

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Obama confirms troop withdrawal delay

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Afghan President Ashraf Ghani told Congress on Wednesday that his people owe a “profound debt” to the thousands of American servicemembers who suffered and died in Afghanistan after President Barack Obama agreed to slow the withdrawal of U.S. troops to held the Afghan government cope with a tenacious insurgency.

Ghani appeared before Congress a day after Obama announced that the 9,800 U.S. troops still in Afghanistan would stay there through the end of 2015 to advise and train Afghan army and police forces, despite an early plan to reduce U.S. forces to 5,500 by the end of the year. Obama said a plan to withdraw to an Embassy presence by the time he leaves

office in 2017 has not changed.

That announcement was good news for Ghani, who has sought to improve relations with the U.S. which were severely strained in the final years of his predecessor, Hamid Karzai.

As part of Ghani’s efforts, the Afghan president expressed his gratitude to the American people for supporting democracy in his country after the ouster of the Taliban in the 2001 U.S.-led invasion that followed the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the U.S.

“The people of Afghanistan recognize the bravery of your soldiers and the tremendous sacrifices that Americans have made to keep Afghanistan free,” Ghani told a joint meeting of Congress. “We owe a profound debt to the soldiers who have lost limbs to buried bombs, to the brave veterans, and to the families who tragically lost their loved ones to

the enemy’s cowardly acts of terror.”

Obama ended combat operations in January and plans to wind down the U.S. support role over the next two years. He faces political pressure from Republicans in Congress, who fear Afghanistan might spiral out of control like in Iraq, where the Islamic State group swept aside U.S.-trained Iraqi security forces in a bloody and dramatic rise to power following a 2011 U.S. withdrawal.

“Afghanistan remains a very dangerous place, and insurgents still launch attacks, including cowardly suicide bombings against civilians,” Obama said Tuesday.

Military personnel are advising and training about 330,000 members of the Afghan security forces, which are growing stronger “month by month,” he said. The Pentagon said no

particular units have been chosen to stay in Afghanistan, but there will be limited extensions for some.

“It won’t be an across-the-board type of situation. It’s got to very much be case-by-case, and this is something that the personnel analysts and the logisticians are working very hard at now,” Pentagon spokesman Col. Steve Warren said Wednesday.

The announcement Tuesday was greeted with support on Capitol Hill.

“This is the right decision in the effort to improve stability in the region and should signal a continued flexibility based upon circumstances on the ground,” Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn., chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said in a released statement.

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## GI families frustrated by response to terrorists’ ‘hit list’

*The (Norfolk, Va.) Virginian-Pilot*

NORFOLK, Va. — Families of some of the 100 servicemembers whose names and addresses appeared on an online “hit list” by Islamic State militants are struggling to figure out how much danger they really face.

The weekend posting by a group that identified itself as the Islamic State Hacking Division included pictures of servicemembers along with their names, home addresses, branches of service and, in some cases, ranks and titles. It claimed the information was hacked from military sites, while the Pentagon insists it was culled from the Internet.

The posting, which has since been removed, called on unnamed “brothers in America”

to seek out the servicemembers and “kill them in their own land.”

On the list: 15 servicemembers from Hampton Roads, Va., most of whom were assigned to warships that launched strikes against the Islamic State group.

The wife of one sailor named said affected families are frustrated.

They maintain that the Navy’s public relations arm has been too lax in allowing information about naval operations onto the Web and that the Pentagon is not taking the threats seriously enough.

Additionally, they said, the Navy is not being forthcoming enough with them about how it intends to deal with the risk.

“The bottom line is, we are

at war, and war is not pretty,” the woman said.

“It’s not that our addresses couldn’t have been found,” she said. “We’ve pretty much given the keys to the kingdom to people that don’t have our best interests at heart.”

The Pilot is not identifying the servicemembers or their immediate relatives.

Still, she said, families were heartened that schools and police were taking measures to protect them. The Navy and local police departments did not release details on activities.

On Monday, Navy officials said the Naval Criminal Investigative Service was meeting with all 41 Navy and Marine Corps servicemembers listed.

But the woman said many

families had simply received brief phone calls.

“They feel the response has been anemic at best,” the woman said. “They said it was face-to-face contact. That assumes a different posture. It makes everything else they say seem without credibility.”

Standing on a playground with her children, the sailor’s wife said families might be scared, but they are not going to be bullied.

“While this has been done to intimidate and make us scramble, life goes on,” she said.

“It doesn’t mean we are not concerned and we are not going to take a stricter posture,” she said. “But if their intended target was for us to stay home every day — that’s not going to happen.”

# Max leave carryover dropping on Oct. 1

BY MATT MILLHAM

*Stars and Stripes*

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — Some servicemembers could lose leave days when a policy that allowed troops to keep as many as 75 days of leave ends Oct. 1.

Troops are being urged to check their leave balances and use any use-or-lose leave they have before the end of the fiscal year, when the amount of leave that can be carried forward drops back to 60 days. There's just one hiccup: The Defense Finance and Accounting Service system that provides troops with biweekly pay and leave statements is misreport-

ing troops' use-or-lose leave balances.

On March 18, the Army's personnel division blasted a memo to the force advising soldiers and commanders "that the number of use/lose leave days listed in their leave and earning statement (LES) use/block is incorrect." That's because it doesn't take into account the end of the temporary authorization that allowed members to carry additional leave.

As a result, some servicemembers could have as many as 15 days more of use-or-lose leave to use than is reflected on their LESs. Personnel who don't use their excess leave by the end of the fiscal year will

lose it.

DFAS is working to fix the disparity and "anticipates to have the glitch fixed by end of month June," said Lt. Col. Brian Ketz, deputy director of the Army's 266th Financial Management Support Center in Kaiserslautern.

Personnel have been able to carry over as many as 75 days of annual leave since 2008, when Congress authorized a temporary increase. Lawmakers extended the policy in 2013 but didn't renew it again.

The change doesn't affect leave earned during lengthy deployments. Personnel serving in areas subject to hostile fire or imminent danger pay

for at least 120 continuous days will still qualify for "special leave accrual," or SLA, which can allow servicemembers to carry over as many as 120 days of leave from one fiscal year to the next. SLA leave has a use-by date noted on members' leave and earning statements.

But on Oct. 1, any leave in excess of 60 days not coded SLA will be lost, according to the Army's memo.

The memo tells commanders to monitor soldiers' leave balances and encourage them to use their excess leave so they don't lose it.

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## Ex-prosecutor pens an apology in capital case

NEW ORLEANS — It was a long journey of conscience for a former Louisiana prosecutor. He went from celebrating a death sentence with rounds of drinks three decades ago to writing an anguished, open letter of apology after the convicted man was recently declared innocent and set free.

"I apologize to Glenn Ford for all the misery I have caused him and his family," A.M. Stroud III wrote in a letter published in *The Times of Shreveport*. "I apologize to the family of Mr. Rozeman for giving them the false hope of some closure."

Ford is the exonerated prisoner released earlier this month from the Louisiana State Penitentiary after serving just shy of 30 years on death row. Isadore Rozeman was the elderly victim who was killed in a 1983 robbery.

Stroud's letter was more than just an apology. It was a condemnation of the state's decision to oppose compensating the now cancer-stricken Ford for three decades lost. It was also a firm statement against capital punishment.

From The Associated Press

## Documents provide details on sub videos

BY STEVEN BEARDSLEY

*Stars and Stripes*

NAPLES, Italy — A sailor likened his recording of female officers showering aboard the submarine USS Wyoming to "catching Pokemon" and traded several of the videos to crewmembers for energy drinks, according to documents released by the Navy on Wednesday.

The seven charge sheets are the latest from a Navy investigation into 12 sailors accused of making and sharing the cellphone videos while aboard the ballistic-missile submarine between August 2013 and June

2014. All seven sailors named in the documents face sexual misconduct charges. Two so far have been referred for court-martial, while the other five are awaiting their command decisions on discipline, which could range from referral for court-martial to nonjudicial punishment.

Decisions on whether to charge four additional sailors are pending, and another sailor will not face charges because of a lack of evidence, according to Lt. Cmdr. Tommy Crosby, of U.S. Submarine Force Atlantic.

The episode has been an embarrassment for the Navy as it continues integrating female

officers aboard its submarines and plans to bring enlisted females aboard beginning next year. The service has described the process as going smoothly since it began in 2011.

According to the redacted charge sheets, the ship was often underway when the videos were taken, and in some cases female Midshipmen from the Naval Academy were on board and possibly filmed.

The sailor who accepted the energy drinks in exchange for some of the videos joked with other sailors that "like Pokemon, gotta catch them all."

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## Lawyer: Bergdahl faces desertion charge

WASHINGTON — The Army has decided to charge Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl with desertion, his lawyer said Wednesday.

Eugene Fidell told *Stars and Stripes* that he has been handed a charge sheet with Article 85 and Article 99 charges.

Article 85 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice refers

to any member of the armed forces who "without authority goes or remains absent from his unit, organization, or place of duty with intent to remain away therefrom permanently" or "quits his unit, organization, or place of duty with intent to avoid hazardous duty or to shirk important service."

Article 99 refers to "misbehavior before the enemy," which applies to any service-

member who "runs away" or "shamefully abandons, surrenders, or delivers up any command, unit, place, or military property which it is his duty to defend."

Bergdahl spent nearly five years in captivity after walking off his post in eastern Afghanistan in 2009 and falling into the hands of insurgents.

From staff reports



# Curry helps Warriors clinch division

The Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — The music was turned up in the locker room and the mood was festive, but Golden State didn't overdo the celebration of the team's first division title in 39 years.

These Warriors aren't done yet.

"We might be a little subdued, but I think everybody is proud of what we've done. We still have 11 games left to keep getting better so I think everybody is focused on that," Stephen Curry said. "But I think everybody is pretty happy right now."

Curry had 33 points and 10 assists and the Warriors pulled away from the short-handed Trail Blazers in the second half for a 122-108 victory Tuesday night. Andre Iguodala came off the bench to score 21 points for the Warriors, who won their seventh straight to push their record to an NBA-best 58-13.

Golden State hasn't won the Pacific Division crown since the 1975-76 season, the year after the team won the NBA championship.

After the game, many players sported T-shirts that read "Pacific Claimed."

With a comfortable lead on second-place Memphis in the Western Conference, the Warriors have dropped just

one of their last 12 games. Playing the second of a back-to-back, the team shot a season-high 60.2 percent for the game.

"Golden State is a terrific team," Blazers coach Terry Stotts said. "They're solid on both ends of the court and they showed that. They were very good all night. They passed the ball well — they had 30 assists after three quarters and 37 for the game. They kind of put on a clinic as far as how to share the ball."

Damian Lillard had 29 points for the Blazers, who have lost five straight following a 1-4 road trip. Despite the slump, Portland has remained atop the Northwest Division, five games in front of Oklahoma City.

Golden State limited guard Klay Thompson to 25 minutes because of a sore ankle that kept him out of three games during the team's homestand. Thompson, who finished with 16 points, returned Monday night for the Warrior's 107-76 victory over the Washington Wizards.

**Thunder 127, Lakers 117:** NBA scoring leader Russell Westbrook poured in 27 points and added 11 assists and Enes Kanter contributed 25 points and 16 rebounds for host Oklahoma City's fourth straight victory.

Kanter had a double-double in the first quarter with 15 points and 10 rebounds as Oklahoma City raced out to a 37-27 lead.

**Mavericks 101, Spurs 94:** Monta Ellis matched his sea-

son high with 38 points as host Dallas rallied in the second half.

Ellis hit 16 of 27 field-goal attempts, bouncing back from his 4-for-22 performance Sunday in a loss at Phoenix.

The victory pulled Dallas within percentage points of sixth-place San Antonio in the Western Conference.

**Bucks 89, Heat 88:** Khris Middleton hit a three-pointer at the buzzer as host Milwaukee snapped a six-game losing streak with a comeback victory in a key game for the sixth spot in the Eastern Conference playoff race.

Bayless missed on a drive down the lane, but Zaza Pachulia tapped the ball back out to Middleton, who buried the winner. He finished with 13.

**Pistons 108, Raptors 104:** Reggie Jackson had 28 points and nine assists, and Andre Drummond added 21 points and 18 rebounds for host Detroit.

Jackson and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope combined for 54 points, 13 assists and 11 rebounds in the game without committing a turnover.

**Kings 107, 76ers 106:** DeMarcus Cousins had 33 points and 17 rebounds as Sacramento dealt visiting Philadelphia its 16th straight road loss.

The Kings limited Philadelphia to no field goals and three points in the final 6:12 of the game to register their first-three-game winning streak since late November.

## Kings top Rangers

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Jonathan Quick and the Los Angeles Kings are still on the outside of the Western Conference playoff race.

The way the veteran goalie sees it, that's just a temporary situation.

Quick shook off a goal in the first minute and allowed just one more the rest of the way in the Kings' 4-2 victory over the New York Rangers on Tuesday night.

When asked if his club — the defending Stanley Cup champion — is a playoff team, Quick provided an emphatic "Yes."

"I believe we are," said Quick, who made 34 saves.

The Kings, fighting for a chance to defend their title, have won the first two games of a five-game trip on successive nights. Marian Gaborik snapped a second-period tie, and Los Angeles cooled off the Rangers in a rematch of last year's Stanley Cup Finals.

Robyn Regehr scored a rare goal in the first period, and Jeff Carter and Jake Muzzin extended the lead in the third. Anze Kopitar had two assists, giving him a goal and six assists in four games.

"It was a good performance by everyone," Gaborik said of the Kings, 7-2-2 in their past 11. "After that fourth goal, we slowed down a little bit. Other than that, we were better than [Monday] night. We just have to ramp things up."

The Kings won 3-1 at New Jersey on Monday and still have stops at Long Island, Minnesota and Chicago before heading home. They had scored only eight goals in their previous five games.

Los Angeles, which beat the Rangers in five games for the 2014 title, is tied in points with third-place Calgary in the Pacific Division, but the Flames hold the tiebreaker.

"We need points. That's the bottom line," Gaborik said.

**Predators 3, Canadiens 2 (OT):** Filip Forsberg scored a power-play goal at 1:54 of overtime as host Nashville rallied to beat Montreal in a game between two of the NHL's top teams.

Pekka Rinne made 27 saves in his 39th win. He pulled within a victory of the Canadiens' Carey Price in this showdown between the league's winningest goalies this season.

**Canucks 5, Jets 2:** Radim Vrbata had two goals and an assist, leading host Vancouver to its third straight win.

Henrik Sedin had an empty-net goal and two assists for the Canucks.

**Wild 2, Islanders 1 (SO):** Zach Parise scored the equalizing goal midway through the third period, then added another in the shootout to help Minnesota beat New York for its 10th straight road win.

**Blues 3, Penguins 2 (OT):** Alexander Steen redirected Zbynek Michalek's shot from the point into the net 35 seconds into overtime, lifting visiting St. Louis to a win over Pittsburgh.

**Blue Jackets 5, Ducks 3:** Scott Hartnell had his eighth career three-goal game as host Columbus rebounded from a two-goal deficit to beat Anaheim for its fourth win in a row.

**Lightning 4, Panthers 3:** Ryan Callahan and Nikita Kucherov scored in the third period to send host Tampa Bay past Florida.

**Coyotes 5, Red Wings 4 (OT):** Mark Arcobello scored his second goal of the game in overtime, and Mike Smith made 33 saves to lead Arizona over Detroit.

The win snapped an eight-game losing streak for the Coyotes.

## NFL replay changes nixed

The Associated Press

PHOENIX — NFL owners shot down nearly every video replay proposal brought to their meetings Tuesday, while approving six safety rule changes.

Of the 13 replay alterations proposed, including extending the number of coaches' challenges and letting them challenge all officiating calls, the only one passed will allow game officials to use replay for clock issues at the end of a half, game or overtime if more than 1 second remains.

Washington's suggestion to use replay to review personal fouls was withdrawn. Kansas City withdrew a proposal to allow replay officials to review all potential scores or turnovers. For example, a pass ruled incomplete in the end zone could be reviewed by the replay official without a coach's challenge. Currently, the play would be reviewed only if it was ruled a touchdown.

Proposals defeated were:

- Increasing coaches' challenges by one to three.

- Replay reviews of any personal fouls.

- Reviews of any penalty resulting in a first down, with no challenge necessary.

- Replays on fouls against a defenseless receiver being enforced when a reversal results in an incomplete pass.

- Reviewing fouls against a defenseless receiver, with an unsuccessful challenge not costing a timeout.

- Reviewing whether time expired on the play clock before the ball is snapped.

- Using stadium-produced video for a replay review.

Philadelphia Eagles owner Jeffrey Lurie was disappointed the Patriots' proposal that virtually anything be challengeable was not passed.

"We sort of have an encyclopedic notebook of what you can challenge," Lurie said. "I prefer challenge anything. It didn't

pass and I hope someday it will."

The owners approved a proposal for stopping play when a medical adviser believes a player is unstable and should be taken off the field.

They also approved rules prohibiting players from pushing teammates on the line of scrimmage when the opponent is punting; eliminating all peel-back blocks and chop blocks by running backs outside the tackle box; and extending defenseless player protection during an interception return. Tableted was a move to place cameras on all boundary lines (sidelines, goal lines and end lines) while the league further researches such a project.

Lurie, like several owners, threw his support behind the NFL returning to Los Angeles. That's become a much more feasible possibility with a stadium planned by Rams owner Stan Kroenke, and with the Chargers and Raiders also in the process of putting together another construction plan for elsewhere in the area.

Asked if the league having one or more teams in Los Angeles is inevitable, he enthusiastically replied, "I sure hope so."

"I think there is a real chance we'll get one of these stadiums done," added Lurie. "Two teams to start off, I assume one from the AFC and one from the NFC. It makes no sense for the NFL not to be there."

But the NFL has not been in the nation's second-largest market since the Rams and Raiders left in 1995. The race now seems to be on, with many owners eager to return to L.A.

And to bring back more than one team, offsetting the enormous costs of the new stadium that could approach \$2 billion.

"I think to support the financial commitment of doing the kind of stadium that's necessary in L.A., you'll need the resources of two teams," Patriots owner Robert Kraft said.



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# Wildcats are own worst enemy

The Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ky. — Good teams have tried various ways to beat Kentucky. The game plans have included getting physical with them, trying to force the unbeaten Wildcats to take jump shots, double-teaming post players, playing up-tempo so Kentucky can't set its defense, pressing them.

These tactics and others have worked to some extent in box scores, just not on the scoreboard.

No matter who Kentucky plays or how well it plays, the consensus seems to be if the Wildcats play to their potential, they won't lose.

That makes Kentucky's toughest opponent, well, Kentucky.

Fifth-seeded West Virginia might be Kentucky's stiffest challenge so far, with the Mountaineers expected to try to use their defensive pressure and physicality to derail the Wildcats (36-0) in Thursday night's NCAA tournament regional semifinal in Cleveland.

One of the burning questions in college basketball this season is how to beat Kentucky.

The answer seems to rest with the Wildcats. For Kentucky to lose with its length, depth and experience, it feels like each player in John Calipari's nine-deep rotation needs to have an off night.

It's possible, just seems unlikely it'll happen in the same game.

"The good news is there's enough guys that, if two or three aren't playing well, we can still survive," the Kentucky coach said after watching his team shoot just 37 percent and get out-rebounded 45-38 by Cincinnati, and still advance to the Sweet 16 with a 64-51 win on Saturday.

Calipari isn't just spewing coach speak, the stats back up his observation.

Eight of the nine players in the rotation are averaging between 5.8 and 11.1

points per game. Eight different players have been Kentucky's leading scorer this season.

Even when a team has some in-game success against Kentucky, Calipari has enough talent to mix and match lineups until he finds a combination that works. Having "reinforcements," as the coach calls them, has also succeeded in wearing down opponents.

"Every team always plays us with different strategies," 6-11 freshman Karl-Anthony Towns said. "Everyone has different stuff they do. We don't get much time to scout and we just have to get into the groove while the game is going on. You just feel them out. That's how it always is."

Cincinnati tried to take the physical route, but the Wildcats' height and length makes beating them up a difficult proposition.

The approach did help the Bearcats beat the Wildcats on the offensive glass. Florida also played Kentucky tough in two regular-season meetings, forcing the Wildcats to fight through several bodies on the way to the basket. The teams exposed an area of vulnerability for the Wildcats — defensive rebounding. But with five frontcourt players 6-foot-9 or taller on the roster, Kentucky's size allows them to overcome the deficiency.

Against Cincinnati the Wildcats had nine blocks including six in the second half, several 50-50 situations and a lot of contested shots as the Bearcats shot 32 percent and committed 14 turnovers.

Teams have also tried to show they're not intimidated with a lot of chatter when the game starts, something very noticeable against Cincinnati and Arkansas.

"A lot of teams want to do that," said junior 7-footer Willie Cauley-Stein, whose two-handed slam dunk over Cincinnati's Quadri Moore late in the first half was the turning point for Kentucky. "But with our

guys and the way we play and the way we are all for each other, there is kind of a barrier around us. You just kind of laugh at it. I would do the same thing. . I mean, you've got to do something. You got to try something."

The Wildcats have enough guard play to break through full-court presses.

Kentucky point guards Andrew Harrison and Tyler Ulis combined for 12 assists and just two turnovers in the championship game of the Southeastern Conference Tournament. West Virginia (25-9) likes to use its disruptive defense to create turnovers. The Mountaineers succeeded in forcing 23 turnovers with 15 steals in Sunday night's 69-59 win over Maryland.

Kentucky also has used its athleticism and size to turn the table on opponents.

"If you turn the ball over against them, they are great at finishing because they've got eight or nine guys that are pro prospects," Cincinnati associate head coach Larry Davis said, "and they're going to go finish it on you if you turn it over and get it in open court."

None of that fazes Mountaineers coach Bob Huggins, who acknowledged the tall challenge but offered no hints of how his team will try to meet it.

"I can tell you that we're not going to be scared," said Huggins, who's 8-2 against Calipari.

Not many teams have been "scared" of Kentucky — though all have been over-matched in the end.

"You're going to have to be the better team for 40 minutes," Hampton coach Edward Joyner Jr. said after his team's 79-56 opening-round loss to Kentucky. "You don't have to go in being the best team, you have to be the best team for that night. But it's going to take a great 40 minutes to beat those guys."

Translation: If anyone beats Kentucky, they'll need a major assist from the Wildcats.

# Huggins has edge on Calipari

The Associated Press

West Virginia coach Bob Huggins has had his way against Kentucky's John Calipari over the years.

Huggins is 8-2 all-time against his close friend. Meeting No. 11 will be Huggins' greatest challenge against a Calipari-coached team when West Virginia takes on the NCAA tournament's top overall seed in the Sweet 16 on Thursday night in Cleveland.

"We're going to have fun trying," Huggins said. "He'll have them ready. He always has them ready."

Whether fifth-seeded West Virginia (25-9) will be ready for double-digit favorite Kentucky (36-0) may be another matter, but Huggins insists his players won't give in to the pressure.

He noted that when senior guards Juwan Staten and Gary Browne were out with injuries late in the regular season, freshmen Javon Carter and Daxter Miles Jr. embraced the opportunity to lead the team into Allen Fieldhouse in Lawrence, Kan., where the Mountaineers took the Jayhawks to overtime before losing 76-69.

"These guys are different," Huggins said. "They kind of relish the moment. They love to play, and that's what's fun about them. They love to play. They love being around each other."

So do Huggins and Calipari, who enjoy a longtime friendship. When Huggins suffered a heart attack at the Pittsburgh airport in 2002, Calipari went to visit him in the hospital.

Huggins said he couldn't estimate the number of times the pair speak during the year.

"We talk about a lot of things," Huggins said. "Sometimes it's about basketball."

Eight of Huggins' wins against Calipari came when Huggins was Cincinnati's coach. Six occurred when Calipari was at Memphis and two when he coached Massachusetts. They're 1-1 head-to-head with their current teams.

It marks the third time in West Virginia's last four NCAA tournament appearances that it will play Kentucky.

West Virginia advanced to their first Final Four in 51 years by beating Kentucky 73-66 in 2010 when the Wildcats were a No. 1 seed in Calipari's first season. Kentucky ousted the Mountaineers in the second round of the tournament a year later.

In 2010, West Virginia used a 1-3-1 zone defense that forced Kentucky to shoot 4-for-32 from three-point range.

Huggins doesn't plan to use that win as a blueprint this time.

On offense, West Virginia made eight three-pointers in the first half without a two-point basket in the 2010 game. This year's team is making only 32 percent of its three-point attempts and doesn't have the same variety of long-range shooters.

But what West Virginia lacks in all-around shooting accuracy is a tenacity and grit to go after loose balls, rebounds and get in the face of opponents.

The centerpiece of West Virginia's defense is a full-court press that has helped force an NCAA-best 19.6 turnovers per game. Maryland committed 23 Sunday night in West Virginia's 69-59 win.

West Virginia also leads the nation with 16.5 offensive rebounds per game — Kentucky allowed 21 offensive rebounds in a 64-51 win over Cincinnati on Saturday.

But West Virginia managed only nine points from its bench against Maryland.

# Point guards power NC's triangle teams

The Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Triangle neighbors Duke, North Carolina and North Carolina State are getting top-notch play at the point. It's a big reason why they're headed to the NCAA tournament's Sweet 16 together for the first time in a decade.

The freshman-senior duo of Tyus Jones and Quinn Cook gives the Blue Devils a pair of proven playmaking scorers. For the Tar Heels, a healthier Marcus Paige is back to knocking down big shots. And the Wolfpack's Anthony "Cat" Barber keeps sprinting by defenders in the open court.

They're battle-tested, including against one another.

"They're all very competitive — you're going against the best and you want to perform against the best," said Jeff Capel, Duke's associate head coach who played some point for the Blue Devils in the 1990s. "I think it's helped make them all better."

"I'm sure our guys are looking at, 'What did Barber do? What did Paige do?' Paige is looking at, 'What did Barber do?' They're all looking. That's what competitors do."

North Carolina's Triangle region features three Atlantic Coast Conference programs — Duke in Durham, UNC in Chapel Hill, N.C. State in Raleigh — with about a 30-minute drive between any of the three campuses.

They've combined for 11 NCAA titles, but this is only the fourth time they've all

gone to the Sweet 16 in the same year, the others were 1986, 1989 and 2005, according to STATS.

Duke (31-4) was expected to get there as the No. 1 seed in the NCAA's South Region. So was North Carolina (26-11), the West's No. 4 seed which survived the opening weekend for the first time since 2012.

But N.C. State (22-13) is one of the tournament's top stories after rallying from 16 down to beat LSU on a last-second shot and then stunning top-seeded Villanova.

Also in the Sweet 16 for the first time since 2012, the East's No. 8 seed earned its first win against a No. 1 seed since coach Jim Valvano led that memorable "Cardiac Pack" championship run in 1983.

Guard play has been huge for all three teams.

It was Jones distributing and Cook burying three-pointers against Robert Morris and San Diego State, Paige having a big second half against Arkansas or Barber weaving his way through Villanova's pressure.

"They're different," Capel said, "but they're winners."

Jones is averaging 6.5 assists at the helm of a Duke offense shooting 58 percent through two NCAA games. Cook — who moved to a combo-guard role with Jones' arrival after playing mostly at the point previously — is averaging 18.5 points and shooting 56 percent.

At UNC, Paige was a preseason pick for Associated Press all-American and ACC player of the year, but he had a slow start and then battled a troublesome foot in-

jury for more than two months.

Now the smooth left-handed junior is looking more like himself again. After averaging 13.2 points and shooting 40 percent through the first 30 games, he's averaged 17.9 points and shot 47 percent over the past seven dating to the regular-season finale against Duke.

"I'm healthy, that's the biggest part," said Paige, who scored 20 of his 22 points after halftime in Saturday's win against the Razorbacks. "I'm a little bit more aggressive than I have been attacking the basket. ... I would just say confidence, health and just understanding that I've got to be a playmaker at this point in the year."

Then there's Barber, a sophomore averaging 15.8 points over his last 13 games with improved range on his shot to go with the kind of speed that had earned him his nickname before stepping foot on campus.

His run has included wins at Louisville — N.C. State's next opponent — and UNC along with a 34-point night against Pittsburgh in the ACC tournament. Barber scored 17 points against LSU, then had 13 despite foul trouble against Villanova.

Playing in the ACC, which has five Sweet 16 teams, certainly helped prepare them all for the tournament. Duke, UNC and N.C. State played each other twice, forcing Jones, Cook, Paige and Barber to push themselves to keep up with one another.

Now they're leading teams still advancing in March — all from the 919 area code.