag for these, plus related upgrades

and replacements, is likely to approach \$348 billion by 2024, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

Richardson acknowledges the expense but argues it is part of the cost of doing business on the world stage.

"From a security standpoint in this day and age, a world-class nuclear capability" is required to be considered a great power, he said Dec. 31 in an Associated Press interview. Without it, "we could be threatened or coerced by another nation who could hold this nuclear threat over our heads," he added.

Russia and China are both modernizing their nuclear forces, although not every expert agrees that this alone justifies the United States following suit,

at huge expense.

Richardson took over as the Navy's chief of naval operations, its top job, in September after three years as head of naval nuclear propulsion programs, meaning he was responsible for the nuclear reactors that propel submarines and aircraft carriers, but not for the Navy's nuclear weapons. He is a career submariner.

His focus on the Navy's nuclear future may seem surprising at a time when the military's agenda is dominated by the threat posed by the Islamic State and other terrorist groups, which are not in the nuclear game and may not be deterred by U.S. nuclear weapons.

## North Korea claims test of hydrogen bomb

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — Soon after the ground shook around its nuclear testing facility, North Korea trumpeted its first hydrogen bomb test — a self-proclaimed "H-bomb of justice" that would mark a major and unanticipated advance for its still-limited nuclear arsenal.

The announcement Wednesday was met with widespread skepticism, as well as a strong condemnation of the defiant, impoverished country by the U.N. Security Council, which said it would begin work on a resolution for new international sanctions.

North Korea's fourth nuclear test likely pushed its scientists and engineers closer to their goal of building a warhead small enough to place on a missile that can reach the U.S. mainland. But South Korea's spy

agency thought the estimated explosive yield from the blast was much smaller than what even a failed hydrogen bomb detonation would produce.

There was a burst of jubilation and pride in Pyongyang. A North Korean TV anchor said the test of a "miniaturized" hydrogen bomb had been a "perfect success" that elevated the country's "nuclear might to the next level."

A large crowd celebrated in front of the capital's main train station as the announcement was read on a big video screen, with people applauding, cheering and recording the report on their mobile phones.

North Korea's state media called the test a self-defense measure against a potential U.S. attack. "The (country's) access to H-bomb of justice, standing against the U.S., the chieftain of aggression ..., is the

legitimate right of a sovereign state for self-defense and a very just step no one can slander."

There was high-level concern in Seoul and elsewhere. South Korean President Park Geun-hye ordered her military to bolster its combined defense posture with U.S. forces. She called the test a "grave provocation" and "an act that threatens our lives and future." Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said, "We absolutely cannot allow this."

U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter spoke by phone with his South Korean counterpart Han Min-Koo, and they agreed that a North Korean nuclear test would be an "unacceptable and irresponsible provocation," according to Carter's press secretary, Peter Cook.

Washington and nuclear experts have been skeptical of past North Korean claims about hy-

drogen bombs, which are much more powerful and much more difficult to make than atomic bombs. A confirmed test would further worsen already abysmal relations between Pyongyang and its neighbors and lead to a strong push for tougher sanctions on North Korea.

A successful H-bomb test would be a big advance in North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

"I'm pretty skeptical," said Melissa Hanham, senior researcher at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Middlebury Institute for International Studies in Monterey, Calif. "The seismic data indicates it would be very small for a hydrogen test."

It could be weeks before the true nature of the test is confirmed by outside experts — if they are able to do so at all.

## Report: US police fatally shot 984 people in '15

*The Washington Post*

On the afternoon of New Year's Eve, Las Vegas police cornered Keith Childress Jr., who was wanted for a number of violent felonies. They opened fire on the 23-year-old after he refused to drop the object in his hands, which turned out to be not a gun but a cellphone.

With that, the nation logged what is likely its final police shooting death of 2015, a year that saw 984 such killings, well more than double the average number reported annually by the FBI over the past decade.

The shooting is the final one to be counted as part of The Washington Post's yearlong project tracking on-duty police killings by firearm, an issue that has taken on new urgency in the wake of a number of high-profile killings of unarmed black men. The Post sought to document every shooting death at the hands of police in 2015, revealing troubling patterns in the circumstances that lead to such shootings.

The project will continue. Federal officials have announced plans to improve their data collection, but the new initiative will not be in place until 2017. The Post has tallied five fatal police shootings in 2016.

Over the past year, The Post found that the majority of those shot and killed by police were armed and half of them were white. Still, police killed blacks at three times the rate of whites when adjusted for the population where the shootings occurred. And although unarmed black men represent 6 percent of the U.S. population, they made up nearly 40 percent of those who were killed.

Regardless of race, about a quarter of those killed displayed signs of mental illness.

The 2015 number may yet rise. The Post is tracking a few cases where it's unclear whether police killed someone or the person committed suicide.

# Guard soldier seeks delay of sentencing to save pension

*Associated Press*

CHEYENNE, Wyo. — A man convicted of committing sex crimes against a child at F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne is asking a federal judge to delay his sentencing hearing for a few months so he can qualify for a military pension.

Wyoming Army National Guard Lt. Timothy Wells was convicted in federal court in October of sexual exploitation of a child and other charges. He faces at least 15 years in prison, federal prosecutors say.

Jim Barrett, one of Wells' lawyers at the Federal Public Defender's Office, recently asked U.S. District Judge Alan B. Johnson of Cheyenne to release Wells from custody temporarily and push his scheduled sentencing hearing back

from next Tuesday until April so he can finish 20 years of military service necessary for a pension.

Federal prosecutors are urging Johnson to deny Wells' request to be released for a few months pending sentencing.

Prosecutor Thomas Szott wrote to Johnson last week stating Wells, 47, doesn't deserve any special consideration.

"If his crimes have in fact cost him his twenty-year retirement, he must bear that loss as a consequence of the choices he made. His detention pending sentencing remains appropriate," Szott wrote.

Szott also stated it's unclear that Wells would have to be released to qualify for the pension.

## Navy to name ship after Iwo Jima MOH recipient

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The Navy is going to name a ship after the last living Medal of Honor recipient from the Battle of Iwo Jima, a victory that proved to be a turning point in World War II.

The Navy will officially announce its plans to honor Hershel "Woody" Williams at a Jan. 14 ceremony in Charleston, W.Va., according to West Virginia news station WSAZ.

Williams, 91, from the state's Cabell County, was presented with the valor award for clearing a series of Japanese pill boxes with a flamethrower while under heavy fire during the 1945 battle that claimed the lives of more than 6,800 U.S. servicemembers and wounded another 19,000. He then refused evacuation despite shrapnel wounds.

The battle was immortalized in the iconic "flag-raising" photo by The Associated Press' Joe Rosenthal.

The move to name a ship

after Williams picked up steam in February when Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., submitted a request to Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus. The announcement was first made in October; however, few details were available.

"I am thrilled the U.S. Navy will name a Navy ship after World War II Medal of Honor recipient and my dear friend, Woody Williams," Manchin said in a statement in October. "Naming a ship after Woody is a lifelong tribute to Woody's brave actions and his dedication to public service."

In recent years, Williams has taken up championing veterans issues through his nonprofit, The Hershel "Woody" Williams Medal of Honor Foundation.

He returned to Iwo Jima — now called Iwo To — in March for the battle's 70th anniversary ceremony. He told Stars and Stripes he remembered the bullets bouncing off the body of his flame thrower, which was strapped to his back, as he sought cover from withering Japanese fire.

## Payout to hostages rankles Pueblo crew

WASHINGTON — The memory of 11 gruesome months of captivity in North Korea came flooding back to Tom Massie when he heard that the American hostages held in Iran for 444 days will finally be compensated for their ordeal.

Good for them, he thought. But for Massie and his 81 fellow crewmembers on the USS Pueblo, a Navy spy ship that North Korea seized in international waters in 1968, financial recompense remains elusive.

Now in their 60s and 70s, many disabled and struggling on fixed incomes, the men of the Pueblo have received almost nothing in damages. The government once paid them about \$800 for food they didn't eat, calculated at the World War II rate of \$2.25 a day.

That's far less than the \$4.4 million to which each Iran hostage is entitled under a law passed by Congress last month — \$10,000 for every day of captivity in Tehran, coming from a fund established with penalties paid by sanctions-busting banks. The contrast strikes many of the Pueblo crewmembers as another slap in the face from the government.

From wire reports



# How Chiefs salvaged season

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — There was no “Eureka!” moment in the Kansas City Chiefs’ remarkable turnaround.

No moment of clarity, no major shake-up in scheme or personnel. The Chiefs didn’t abandon the running game when Jamaal Charles got hurt or stop blitzing quarterbacks when Justin Houston went down.

Rather, they stuck to their convictions behind the steady hand of coach Andy Reid, and it paid off with a franchise-record 10 consecutive victories and a return to the playoffs after a one-year absence.

“Andy said the key was to keep focused on the next opponent, and that’s what he did,” Chiefs owner Clark Hunt said. “We got that first victory and I really think that lifted the team spirit. We went to London, had a good experience and won that game, and the team took off from there.”

The Chiefs (11-5) actually clinched a wild-card spot with one week left in the season, then beat the Oakland Raiders on Sunday to secure the No. 5 seed. They head to Houston on Saturday to face the team they beat in their season opener before they lost five straight games.

“Clearly when you’re 1-5, you’re not thinking about the playoffs or Super Bowl. You’re thinking about getting a victory,”

Hunt said. “Once you start stringing victories together, I was optimistic we could carry it all the way to the end and make the playoffs.”

Even during the doldrums, though, nobody in the Kansas City locker room seemed to lose hope.

For good reason, too. The Chiefs weren’t far off. Those first six games included five opponents that have since qualified for the playoffs, so it wasn’t as if they were losing to cellar-dwellers. They had the Broncos beaten in Week 2 before allowing two late touchdowns, the decisive one on a fumble return, and had the Bears beaten a few weeks later before they allowed a late touchdown pass in a one-point loss.

The only games where Kansas City seemed clearly overmatched were on the road, in Green Bay in Week 3 and Cincinnati the following week. Both of those teams are in the playoffs.

“I’ve been on a lot of teams that they never would’ve gotten his far,” defensive tackle Mike DeVito said. “At 1-5, guys would’ve been thinking about going home. ... So this team is very mature, and it really speaks to Coach Reid and the philosophy and culture that he brings in here. There’s a system and guys follow by the system and it works.”

Depending on the bookmaker, the Chiefs had a roughly 5 percent chance of making the playoffs after their 1-5 start.

The sports analytics site numberFire put the odds at 1.5 percent, and gave Kansas City the fifth-best odds of having the No. 1 overall pick in the NFL draft. Not since the Bengals in 1970 had a team started 1-5 and made the postseason.

“We’ve got a great group of leaders in this locker room, man, and we never questioned ourselves or doubted ourselves that we could get to this point,” said rookie cornerback Marcus Peters, whose eight interceptions landed him in the Pro Bowl. “There was never any doubt that they carry into the huddle.”

Reid has said all along that he liked the makeup of his team, even during the long, hot days of training camp. It wasn’t just the talent on both sides of the ball, though there is arguably more than his first two years in Kansas City, but the mentality that they carry into the huddle.

They firmly believe they will win every time they step on the field. The last 10 weeks, they’ve made good on that belief.

“They’re a pretty humble crew. They don’t get caught up in accolades or wins and all that stuff. They just go play,” Reid said. “That’s the way they practice. They practice just like the way they play. They go out and go a hundred miles an hour and they do it every day. Every team has got its own personality, but that’s kind of this group. Humble group that work hard. They don’t think anything is impossible.”

# Pats’ Brady says ankle feels better

Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady said his right ankle is feeling better.

Brady walked without an apparent limp for his media availability on Wednesday. He said getting the week off before the Patriots’ first playoff game will be helpful.

“This is the first time we’ve had off in quite a while,” he said.

Brady has received treatment for his ankle after Miami defensive lineman Ndamukong Suh landed on it in Sunday’s 20-10 Dolphins victory.

The Patriots have the first week of the playoffs off. They will host Cincinnati, Houston or Kansas City on Jan. 16.

# Jets’ Wilkerson to have surgery on broken leg

NEW YORK — New York Jets defensive end Muhammad Wilkerson said he was having surgery Wednesday to repair his broken right leg.

Wilkerson, selected to his first Pro Bowl this season, broke his fibula in the third quarter of the Jets’ 22-17 loss at Buffalo last Sunday.

Wilkerson had a career-high 12 sacks in his fifth NFL season as a key part of Todd Bowles’ defense. He’s scheduled to be a free agent this offseason. The 26-year-old defensive end has been looking for a long-term extension from the Jets, who could use the franchise tag on him rather than let him hit the free-agent market.

# Clemson’s offense prepares for Tide

Associated Press

CLEMSON, S.C. — Clemson’s offensive line has conquered challenges all season. Its final — and perhaps biggest — will come in the national championship game against Alabama’s dominating defense.

“We’ve always been a question mark around here,” Tigers center Jay Guillermo said.

There certainly will be more questions about the line and the top-ranked Tigers (14-0) leading up to their matchup on Jan. 11 in Arizona with the powerful Crimson Tide (13-1), which completely shut down Big Ten champion Michigan State 38-0 in the Cotton Bowl last Thursday night.

No. 2 Alabama held the Spartans to a season-low 239 yards as linebacker Reggie Ragland and defensive end Jonathan Allen had their way with Michigan State’s offensive line, combining for four sacks and six tackles for loss.

The Clemson offensive line — none who were starters before this year — know they have to fare better, even if there are questions whether they actually can.

“People doubt us all the time,” Tigers coach Dabo Swinney said. “Nobody believes in this team except these guys.”

The Tigers’ unit is a group that early on didn’t look like it could anchor a national championship run.

Of the two returning starters from last season, center Ryan Norton was slowed by an injury and tackle Isaiah Battle left the team for the NFL supplemental draft in the summer.

Clemson had to rely on Guillermo, a junior who had given up football last season because of personal issues, to snap the ball to quarterback Deshaun Watson and a talented, yet at that time, unproven true freshman Mitch Hyatt to protect Watson’s blind side.

They managed to answer the challenges 14 straight times.

The group, which also includes guards Eric Mac Lain and Tyrone Crowder and right tackle Joe Gore, gradually gelled and became the engine that drives Clemson’s relentless offense.

Watson and tailback Wayne Gallman surpassed 100 yards on the ground in the 37-17 win over Oklahoma at the Orange Bowl and the Tigers finished with 312 yards rushing.

The line helped Watson become Clemson’s single-season total yardage leader (4,731) and Gallman gain the most rushing yards (1,482) in school history.

All five members of the offensive line received honors on one of the three all-Atlantic Coast Conference postseason teams.

“It’s been a long journey,” said Mac Lain, the former tight end who had made only one start before this season.

Watson, who was coming off a knee injury this offseason, remembers the bond he saw growing among the linemen.

“It was just really during summer workouts, all the stuff they did,” Watson said. “Just hanging out. You could see the relationship building.”

Once the season began, things did not

come so quickly.

The Clemson offense was held to 20 points, its lowest total all year, against Louisville in September then 296 yards, also a season low, a game later against Notre Dame.

But the linemen knew they were close to putting things together.

Clemson has had 10 straight games of 500 yards or more on offense, powering to an undefeated season, an ACC title and the chance to try for the program’s first national title since 1981.

“We really had a mentality here of wanting to prove people wrong,” Guillermo said.

Clemson will do that in a big way if it can hold off the Crimson Tide defense, which limited Michigan State to 29 yards rushing.

Alabama’s Allen said the Crimson Tide concentrates on taking away the run so they can get after the quarterback.

“If you stop the run, you get rewarded with pass rushing,” said Allen, who had two sacks against the Spartans. “That’s just our mentality.”

If Alabama shuts down Clemson’s run game, it will go a long way in helping Alabama win its fourth national championship in seven years. The Tigers, however, believe they can slow down the Crimson Tide so Watson and Gallman can make the plays they’ve made all season.

“We know we’re only going to go as far as our offensive line takes us,” Guillermo said. “It starts with us putting the game on our back. That’s what we want to do.”



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# Mavericks down Kings again

Associated Press

DALLAS — Deron Williams has been back with his hometown Dallas Mavericks for a couple of months now.

He might have finally had his homecoming parade. Or homecoming dogpile, if you will.

Williams hit a three-pointer at the buzzer in the second overtime, and the Mavericks pulled out a wild 117-116 victory over Sacramento on Tuesday night for their 22nd consecutive home victory against the Kings.

Williams took an inbound pass from Devin Harris with 2.3 seconds left, pump faked to get Rudy Gay to fly by him in the left corner and the ball went in after the horn sounded.

With his shot headed toward the hoop, Williams backpedaled a few steps to his right and bumped Kings coach George Karl back into a seat on the Sacramento bench just as the ball went in. An instant later, teammates swarmed Williams on the court.

"That was definitely my first Mavericks mob scene," said the veteran guard, who led Dallas with 25 points and was 3-for-6 from long range. "I was at the very bottom of the pile, then all of a sudden it went dark and I couldn't breathe."

Dirk Nowitzki hit an earlier three as the Mavericks scored the last eight points after falling behind 116-109 with 1:20 left

in the second overtime.

DeMarcus Cousins scored 35 for his third straight 30-point game for the Kings, including a buzzer-beating layup for a 98-all tie at the end of regulation.

Former Dallas guard Rajon Rondo was out with back spasms in his first visit since an acrimonious split after an ill-fated half-season with the Mavericks.

Dallas' run against Sacramento is the second-longest current streak versus one team in the NBA behind San Antonio's 32-game run against Golden State, according to STATS.

**Warriors 109, Lakers 88:** Klay Thompson scored 22 of his 36 points in the first quarter and Stephen Curry added 17 before sitting out the fourth to rest his ailing leg in visiting Golden State's victory.

Kobe Bryant sat out his third straight game with a sore right shoulder for the Lakers, whose three-game winning streak ended while the Warriors improved to 33-2.

Curry stayed in the game after taking a blow on his left leg in the third period, but briefly limped with obvious frustration on his face. The reigning MVP missed two games with a bruised lower left leg last week before returning for Golden State's last two games.

Curry went to the locker room before the fourth.

Draymond Green's streak of three straight triple-doubles ended with nine

points, 12 rebounds and five assists, but the Warriors never trailed while beating the Lakers at Staples Center for only the fifth time in franchise history.

**Bulls 117, Bucks 106:** Jimmy Butler had 32 points and a season-high 10 assists to lead host Chicago over Milwaukee for its season-best fifth straight win.

Pau Gasol scored 26 points with 11 rebounds, and Taj Gibson added 11 points and 14 boards as the Bulls led the entire way.

Derrick Rose returned to the Bulls after missing three straight games with a sore right hamstring. He showed no effects of the injury and finished with 16 points.

Khris Middleton scored 26 for Milwaukee, and Michael Carter-Williams had 20 points and 12 assists.

**Knicks 107, Hawks 101:** Arron Afflalo and Carmelo Anthony both scored 23 points, and visiting New York almost lost a 16-point lead before holding off Atlanta to give the Knicks their second win over the Hawks in three days.

The Knicks led by 16 in the third quarter but saw the lead reduced to two points in the final minute before Jose Calderon scored on a drive with 18 seconds remaining.

Kristaps Porzingis had 17 points and 11 rebounds for New York. Anthony finished with 11 rebounds and seven assists.

Paul Millsap led Atlanta with 19 points.

# LSU rolls past No. 9 Kentucky

Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. — It looks like Ben Simmons won't always have to dominate for LSU to beat some of college basketball's best.

Tim Quarterman had 21 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists, Craig Victor added 15 points and 12 rebounds, and LSU defeated No. 9 Kentucky 85-67 on Tuesday night.

Simmons, the heralded freshman, added 14 points and 10 rebounds for the Tigers (9-5, 2-0 Southeastern Conference), who seem to be figuring things out after a disappointing 7-5 start in non-conference play. LSU has begun its SEC slate by beating the preseason picks to finish first and second in the league, starting with last Saturday's triumph at Vanderbilt.

"We have come together as a team," Simmons said. "Everyone got sick of what was happening and we laid it all out. We put our goals down and everyone has really stepped up and contributed."

LSU never trailed after tying the game at 2 and kept its lead at or near double digits for much of the game to the delight of a packed and energized Pete Maravich assembly Center.

**Marquette 65, No. 8 Providence 64:**

Freshman Henry Ellenson had 13 points, 10 rebounds and four blocked shots, swatting away Kris Dunn's attempted buzzer-beater to lead the Golden Eagles over the host Friars.

Duane Wilson scored on a layup with 31 seconds left to give Marquette (11-4, 1-2 Big East) the 65-64 lead. The Golden Eagles avoided opening the conference schedule with three straight losses for the first time since joining the Big East in 2005.

**No. 18 Butler 77, DePaul 72:** Kellen Dunham snapped out of his shooting slump with 24 points for the visiting Bulldogs.

Butler (12-3, 1-2) put four players in double figures in its first Big East win after consecutive losses to No. 8 Providence and No. 10 Xavier. Andrew Chrabascz added 16 points, Roosevelt Jones scored 15 and Kelan Martin had 12 points, including a poster-worthy dunk over DePaul's Darrick Wood in the second half.

**No. 19 Iowa 77, Nebraska 66:** Jarrod Uthoff had 25 points, eight rebounds and four blocks as the host Hawkeyes won their fifth straight.

Mike Gesell had 22 points and 10 assists for his first career double-double with surging Iowa (12-3, 3-0 Big Ten). The Hawkeyes have victories in nine consecutive league games dating to last season.

**No. 22 South Carolina 81, Auburn 69:** Sindarius Thornwell scored a season-high 22 points in the visiting Gamecocks' Southeastern Conference-opening victory over the Tigers.

Sporting their highest AP ranking in 18 years, the Gamecocks (14-0, 1-0) lost most of an 18-point first-half lead before building it back with inside baskets and foul shots.

**Temple 55, No. 23 UConn 53:** Josh Brown hit a spinning jumper in the lane with 2.5 seconds left to give the visiting Owls the win.

Temple (7-6, 2-1 American Athletic Conference) led by as many as eight points in the second half, but the teams were tied after two free throws from UConn's Daniel Hamilton.

# Blackhawks edge Penguins in overtime

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — The Chicago Blackhawks earned the extra point. The Pittsburgh Penguins earned the needed confidence boost.

And for nearly four glorious minutes on Tuesday night, the rest of the NHL earned a glimpse of the way the new 3-on-3 overtime format is meant to be played: fearlessly.

Artemi Panarin ended the chaos with a wrist shot over Marc-Andre Fleury 3:47 into the extra session to lift the Blackhawks to a 3-2 victory on Tuesday night as Chicago survived a late Pittsburgh rally to win its fourth straight.

"I thought the overtime was great for the sport," Blackhawks coach Joel Quenneville said. "Both teams had A++ chances and the right guys were getting them and the goaltending display was fun to watch."

Panarin finished with two goals, including the winner off a feed from Patrick Kane as Chicago fended off the resilient Penguins, who erased a 2-0 deficit in the third period behind goals from Sidney Crosby and Kris Letang.

It set the stage for a dazzling back-and-forth overtime, with two of the league's most skilled teams taking advantage of the wide swathes of open ice available when there are six skaters on the surface instead of 10. They traded opportunities — with Fleury making a doorstep stop on Marian Hossa on one end and Corey Crawford denying Phil Kessel twice at the other — before Kane set up Panarin for his 13th of the year.

Jonathan Toews got his 14th goal of the season for Chicago. Kane finished with two assists to boost his point total to an NHL-best 59. Crawford made 34 saves for the Blackhawks and was helped by a handful of Pittsburgh shots that clanged off the posts and out of harm's way.

Crosby scored his 12th of the season and sixth in his last six games to start Pittsburgh's comeback. Letang added his

fourth with a shot from the point with 2:50 to play to force overtime. Fleury stopped 27 shots in the first game of a home-and-home with the defending Stanley Cup champions.

"What I loved about our group was the resilience," Penguins coach Mike Sullivan said. "We just keep playing. We raised our intensity level when we had to. That's a great sign for this team."

Chicago appeared to be firmly in control going into the third and managed to improve to 17-0-1 when leading after two, but this one was harder than most.

Crosby gave Pittsburgh life when he ripped a wrist shot by Crawford's blocker 5:54 into the third. He nearly added another after the ensuing faceoff only to have his backhand beat Crawford but hit the post. Letang finally tied it with less than 3 minutes remaining when his blind shot from the point emerged from a sea of jerseys to slip by Crawford's glove.

The Penguins earned at least one point for the sixth time in their last seven games and appear to be figuring things out under Sullivan, their once-sleepy offense getting a need jolt from its stars and a rejuvenated power play that was converting nearly 40 percent of its opportunities since Dec. 19.

"Stay with it, don't get frustrated and trust the puck would go in," Crosby said. "That was really important. That's a point we're looking at down the line looks like a big one."

**Panthers 5, Sabres 1:** Jaromir Jagr scored his team-leading 14th goal, and visiting Florida extended its franchise-record winning streak to 10 games with a win over Buffalo.

Roberto Luongo made 31 saves to improve his career record against Buffalo to 18-7.

**Capitals 3, Bruins 2:** Evgeny Kuznetsov had a goal and an assist and Washington beat host Boston to end a season-high two-game skid.

Braden Holtby faced only 14 shots through the first two periods and finished with 29 saves for Washington.

**Rangers 6, Stars 2:** Derek Stepan scored two goals and Rick Nash had three assists to lead host New York past Western Conference-leading Dallas.

The Stars lost their second straight in regulation and finished their three-game trip to the New York area 0-2-1 against New Jersey, the Islanders and Rangers while getting outscored 15-9.

**Wild 4, Blue Jackets 2:** Zach Parise scored his fourth career hat trick and second this season to lead visiting Minnesota past last-place Columbus.

Parise's empty-net goal with 57 seconds left gave Minnesota a 3-1 lead. Nick Foligno cut the deficit to one 41 seconds later.

Mikael Granlund won the ensuing faceoff and scored into Columbus' empty net 2 seconds later. The two goals 2 seconds apart tied an NHL record.

**Flyers 4, Canadiens 3:** Brayden Schenn had a goal and two assists to help host Philadelphia beat Montreal to snap a three-game losing streak.

Wayne Simmonds, Shayne Gostisbehere and Sean Couturier also scored for the Flyers.

**Flames 3, Lightning 1:** Matt Stajan and David Jones gave host Calgary the lead, and Karri Ramo stopped 30 shots to lead the Flames.

Lance Bouma added an empty-netter with just under a minute left and Mark Giordano had two assists to help the Flames move past Anaheim and into third place in the Pacific Division.

**Jets 4, Predators 1:** Drew Stafford scored a pair of power-play goals to lead Winnipeg past host Nashville.

Ben Chiarot and Alexander Burmistrov also scored and Connor Hellebuyck made 43 saves for the Jets.

Colin Wilson had the lone goal for Nashville, which has lost three of four.