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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Quick release of sailors defused potential crisis

BY TARA COPP
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The speed with which Iranians released 10 sailors detained after their boats drifted into territorial waters Tuesday took much of the steam out of what could have become a major international incident — and a blow to President Barack Obama at a time when Republicans are slamming him over the pending deal to curb, not eliminate, Iran's nuclear program.

Iran is set to receive \$100 billion in frozen assets after the agreement goes into effect, expected within days. The release of the money could have been delayed if the sailors were not quickly released.

To resolve the 16-hour incident, Secretary of State John Kerry used the personal relationship he developed with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif during the nuclear negotiations.

Complicating the situation was a propaganda video by the Iranians, released just hours after the sailors were freed, showing one of them making a controversial apology.

"It was a mistake. It was our fault. And we apologize for our mistake," says one of the sailors, who is identified as the crews' commander on the video. "It was a misunderstanding. We did not mean to go into Iranian territorial waters."

The Iranians used the video to declare that the U.S. had officially apologized.

The State Department countered that no official apology had been extended from the U.S., and thanked Iran for the sailors' speedy release, which incited some on Capitol Hill.

"The administration is pretending as if nothing out of the ordinary has occurred," said Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. "Under international law, sovereign immune vessels like navy ships and boats do not lose their sovereign immune status when they are in distress at sea."

McCain also said that the detention and apparent arrest of the sailors was a violation of international law.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Navy is debriefing the 10 sailors, looking to get details about the apology.

Afghan attack claim signals escalation by Islamic State

BY HEATH DRUZIN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Islamic State's claim of responsibility for a deadly assault on a Pakistani consulate is sparking fears that the group is expanding operations in Afghanistan just as Kabul embarks on another attempt at peace talks.

"I think it is now an alarming issue for the government," Kabul political analyst Mohammad Younas Fakor said. "This was the first time they carried out such an attack, which may mean they will increase their violence the rest of the year."

"Before Wednesday, Daesh was only limited to a few districts of Nangarhar, but now they carried out an attack in the city, so they are trying to spread out," he said, using a common shorthand for the Islamic State group.

The attack began Wednesday morning when a suicide bomber killed three Afghan policemen in the eastern city of Jalalabad. Two other attackers then stormed a guesthouse next to the consulate, firing at the consulate and Afghan security forces, police and provincial officials said. Four more Afghan security personnel died in the ensuing two-hour gunbattle before the attackers were killed. At least 10 other people, including three civilians, were wounded.

The Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack, according to the SITE Intelligence Group, which tracks extremist groups. It would mark the group's first such complex attack on a major Afghan city.

For the most part, the group's violence has been concentrated in rural areas of Nangarhar province, in eastern Afghanistan, where they have battled both Afghan security forces and the Taliban. Wednesday's attack in the provincial capital was different, involving multiple attackers in one of Afghanistan's most populous cities.

If the Jalalabad attack proves to have been carried out by Islamic State militants, it would be significant, said Thomas Ruttig, co-director of the Afghan Analysts Network. Given the history of groups er-

roneously claiming attacks in Afghanistan to increase their profile, however, the statement should be approached with caution.

And the group is still made up mostly of fighters who simply switched allegiance from the Taliban or other insurgent groups, so they have not yet significantly increased pressure on Afghan forces, he said.

"Militarily, it's not a different thing, whether you fight with a black flag or a white flag," he said in reference to the Islamic State and Taliban flags, respectively.

The attack appeared to be against the Pakistani Consulate, and it came just two days after Islamabad hosted a four-country meeting aimed at bringing a fractured Taliban and other insurgent groups to the peace table.

The rise of Afghanistan's Islamic State branch, made up largely of fighters from the Pakistani Taliban and disaffected former Afghan Taliban, underscores how complex any negotiations to end the war in Afghanistan will be with multiple insurgent factions fighting both the Afghan government and each other.

It was the latest in a wave of attacks in the country since the start of the year following Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's New Year's Eve announcement of the new peace talks initiative. There have been several car bomb attacks in Kabul, and gunmen engaged in a daylong battle at the Indian Consulate in the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif last week.

On Monday, representatives from Afghanistan, the U.S., Pakistan and China met in Islamabad, the Pakistani capital, to discuss a road map for resuming peace talks that were abruptly halted last summer after Afghan officials revealed that longtime Taliban leader and founder Mullah Mohammad Omar had been dead for two years. Since then, his successor, Mullah Aktar Mansoor, has been jockeying to consolidate his support base among the increasingly fractured Taliban. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday.

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Marines open infantry ranks to women

BY WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

The Marine Corps officially opened its infantry ranks to women Tuesday by issuing an administrative order intended to facilitate their integration into all combat jobs by April 1.

The change means female Marines who have already successfully completed infantry training and related job school for combat weapons are eligible for the “ground combat arms” occupational specialty, which clears the way for them to request lateral moves into formerly closed jobs.

Defense Secretary Ash Carter announced last month that women in any service will no longer be barred from combat positions based on their

gender. The decision opened the remaining 10 percent of military positions to women — roughly 220,000 jobs, including those in elite units such as the Army’s Delta Force and the Navy SEALs.

The Marine Corps was the only service that sought to keep some combat jobs closed to women. While serving as Marine Corps commandant, Gen. Joseph Dunford, now chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, argued that women should be kept off the frontlines because mixed-gender units weren’t as capable as all-male units.

The current commandant, Gen. Robert B. Neller, sounded far more positive about women serving in combat roles in a Marine Corps statement is-

sued Wednesday.

“Our Marines earned this. They volunteered, worked hard, completed the training and earned these [military occupational specialties],” he said. “Given the secretary of defense’s decision last month, we now have the authority to award those qualified Marines the additional [military occupational specialties], and we’ll continue to keep faith with them.”

Dozens of women completed the Marines’ infantry training in the past two years as part of an integration study conducted by the service, and they would be eligible for the infantry job specialty under the announced opening.

In the statement, Sgt. Maj. Ronald L. Green commended

the women who participated in the study for their dedication in helping the Marines “develop a well-planned and responsible integration process that ensures the Marine Corps remains prepared to answer our nation’s call, while reinforcing our standards and core values.”

The issue of combat training standards to be used for women remains contentious.

Speaking with reporters at the Pentagon last week, Gen. John F. Kelly, U.S. Southern Command commander, said his “greatest fear” was that the military over time would be pressured into lowering physical standards for women entering combat jobs.

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‘Potter’ actor Rickman dies

Associated Press

British actor Alan Rickman, a classically trained stage star and sensual screen villain in the “Harry Potter” saga and other films, has died. He was 69.

Rickman’s family said Thursday that the actor had died after a battle with cancer.

Rickman was often cast as the bad guy; with his rich, languid voice he could invest evil with irresistible relish. His breakout role was as scheming French aristocrat the Vicomte de Valmont in an acclaimed 1985 Royal Shakespeare Company production of Christopher Hampton’s “Les Liaisons Dangereuses.”

Film roles included the psychopathic villain Hans Gruber, who tormented Bruce Willis in “Die Hard” in 1988; a deceased lover who consoles his bereaved partner in 1990’s “Truly Madly Deeply”; and a wayward husband in 2003’s “Love Actually.” Millions know him from the Potter films, in which he played Severus Snape.

New sealift ships can’t stand up to high seas

Bloomberg

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Navy is spending millions of dollars to repair new high-speed transport ships built by Austal Ltd. because their weak bows can’t stand buffeting from high seas, according to the Pentagon’s chief weapons tester.

“The entire ship class requires reinforcing structure” to bridge the twin hulls of the all-aluminum catamarans because of a design change that

the Navy adopted at Austal’s recommendation for the \$2.1 billion fleet of Expeditionary Fast Transports, Michael Gilmore, Defense Department director of operational test and evaluation, said in a report to Congress.

“The Navy accepted compromises in the bow structure, presumably to save weight, during the building of these ships,” Gilmore wrote to lawmakers, including Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman

John McCain, in a September letter that wasn’t previously disclosed. “Multiple ships of the class have suffered damage to the bow structure.”

The speedy catamarans are designed to transport 600 short tons of military cargo and as many as 312 troops for 1,200 nautical miles at an average speed of 35 knots. They’ve been deployed to Africa and the Mideast as well as to Singapore and are being considered for expanded use by the Marines.

Kelly hands Tidd control of SOUTHCOM

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Navy Adm. Kurt W. Tidd took the U.S. Southern Command on Thursday morning, as its outgoing leader Marine Gen. John F. Kelly prepares to retire following more than four decades in uniform.

Tidd, a 1978 Naval Academy

graduate who has most recently worked alongside Secretary of State John Kerry as the assistant to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, assumed control of the combatant command that oversees U.S. military operations in South and Central America and the Caribbean. SOUTHCOM largely faces issues such as drug trafficking, narcoterrorism and

providing humanitarian and disaster relief. It also oversees the U.S.’ detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Described by Defense Secretary Ash Carter as “a principled leader” who is “never afraid to roll up his sleeves and get grease under his nails,” Tidd, 59, previously commanded the Navy’s 4th Fleet/Naval Forces Southern Command.

Pats, Chiefs stay alive despite injuries

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The offensive line of the Kansas City Chiefs looks a lot like a grade-school game of musical chairs, only with 300-pound behemoths jumping around from spot to spot.

Take second-year pro Zach Fulton. He's been forced to play three different spots along the line due to a litany of injuries this season. And he wasn't even supposed to be a starter.

It's not just along the offensive line, either. The Chiefs have used fullback Spencer Ware as a change-of-pace running back, and wide receivers have lined up all over the field. On defense, guys are moving around so much that it seems as if change is the only constant.

All of which underscores the value of interchangeable parts in the modern NFL.

"Having that flexibility is a big thing," Chiefs coach Andy Reid explained. "It's that, 'The more you do, the more that ups your value.'"

The Chiefs aren't alone. They head to New England for Saturday's divisional round against a team in the Patriots that is just as adept at moving around pieces to make everything work.

Lose wide receiver Julian Edelman to a broken foot for nine weeks? No problem. Stick journeyman Keshawn Martin out there. Dion Lewis and LeGarrette Blount headed to injured reserve? Brandon Bolden, James White and Joey Iosefa can get you by — until you get Steven Jackson off the street.

"You have to have some way to manage those situations," Patriots coach Bill Belichick said. "So depending on what the position is, what the situation is, your team — each team is different. I don't know that there's one set way to do it."

Nowhere is the value of versatility more important than the offensive line.

Years ago, guys often would sign to play a specific position. Over time, it became necessary for them to play on either side of the line. These days, someone like Jeff Allen could be called upon to play any-

where across the Chiefs' offensive line on any given day.

The musical chairs were never as evident as in last weekend's wild-card win over Houston.

Mitch Morse was already out with a concussion, so Fulton filled in at center. Jah Reid was out with a sore knee, so Donald Stephenson started at right tackle. But when right guard Laurent Duvernay-Tardif sustained a concussion of his own, Reid limped onto the field to play guard — for the first time all year. And all of this without Ben Grubbs, the starting left guard, who is on injured reserve.

Forgive quarterback Alex Smith if sometimes he doesn't know who's in front of him when he takes a snap, or who is protecting his blindside from guys like J.J. Watt.

"It's not always pretty. That's not this crew," Andy Reid said. "They're not going to win any beauty contests. But they come out and they'll battle you and there's something to be said about that."

Running back is another position where

a piecemeal approach has paid off.

Jamaal Charles went down with a season-ending knee injury early in the year, and Ware has teamed up with Charcandrick West to form a potent one-two combination in the Kansas City backfield.

"Not having Charles and those guys is going to hurt," Patriots cornerback Patrick Chung said, "but those guys are good, too. ... They're a good team, a very explosive team as a whole."

In fact, all of those personnel changes can be just as taxing on the opponent. What the Chiefs are doing with Ware and West may be entirely different from what they did with Charles when New England played them last year, and the same goes for the way the Patriots go about things.

"They obviously emphasize the skills of certain players and skills that their individual players have," Belichick said. "It's a lot to defend. You have to defend a lot of different things and a lot of good players there, and if they catch on something they have a chance for a big play."

Steelers prep Jones in case Big Ben sits

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Landry Jones wouldn't mind a shot at redemption. Ben Roethlisberger with his mess of a right shoulder hopes it doesn't come to that.

Jones took the majority of the snaps with the starters for the Pittsburgh Steelers on Wednesday, prepping for Sunday's playoff visit to Denver just in case Roethlisberger can't find a way to make it work with the sprained shoulder on his throwing arm.

"You want to be a tough guy," Roethlisberger said.

Just, Roethlisberger insists, not a stupid one. Though the pain in the shoulder has eased a bit since Cincinnati linebacker Vontaze Burfict drove it into the rain-soaked turf at Paul Brown Stadium in the third quarter of last Saturday's 18-16 wild-card victory, Roethlisberger knows there's a difference between fending off

your two sons and chucking a football 30 yards downfield against the NFL's best defense.

"Of course I want to be out there with the guys," he said. "But I've always said not at the expense of hurting the team."

Having a quarterback with limited range isn't ideal when facing the self-described "No Fly Zone," particularly if Brown isn't available to create his usual open-field chaos. The two-time All-Pro missed practice on Wednesday as he continues to go through the NFL's concussion protocol after taking a shot to the head from Burfict on Roethlisberger's final throw.

Coach Mike Tomlin would prefer not to think about playing without Brown, though tight end Heath Miller isn't convinced it would doom a season in which the Steelers have somehow advanced to the final eight despite losing Roethlisberger, running backs Le'Veon Bell and DeAngelo Williams and center Maurkice Pouncey due to injury.

"If (Brown) is not able to go, then we're not going to not make the trip," Miller said.

Miller has a point. Look for no further proof than Jones, who barely held onto his roster spot this summer only to come off the bench twice to rally Pittsburgh to wins over Arizona and Oakland. That propensity for late-game magic took a serious hit in the first playoff game of his career. Jones went just 2-for-5 for 11 yards after Roethlisberger left, including an interception with less than 2 minutes that seemed to seal Cincinnati's first postseason win in a quarter century.

Jones would love to have the throw back. He didn't get a chance, instead returning to the sideline as Roethlisberger grinned through the agony to lead an improbable winning drive not quite as pretty but no less forgettable than the one he put together to lead the Steelers to victory in the 2009 Super Bowl.

Source: McAdoo is Giants' new coach

Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — The New York Giants didn't have to look far to find a replacement for Tom Coughlin.

Offensive coordinator Ben McAdoo has been promoted to take over the team that has missed the playoffs the past four seasons, a person familiar with the decision told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

The 38-year-old McAdoo has been on the fast track since reviving the offense over the past two seasons. He got the first interview for the job after the 69-year-old Coughlin stepped down after 12 seasons and he made an immediate impression.

The coaching search lasted less than 10 days.

The story was first reported by several media outlets.

The Giants have liked what McAdoo has done with the offense the past two seasons, helping two-time Super Bowl MVP quarterback Eli Manning get back on track.

It didn't hurt that Manning voiced support for his coach after the season. This would be McAdoo's first head coaching job.

McAdoo would be the NFL's second youngest coach. Adam Gase, the Chicago Bears offensive coordinator who was hired by the Dolphins, is 37.

Cards expect tough rematch against Pack

Associated Press

TEMPE, Ariz. — The Arizona Cardinals will meet a familiar foe in the NFC divisional playoffs on Saturday night.

They won't expect a one-sided affair over the Green Bay Packers like the previous time they met.

Green Bay won at Washington 35-18 on Sunday to earn a rematch with the Cardinals after losing 38-8 at Arizona on Dec. 27.

The Cardinals sacked Aaron Rodgers eight times, clinching a first-round playoff bye with the win. The Green Bay quarterback fumbled twice and both were returned for Arizona touchdowns.

The Packers' recent offensive woes van-

ished and Rodgers looked like his old MVP self in the win over the Redskins. Green Bay outscored Washington 35-7 after falling behind 11-0.

"It's huge for us," Rodgers said. "I talked a lot the last couple of weeks about turning it on, and a lot of you probably thought that was lip service. But we needed a game like this to get our mojo back and get our confidence going."

The Cardinals (13-3) were routed at home by Seattle 36-6 in their regular-season finale, a performance the team and coach Bruce Arians wrote off as an aberration in a game that meant nothing in terms of playoff positioning.

The Cardinals opened as seven-point favorites over the Packers (11-6).

Arizona would have faced Minnesota had the Vikings made that last short field goal and beat Seattle in Sunday's wild-card game.

This is the Cardinals' first playoff bye in their history, which doesn't include many postseason appearances.

But Arizona did meet Green Bay in the playoffs once, and that 2010 matchup at University of Phoenix Stadium was a memorable one.

The Cardinals won 51-45 in overtime, the highest-scoring playoff game in NFL history.

"There aren't too many times you have an opportunity to go back and have a redo," Packers coach Mike McCarthy said. "We're looking forward to having a redo."



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Nuggets hold off Warriors

Associated Press

DENVER — Stephen Curry was just about unstoppable in the fourth quarter, except near the very end.

Curry scored 20 of his 38 points in the final period but lost the ball under defensive pressure from Danilo Gallinari in the game's final moments, and the Denver Nuggets hung on to hand the Golden State Warriors their third loss of the season, 112-110 on Wednesday night.

"It was a great opportunity to try to tie the game or take the lead," Curry said about the last of his eight turnovers. "Got stuck between looking for the open man and handling the ball, and one little mishandle and Gallinari got it."

The defending NBA champion Warriors (36-3) had won seven straight since their previous defeat, 114-91 at Dallas on Dec. 30.

Harrison Barnes added 18 points and Klay Thompson had 17 for the Warriors.

Gallinari led the Nuggets with 28 points but it was his defense at the game's critical moment that made the difference, Nuggets coach Michael Malone said.

"Gallo has proven this year he can guard most players on the floor," Malone said. "And he did a great job. He got into a stance, forced a deflection, was first to the floor and comes out with the loose ball. Those are winning plays. Those are what separate teams and we had enough winning plays tonight where we were able to withstand the furious comeback that they made."

Clippers 104, Heat 90: Backup center Cole Aldrich had 19 points and seven rebounds in place of ailing DeAndre Jordan, and host Los Angeles used a third-quarter surge to beat Miami for its 10th straight victory.

Jordan was sidelined because of pneu-

monia, ending the NBA's longest active consecutive games played streak at 360.

The eight-year veteran, who led the league in rebounding the past two seasons, had the second-longest streak in franchise history behind Randy Smith's 595 straight games with Buffalo.

Chris Paul had 15 points and 12 assists for Los Angeles, which is 9-0 since leading scorer Blake Griffin went down with a partially torn tendon in his left quad.

Thunder 108, Mavericks 89: Kevin Durant had 29 points and 10 rebounds, and host Oklahoma City romped when Dallas sat out its usual starters.

Thunder star Russell Westbrook was ejected in the second quarter after getting his second technical foul following skirmishes with J.J. Barea. Westbrook went scoreless.

Celtics 103, Pacers 94: Isaiah Thomas scored 28 points, Jae Crowder matched his career high with 25 and host Boston snapped a four-game losing streak with a win over Indiana.

Amir Johnson had a season-high 18 rebounds and scored 14 points for the Celtics, who beat the Pacers for the first time this season after losing the first two meetings.

Nets 110, Knicks 104: Brook Lopez scored 20 points, Thaddeus Young had 19 points and 11 rebounds, and Brooklyn ended its 10-game home losing streak with a victory over host New York.

The Nets also snapped a five-game overall skid with their first victory under interim coach Tony Brown, who took over when coach Lionel Hollins was fired and general manager Billy King was reassigned on Sunday.

Wizards 106, Bucks 101: John Wall scored 19 points and backcourt mate Bradley Beal had 11 in his return from injury to help Washington beat Milwaukee.

Beal came off the bench and played 22 minutes in his first game since Dec. 9. He had been sidelined with a stress reaction in his lower right leg.

Rockets 107, Timberwolves 104: James Harden had 27 points and 11 assists as Houston won its season-high fifth in a row. Visiting Minnesota lost its season-worst eighth straight.

Dwight Howard added 15 points and 10 rebounds, and Terrence Jones came off the bench to score 16 with nine rebounds for the Rockets.

Hornets 107, Hawks 84: Kemba Walker scored 23 points and host Charlotte pulled away from Atlanta to stop a seven-game losing streak.

Cody Zeller added 19 points and 10 rebounds, and Jeremy Lin had 19 points for the Hornets.

Trail Blazers 99, Jazz 85: Damian Lillard had 21 points and 10 assists, and host Portland shook off a slow first half to beat Utah.

CJ McCollum added 15 points and eight assists for the Trail Blazers, who led by as many as 20 in the second half after the teams traded the lead in the first. It was Portland's second consecutive victory following a three-game losing streak.

Pelicans 109, Kings 97: Eric Gordon made six three-pointers and scored 24 points, Anthony Davis also had 24 and visiting New Orleans snapped a four-game skid by beating Sacramento. The Pelicans tied a team record by hitting 16 three-pointers. Gordon was 6-for-12 from long range and New Orleans went 16-for-33 overall. New Orleans led by 15 at halftime and used a 15-0 run in the third quarter.

Norris Cole had a season-high 18 points and Ryan Anderson hit four 3-pointers and scored 18 for the Pelicans, who had lost six of seven.

Sooners outlast Cowboys

Associated Press

STILLWATER, Okla. — Oklahoma now has an idea what Kansas must have felt like after their thriller last week.

In that game, Oklahoma's Buddy Hield scored 46 points, but Kansas got the win in triple overtime.

This time, Oklahoma State's Jawun Evans scored 42, but No. 2 Oklahoma held on for a 74-72 victory on Wednesday night.

"Winning Big 12 games on the road is never easy, so we feel great," Oklahoma coach Lon Kruger said. "We didn't feel great necessarily about a lot of plays we made, but winning road games in the Big 12 — we'll never get tired of that."

Hield scored 26 points this time for the Sooners (14-1, 3-1 Big 12), but he committed 10 turnovers, including a crucial one that gave Oklahoma State (14-1, 3-1 Big 12) a chance to win. Jeffrey Carroll missed a potential game-winning three-pointer for the Cowboys as time expired.

Clemson 68, No. 9 Duke 63: Jaron Blossomgame scored 17 points, including the clinching dunk with 13.5 seconds left, to lift the host Tigers over the Blue Devils.

Coupled with Sunday's win over then No. 16 Louisville, it's the first time Clemson (11-6, 4-1 Atlantic Coast Conference) has beaten consecutive ranked opponents since closing the 1989 season with victories over Duke and Georgia Tech.

No. 6 Villanova 83, Marquette 68: Kris Jenkins scored 20 points and Jalen Brunson had 14 to lead host Villanova over Marquette.

The Wildcats (15-2, 5-0 Big East) blew a 16-point lead and trailed early in the second half until they took control late in game to win for the 36th straight time at the Pavilion.

No. 10 SMU 79, East Carolina 55: Ben Moore scored 17 points and the visiting Mustangs remained unbeaten by routing East Carolina.

Markus Kennedy had 11 points and 10 rebounds, Jordan Tolbert finished with 15 points and Nic Moore had a career-high 12 assists for SMU (16-0).

Alabama 73, No. 19 South Carolina 50: Riley Norris hit his first seven three-point attempts and scored a career-high 27 points to lead the host Tide to an upset of previously unbeaten South Carolina.

The upset leaves No. 10 SMU as the nation's only unbeaten major college team.

No. 22 Baylor 82, TCU 54: Terry Maston scored a career-high 17 points and combined with Taurean Prince for all of the points in host Baylor's game-turning 13-0 run in the final 3½ minutes of the first half against TCU.

No. 24 Purdue 74, Penn St. 57: Vince Edwards scored 19 points, Isaac Haas had 14 and Caleb Swanigan added 13 as the Boilermakers (15-3, 3-2 Big Ten) rolled at home.

Colgate 80, Army 66: Austin Tillotson scored 18 points to help host Colgate beat Army.

Colgate shot 53.4 percent from the field while holding Army to 39.3 percent and forcing 20 Black Knight's turnovers.

Navy 60, Loyola (Md) 52: Tilman Dunbar scored 15 points and made nine of 10 free throws and the host Mids rallied late to take sole possession of second place in the Patriot League behind Bucknell.

Jace Hogan added 10 points and Will Kelly had six blocks for Navy (13-5, 4-1).

Bennett's 4 goals propel Flames to rout

Associated Press

CALGARY, Alberta — Sam Bennett saw it as a step in the right direction. It was also a step into history.

The 19-year-old Bennett had a first-period hat trick and became the third youngest player in NHL history to score four goals in a game and the Calgary Flames beat the Panthers 6-0 on Wednesday night to give Florida its first regulation loss in 14 games.

"It's a great feeling," said Bennett, who has 10 goals this season. "It's big for my confidence. I knew I felt confident playing in this league and now I think I took another step in the right direction."

Jack Hamilton (Toronto, 1943-44) and Bobby Carpenter (Washington, 1981-82) are the only two players to score four times in a game at age 18, according to Elias Sports.

"Wow," exclaimed Flames coach Bob Hartley. "Right from the start of the game, he was flying out there. Very happy for him, a great performance, he played well. Here's a young kid that was working so hard, it's nice to see that he's getting rewarded."

Bennett is the first Flames player to score four goals in a game since Jarome Iginla on Feb. 23, 2003, according to the NHL. At 19 years and six months, he's the youngest Flame to get a hat trick.

Bennett had not had a goal in 47 days when he scored Monday against San Jose. Immediately after the goal, his first in 19

games, he made a gesture of removing a monkey off his back.

He wasted little time scoring in this one, one-timing a set-up from Jiri Hudler past Roberto Luongo just 56 seconds in.

Mikael Backlund centered the line between Bennett and Hudler and was impressed by how Bennett stayed positive during his goal-less stretch.

"He still played really well during his slump. For a young player, it's easy to just fade away, but he was being physical, was still making plays and was trying to score and it just didn't come," Backlund said.

Johnny Gaudreau and Mason Raymond also scored, and Jonas Hiller made 15 saves.

Blue Jackets 3, Maple Leafs 1: Rookie Joonas Korpisalo made 41 saves and last-place Columbus snapped a four-game skid with a win over host Toronto.

The 21-year-old Korpisalo entered with just one win in six starts this season and had a 3.69 goals-against average and .882 save percentage.

Boone Jenner, Alexander Wennberg and Brandon Dubinsky scored for the Blue Jackets.

Brad Boyes scored late for the Maple Leafs. Toronto has totaled just two goals while losing its past three games.

Toronto's James Reimer stopped 19 of 21 shots.

Flyers 3, Bruins 2: Mark Streit and Wayne Simmonds scored third-period goals to lead host Philadelphia to a come-

back victory over Boston for its fourth straight win.

Jakub Voracek had a goal and two assists and Claude Giroux assisted on all three goals for Philadelphia. The Flyers won their sixth straight at home.

Loui Eriksson and Kevan Miller scored for Boston, which has just two wins in its last 10 games.

Simmonds tied it with 9:50 left and Streit scored 1:22 later on a rebound that beat goalie Tuukka Rask from a sharp angle. It was Streit's fourth goal of the season. The defenseman missed six weeks in November and December following groin surgery.

Steve Mason made 30 saves for the Flyers, and Rask stopped 18 shots.

Ducks 4, Senators 1: Shea Theodore put Anaheim ahead late in the third period with his first NHL goal, Frederik Andersen made 24 saves and the Ducks beat visiting Ottawa.

Andrew Cogliano, Carl Hagelin and Jacob Silfverberg also scored. This was Andersen's first start since Jan. 1 and gave Anaheim its third win in five games.

Theodore scored on the power play, taking a pass from Ryan Getzlaf and putting a wrist shot under Craig Anderson's right arm.

Hagelin and Silfverberg scored soon afterward to finally give an Anaheim offense that has struggled for much of the season some breathing room.

Curtis Lazar scored for Ottawa, and Anderson turned away 34 shots.