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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Navy reassures sailors on militants' list

BY STEVEN BEARDSLEY

Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — There are no imminent threats to Navy personnel and their family members after 36 sailors were identified on an Islamic State list posted online last week, a service official wrote online Thursday.

In a message posted to the Navy's homepage, Navy staff director Vice Adm. S.H. Swift said the service would notify troops if the situation changed. He said current rules on releasing information about operations would remain the same.

"Ongoing intelligence and law enforcement assessments continue to reinforce that sharing information smartly and with due caution remains safe — this includes dealings with vetted U.S. and international media," Swift wrote.

A group claiming affiliation

with the Islamic State group posted the names and personal information of 100 troops it claimed were involved in operations against the militant organization in Iraq and Syria. The group claimed it had hacked defense networks to retrieve the information; Pentagon officials said the group had merely combed open sources, including news articles, social media sites and online public records databases.

Service officials said earlier this week they were working with the FBI to weigh the seriousness of the threats and to consider safety measures. Agents with the Naval Criminal Investigative Service were meeting with the sailors and Marines named in the list, a Navy spokeswoman said Monday.

Defense officials and NCIS agents "have not found evidence of operational planning or an imminent threat," Swift wrote

in the Thursday message.

While some servicemembers and veterans posting online have responded defiantly to the threat, others have suggested the military reconsider the information it shares about operations and the troops involved in them.

One person quoted anonymously in a Virginian-Pilot article on Wednesday said she and other spouses of sailors who lived in the Norfolk area and were named on the list believed the service's public affairs arm had been lax in its releases.

The Navy air campaign against the Islamic State group is one of the more visible parts of U.S. military efforts in the region. The Navy has invited media aboard carriers in the Persian Gulf, the USS George H.W. Bush and its successor, the USS Carl Vinson, to observe the strikes.

The Air Force, which is also

conducting airstrikes from Middle East bases, has said 58 of its personnel were named on the list. Military advisers with all services are also working with Iraqi security forces, although media have had little access to those efforts.

The military has frequently cautioned servicemembers against sharing too much information on social media sites, such as Facebook, and keeping personal accounts publicly accessible.

The Islamic State group and its supporters have shown themselves especially savvy to using the Internet to threaten troops and their families directly. A group calling itself "Cyber Caliphate" hacked U.S. Central Command's Twitter account in January, and it sent threatening messages to several prominent military spouses in February.

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New carrier Ford can't launch jets with extra fuel

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Navy's top warplanes can't be launched off its newest aircraft carrier if they're carrying fuel tanks needed to extend their flight range because the ship's high-tech catapults cause too much wear.

Military weapons testers view this as a deficiency that would "preclude the Navy from conducting normal operations" on the USS Gerald R. Ford until it's corrected, said Air Force Maj. Eric Badger, spokesman for the Pentagon's testing office, in an email.

The previously undisclosed troubles with the catapult system from San Diego-based General Atomics add to short-

comings for the first in a new class of aircraft carriers being built by Newport News, Va.-based Huntington Ingalls Industries Inc.

Flaws in the ship's landing system also are being fixed, and the U.S. Government Accountability Office has said other needed improvements are being deferred until after the ship's scheduled delivery in March 2016 to stay within a \$12.9 billion cap on construction costs imposed by Congress. That's 22 percent more than estimated five years ago.

The 480-gallon tanks for extended flights are carried under the wings of two models of the F/A-18, the Super Hornet fighter and the Growler jamming aircraft. The carrier's electro-

magnetic launch system, made by General Atomics, puts more stress on the tanks than older, steam-powered catapults, and that would cause premature damage to the planes, according to the test office and Navy documents.

The test office learned of the issue in November. Unlike a catapult powered by a steam piston drive, the General Atomics system depends on a motor using electrical currents to generate magnetic fields.

A Sept. 5 report by the Naval Air Systems Command found that "the overstress condition will eliminate the employment of external fuel tanks" that are "an essential element" of combat loads for many Super Hornets and most Growler jammer

jets.

The wing tanks and the pylons they hang from are designed to withstand twisting and yanking when an aircraft is launched, but the stresses add up over time. Given the test results, the warplanes wouldn't be able to launch with fuel tanks, Badger said.

The three-vessel Ford class is the first major new design for a carrier since the 1960s-era Nimitz class and is projected to cost \$40 billion. The launch system is estimated at an additional \$3.2 billion.

The Navy says it will install corrective software on the launch system intended to reduce acceleration forces and will test it on board the Ford after delivery next March.

US fights on both sides in Mideast conflicts

Tribune Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The battle for dominance in the Middle East draws on ancient enmity between the Shiite and Sunni branches of Islam, but what drives it is a thoroughly modern struggle for power between Iran and the Arab monarchies led by Saudi Arabia.

Now the United States, which has generally sought to gloss over Sunni-versus-Shiite conflicts, has been pulled into the tumult as the fight plays out on battlefields along a 2,000-mile arc from northern Syria through Iraq to Yemen.

U.S. forces were on both sides

simultaneously Thursday.

In Iraq, U.S.-led fighter jets, bombers and drones launched a second day of airstrikes to support Iraq's mostly Shiite military, backed by Iran, which had stalled in an offensive aimed at ousting Sunni militants from the strategic city of Tikrit.

In Yemen, the U.S. provided intelligence and logistical support to Saudi Arabia as it carried out airstrikes aimed at dislodging Shiite Muslim rebels, backed by Iran, who have overrun much of the Sunni-dominated country.

To make the situation even more complex and fraught, the

military actions come as the United States and five other global powers scramble to meet a Tuesday deadline for negotiating a preliminary deal with Iran aimed at preventing it from someday building nuclear weapons.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, in a letter to President Barack Obama and leaders of the five other countries, criticized the Saudi airstrikes Thursday. But he did not suggest they would stand in the way of a nuclear deal.

The strikes were "exacerbating the crisis," Rouhani said in a Twitter message describing

his letter. White House officials said they would not comment on the letter but did not dispute Rouhani's account.

Despite the confusing array of nominal alliances, Middle East experts see a consistent pattern of the United States coming to the aid of established governments against rebels, both Sunni and Shiite, who threaten stability. "The U.S. is pursuing a steady line of defending governmental power in the region, the existing national shape of the region," said Vali Nasr, dean of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington.

Officials: Cousins planned US military facility attack

The Associated Press

CHICAGO — An Illinois Army National Guard soldier vowed to bring "the flames of war to the heart" of America if he was unable to get to the Middle East to join the Islamic State group, and his cousin bragged he could kill up to 150 people in a terrorist attack in the U.S., federal prosecutors said Thursday in announcing the men's arrests. Both are also accused of hatching a plot to attack a U.S. military facility.

Hasan R. Edmonds, 22, the guardsman, was arrested Wednesday evening at Chicago Midway International Airport

trying to board a plane on the first leg of a journey to Egypt. Jonas M. Edmonds, 29, was detained a few hours later at home, the U.S. attorney's office in Chicago said. Both men are U.S. citizens from suburban Aurora.

An unsealed federal complaint says the plan was for Jonas Edmonds to carry out an attack in the U.S. after Hasan Edmonds left the country, donning Hasan's uniform to gain better access to soldiers. The complaint says they plotted an armed attack against a U.S. military facility in northern Illinois where Hasan Edmonds had trained.

Germanwings co-pilot may have hidden his illness

MONTABAUR, Germany — Germanwings co-pilot Andreas Lubitz appears to have hidden evidence of an illness from his employers, including having been excused by a doctor from work on Tuesday, the day authorities say he crashed a passenger plane into a mountain, prosecutors said.

The evidence came from searches of Lubitz's homes in

two German cities as authorities sought an explanation of why he locked himself into the cockpit and crashed the Airbus A320 into the French Alps, killing all 150 people on board.

Torn-up sick notes for the day of the crash "support the current preliminary assessment that the deceased hid his illness from his employer and colleagues," Duesseldorf prosecutors' office spokesman Ralf Herrenbrueck said Friday.

From The Associated Press

Saudi strikes relied heavily on intel from US, officials say

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Saudi Arabia told the Obama administration and Persian Gulf allies early this week that it was preparing a military operation in neighboring Yemen, and relied heavily on U.S. surveillance images and targeting information to carry it out, according to senior American and Persian Gulf officials.

Despite days of planning for possible airstrikes, officials said, the Saudis withheld a final decision until it became clear late Wednesday that Houthi rebels were poised to take over Aden, the country's main southern port.

The capture of Aden, the Saudis believed, would eliminate any chance for an early end to the fracturing of Yemen. Retaining control of the city was seen as crucial to reinstalling the government of President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, who secretly fled Aden on Wednesday.

Within hours, acting on orders from King Salman, the Saudis notified allies already signed up for the operation, including the United States, that it was a go. The first airstrikes began at 2 a.m. Thursday, Yemen time.

Officials declined to speculate on how long the operation might last, but said the hope was that the air action would convince the Houthis to enter into political talks they have resisted since their sweep through the country began last summer.

A ground war across Yemen's barren mountains and deserts was described by the officials, some of whom spoke on the condition of anonymity, as both unanticipated and unlikely, even as the Saudis have massed forces along the Yemeni border and Egyptian warships were said to be steaming down the Red Sea.

The officials, however, did not rule out the use of ground troops to help protect Hadi and his government, assuming he can be returned to Aden. Hadi, who fled first to Oman, arrived Thursday afternoon in Riyadh, the Saudi capital.

As the air campaign moved into its second day, other countries from the region and beyond were expected to begin flying missions alongside the Saudis. Adel al-Jubeir, Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Washington, said "the first wave went extremely well" with "no collateral damage that we know of."

Kentucky rips West Virginia

The Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Like a massive, unstoppable blue wave, Kentucky hit quickly and just kept coming. There was no escape for West Virginia, no place to hide.

The Wildcats were as advertised: too big, too strong, too everything. Just too good.

Perfect and pulverizing.

Trey Lyles scored 14 points, Andrew Harrison added 13 and the unbeaten Wildcats, chasing history and a ninth national title, made their 37th straight win look easy, blowing past the Mountaineers 78-39 on Thursday night in the Midwest Regional semifinals of the NCAA Tournament.

"They were what I thought they were," West Virginia coach Bob Huggins said. "That's the best defensive team I think that I've ever coached against. And when they're making shots, there's nobody going to beat them."

The tourney's top seed and an overwhelming favorite to cut down the nets next month in Indianapolis, the Wildcats (37-0) jumped to an 18-2 lead, built it to 26 in the first half and advanced to Saturday's regional final to play third-seeded Notre Dame, an 81-70 winner over Wichita State.

The Fighting Irish may need to call Rudy, consult with Digger Phelps and wake up the echoes from some of those stunning upsets in football and hoops they have pulled off in the past.

Kentucky is a monster this March.

"They did what they had to do," West Virginia forward Devin Williams said. "You can't stop something that's destined."

With stunning ease, the Wildcats took apart the Mountaineers (25-10), who led the nation in steals and figured their full-court press would at least bother Kentucky into some turnovers. Not only did the press not work, West Virginia shot only 24.1 percent (13-for-54) against the Wildcats, who resemble a forest of blue-tinted redwoods inside the paint.

West Virginia didn't eclipse 20 points until the 11:41 mark of the second half.

The Wildcats were fueled by comments made Wednesday by West Virginia freshman guard Dexter Miles Jr., who predicted the Mountaineers would end Kentucky's title run. Some of the Wildcats said they wanted to win by 50.

"Well, that didn't come from me because that's not how I coach," Kentucky's John Calipari said. "I mean, what, someone's going to come in and say we're going to lose and they're going to say they're going to win. But we say at some point you have to step in the ring, we'll lift the rope, you've got to come in here."

At halftime, the Mountaineers had nearly as many fouls (14) as points (18) and there was no hint they would be able to cut into Kentucky's lead. The Wildcats, seeking to become the first team to go undefeated since Indiana in 1976, seemed to be sending a message to the rest of the tournament that everyone else is playing for second place.

Five years ago in the Elite Eight, West Virginia stunned a top-seeded Kentucky team that's a lot like this one, loaded with high school All-Americans and future NBA players. But the Wildcats weren't going to let that happen again, and they blistered the Mountaineers in the opening 20 min-

utes, leaving the court with superfan/ac-tress Ashley Judd dancing along with the thousands who made the trip north to Cleveland.

Aaron Harrison scored 12 points in the first half, Devin Booker dropped two three-pointers and Marcus Lee and Willie Cauley-Stein took turns soaring to convert alley-oop passes into dunks that had West Virginia fans longing to take the country road back home.

Dakari Johnson scored 12 points and Cauley-Stein added 10 rebounds for Kentucky, which hasn't faced Notre Dame in the tournament since 1970.

Juwan Staten scored 14 points to lead West Virginia.

West Virginia's players promised they wouldn't be intimidated by Kentucky's spotless record, the school's blue-in-the-face fans or championship pedigree. In fact, Miles Jr. took it further, saying, "They're gonna be 36-1."

Miles didn't score and didn't say much afterward, repeating "Kentucky played good" to every question.

Kentucky's fans came prepared for a tougher matchup after easy wins over Hampton and Cincinnati to start the tourney. At "The Corner Alley," a restaurant bar where UK's faithful gathered before tip-off, a T-shirt was being sold that said: "They Hate Us Because They Ain't Us."

No, there is no one quite like Kentucky.

And Huggins believes it's going to take something special for the Wildcats to lose.

"They're going to have to have a bad day," he said. "They had a good day today and we had a miserable day, so we lose by 40."

Badgers rally past Tar Heels

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Wisconsin looked like a beaten team for much of the game.

Frank Kaminsky got off to a slow start, his team couldn't make a shot in the first half and then fell behind by seven midway through the second half.

It looked like a repeat of the Big Ten Conference title game, when the Badgers were left for road kill against Michigan State before coming back to win in overtime.

The top-seeded Badgers again proved their grit, rallying in the final 10 minutes to hold off North Carolina 79-72 and advance to the final eight of the NCAA Tournament.

Sam Dekker had a career-high 23 points and 10 rebounds, Kaminsky added 19 and Nigel Hayes 12 to send Wisconsin (34-3) into the West Regional final Saturday against No. 2 seed Arizona, which beat sixth-seeded Xavier 68-60. Wisconsin beat Arizona in overtime last season in the Elite Eight.

"The toughness that they showed today was really something," North Carolina coach Roy Williams said. "It's strange, the difference between winning and losing is so small."

Marcus Paige hit consecutive three-pointers that drew Carolina within one with 54 seconds to go, but Wisconsin made all eight of its free throws — four by Kaminsky — over the closing seconds.

"Everyone knows that once we get to free throw time at the end of the game, we've got to make our free throws or they're going to come down and score," Kaminsky said. "We've been through that a lot this season with situations like that. So it's just nice to be able to go out there and do it."

Arizona 68, Xavier 60: At Los Angeles, just when the Wildcats appeared to be in serious trouble against the underdog Musketeers, T.J. McConnell sparked his team back to the brink of the Final Four.

McConnell scored 13 of his 17 points in the second half, freshman Stanley Johnson added 12 points, and second-seeded Arizona made a dominant late rally for a victory over sixth-seeded Xavier in the West Regional semifinals.

Kaleb Tarczewski had 12 points and 12 rebounds as the Wildcats (34-3) weathered a major scare from the Musketeers (23-14) and clamped down defensively during a game-ending 19-7 run.

With its third Elite Eight berth in five years, Arizona gets another shot its first Final Four under coach Sean Miller, who led Xavier for five years until 2009.

The Wildcats will face top-seeded Wisconsin (34-3) on Saturday at Staples Center in a rematch of last season's West final.

Matt Stainbrook had 17 points and 10 rebounds in his final game for Xavier, which fell just short of its first trip to the Elite Eight since 2008.

Notre Dame pulls away from Wichita St.

The Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Momentum sagging and Wichita State surging, Mike Brey called time out and offered his Notre Dame players a reminder.

There was no screaming. No frantic scribbling of X's and O's. That's not Brey's style. Or his team's, either.

"I said 'Fellas, been here before,'" Brey said. "Little did I know it was going to be a lightning strike, a flat-out lightning strike."

One that carried the Irish all the way to the brink of the Final Four.

Demetrius Jackson scored 20 points and third-seeded Notre Dame blitzed the Shockers in the second half of a surprisingly easy 81-70 victory Thursday night in the Midwest Regional semifinal to advance to the Elite Eight for the first time in 36 years.

The Irish (32-5) shot 75 percent (18-for-24) over the final 20 minutes, overwhelming the seventh-seeded Shockers (30-5) with a barrage of three-pointers, expert cuts to the basket and enough fancy passing to fill an And-One mixtape.

The 38-18 burst that turned a tight game into something else entirely came after Wichita State took its first and only lead

on a layup by Darius Carter with 16:37 to go. Jackson drilled a three-pointer on Notre Dame's next trip down, then added another one moments later.

After that, the Irish were gone. The lead ballooned to as many as 19 points before the Shockers settled themselves. By then, it was far too late.

"I've never seen a 1-point lead get out of hand so quickly," Wichita State coach Gregg Marshall said. "It did tonight because of their firepower."

Pat Connaughton added 16 points and 10 rebounds for Notre Dame and Jerian Grant had nine points and 11 assists as the Irish won their eighth straight.

Notre Dame will play top-ranked and unbeaten Kentucky on Saturday night with a Final Four spot on the line. The Wildcats beat West Virginia 78-39.

Fred VanVleet led Wichita State with 25 points and Carter had 22 points while playing on the home court of distant cousin LeBron James, but the Shockers simply couldn't keep up with the sharp-shooting Irish.

Wichita State appeared ready to take control after surviving an early first-half barrage, then Carter's layup put them ahead. The Shockers — eyeing a rematch with the Wildcats in the regional final

after Kentucky ended the Shockers' perfect season last spring — were caught flat-footed as Notre Dame put on a show.

Once Grant decided to become a distributor after missing all five of his first-half shots, the Irish soared. Notre Dame hit eight straight shots at one point to propel the Irish to the Elite Eight for the first time since 1979, when Bill Laimbeer, Orlando Woolridge and Kelly Tripucka fell to Magic Johnson and eventual national champion Michigan State.

The Irish survived two tough opening weekend games, beating Northeastern and Butler by a combined seven points. The win over Butler came just hours after Brey lost his mother Betty to a heart attack at age 84. He spent Sunday celebrating her remarkable life — she was a member of the 1956 U.S. Olympic swim team — before returning to the cocoon of his resilient team.

Notre Dame rebounded from the worst season of Brey's 15 years in South Bend last winter — a messy 15-17 slog — with a sizzling sprint through March that included wins over Duke and North Carolina on its way to an unlikely ACC Tournament triumph down the street from Tobacco Road.



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Ilyasova, Bucks get past Pacers

The Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Struggling with early season injuries and the adjustment to a new coaching staff, Ersan Ilyasova hasn't quite been himself for the Milwaukee Bucks.

That is beginning to change, just as the Bucks reach the most critical point of their playoff push.

Ilyasova followed up a recent run of good performances with a breakthrough game, scoring a career-high 34 points in the Bucks' 111-107 victory over the Indiana Pacers on Thursday night.

"Sometimes, you have days like this," Ilyasova said.

George Hill missed a potential tying three-pointer in the closing seconds for struggling Indiana.

"It felt good," Hill said. "It was probably the best shot all day, just the worst result."

Khris Middleton added 17 points and Giannis Antetokounmpo had 16 for the Bucks. They have won two straight after breaking a six-game losing streak.

Ilyasova was 12 of 14 from the field and 5 of 6 from three-point range.

"He was cooking," Bucks coach Jason Kidd said. "He was aggressive, he took open shots, he just didn't settle. He also put the ball on the floor. Everything that he shot pretty much went in."

C.J. Miles scored 26 points, Hill added 24 and C.J. Watson had 23 for the Pacers. They were without forward David West because of an allergic reaction.

Were the Pacers tired after ending a six-game losing streak in Washington on Wednesday?

"No excuse," Pacers coach Frank Vogel said. "We played six straight teams with back-to-backs. Some of them came in with a lot of energy. I thought we played with energy but we just weren't very good early."

Milwaukee jumped on Indiana early and led by double-digits for most of the game.

"You can't spot a team 23 points and expect to win," Vogel said. "I'm proud of our fight and how they got back into it but you can't start that way."

The Pacers began to chip away in the fourth quarter, thanks in large part to a flurry of three-pointers by Hill.

Still, the Bucks appeared to be on their way to putting the game away, only to have Michael Carter-Williams foul Watson on a three-point attempt. Watson hit two of three free throws to cut the lead to 4 with 1:31 left.

Miles missed a three-point attempt for Indiana, but officials gave the ball to Indiana on a review of an ensuing out of bounds play. Roy Hibbert then hit a jumper to cut the lead to 2 with 19.9 seconds left.

Antetokounmpo was fouled and hit one of two free throws, giving Indiana the ball trailing by 3 with 11.6 left. Hill then missed a frantic three-point attempt with 1.8 seconds remaining and Jerryd Bayless hit a free throw to seal the game for Milwaukee.

"We've had big leads, we've lost leads, we keep fighting to find a way to get back to the lead then understand we had to get a stop," Kidd said. "I thought the last play was big."

Hoffman leads gusty Texas Open

The Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Charley Hoffman took advantage of calmer afternoon conditions to take the first-round lead in the wind-swept Texas Open, shooting a 5-under 67 on Thursday.

After wind gusts threatening 40 mph pummeled the morning starters, Hoffman faced steady 15 mph wind in the afternoon at TPC San Antonio. He had the lone bogey-free round, birdieing Nos. 2, 3, 9, 11 and 17.

The winner last year in Mexico at the start of the wraparound season, Hoffman has eight top-10 finishes in nine appearances in San Antonio. He was second in 2011 and third in 2013.

"I don't know the answer to (the success here)," Hoffman said. "Visually, the course sets up nice for me off the tee. It was just a pretty low-stress round for me."

Aaron Baddeley was second after a 68. The Australian had a remarkable birdie on the par-4 17th when he snap-hooked his drive deep into thick woods, went back to the tee and holed out from 336 yards.

"That was crazy," Baddeley said. "I hit it, started walking, and the crowd starts going nuts. So, I'm 'Wait. I just made birdie.' It rolls up and goes in."

Max Homa had a 69, and Phil Mickelson and Ryan Palmer shot 70.

Mickelson, winless since the 2013 British Open, lost the clubhead off his 8-iron when it came flying off while he hit from a fairway bunker on the 12th hole.

"That was weird," Mickelson said. "But I thought it was playable out there, for the conditions. It's nice, selfishly, to be on the good end of the tee times in the afternoon. It really looked tough for the guys in the morning."

Jordan Spieth opened with a 71. The 21-year Texan is coming off a playoff victory two weeks ago at Innisbrook. He won the Australian Open and the Hero World Challenge in consecutive weeks last year.

With gusts reaching 38 mph early in the day, no one with a morning tee time managed to break par. Only Matt Kuchar and Cameron Percy matched it, and conditions might have been worse if not for maintenance crews slithering hoses onto some of the greens to water them down.

The stroke average for the morning wave was 78.61 and the overall average was 75.9.

LPGA Tour: Mirim Lee birdied all four par-5 holes and finished with a bogey-free 7-under 65 to take the first-round lead in the Kia Classic at Carlsbad, Calif.

Lee took the outright lead with an 8-foot putt on the par-5 fifth — her 14th hole in her afternoon round at Aviara — and hit a wedge to 3 feet to set up her final birdie on the par-5 eighth. The 24-year-old South Korean player won LPGA Tour events last year in Michigan and China.

Yani Tseng, winless in 70 starts since her victory in the 2012 event at nearby La Costa, had a 66. She finished with a 4-foot birdie putt on the par-4 18th after hitting a 150-yard shot from near a fairway bunker with the ball well above her feet — and water to the right of the green.

Top-ranked Lydia Ko was two strokes back at 67 in the final event before the first major of the season, the ANA Inspiration next week in Rancho Mirage.

The 17-year-old New Zealander has 10 straight top-10 finishes and has broken par in her last 25 LPGA Tour rounds and 28 worldwide. She has two worldwide victories this year, winning the tour's Women's Australian Open and the Ladies European Tour's New Zealand Women's Open in consecutive weeks.

Kopitar, Kings edge Islanders

The Associated Press

UNIONDALE, N.Y. — The defending Stanley Cup champion Los Angeles Kings have moved into a playoff spot in the Western Conference.

Now they have eight games remaining to secure a return trip to the postseason.

Their latest win — a 3-2 victory over the New York Islanders on Thursday night — was anything but easy. They controlled the first period and weathered a difficult second.

Then they grabbed their first lead early in the third, only to fall back into a tie moments later. But when Anze Kopitar scored with 4:23 left, Jonathan Quick shut the door on the slumping Islanders, and the Kings had their third straight win on a five-game trip.

Los Angeles jumped one point ahead of Calgary into third place in the Pacific Division, a position that carries a playoff berth.

"We didn't have the best road record coming in but it doesn't really matter what happened," Kopitar said of the Kings, 15-14-7 away from home. "We are looking ahead."

"We have eight games left, and we have to win a few more to get the spot."

Kopitar, who had a goal and five assists in his previous three games, got to a deflected puck off a drive by defenseman Andrej Sekera and fired it past Jaroslav Halak for his 16th goal.

"We had some shifts after it was 2-2 that were pretty good momentum shifts until we finally did find a way to score," Kings coach Darryl Sutter.

Defenseman Alec Martinez had two assists, and Quick made 25 saves in his 400th NHL game.

Nick Shore netted his first career goal in his 28th game, and Tyler Toffoli also scored for the Kings.

"It feels good any time you score a goal, but most importantly we came out with a win," Shore said. "We are looking to keep it going in Minnesota (on Saturday)."

Quick has won in his 100th, 200th, 300th and 400th NHL games.

Frans Nielsen and Johnny Boychuk had goals, and Halak stopped 34 shots, but the Islanders fell to 2-5-2 in their past nine. New York, 0-5-1 in its past six home games, is struggling to wrap up a spot in

the Eastern playoffs.

"We have to pay the price and be better on home ice," Islanders captain John Tavares said. "We're not getting blown out, but we have to be sharper. We have to have a more simple approach."

Coyotes 4, Sabres 3: Sabres defenseman Mike Weber struggled to gather his thoughts after watching his home fans cheer Arizona's game-winning goal in overtime.

"I've never been a part of that," Weber said. "Whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger, I guess. But this is a whole new low right now."

Sam Gagner scored 56 seconds into overtime to lift the Coyotes to a 4-3 win Thursday night, earning cheers from last-place Buffalo's fans hoping to get the No. 1 overall pick in the NHL Draft.

Oliver Ekman-Larsson, Jordan Szwarz and David Moss scored in regulation for Arizona, which has won consecutive games for just the second time in 2015.

To have the home crowd cheering for his Coyotes was an odd feeling for Ekman-Larsson.

"It was weird," said Ekman-Larsson, who also had an assist. "We just tried to stay focused on what we had to do tonight and I thought we did a good job of that."

Predators 3, Lightning 2: Pekka Rinne made 28 saves for his 40th win as visiting Nashville moved into first place in the Central Division.

Mike Ribeiro, Paul Gaustad and Mike Santorelli scored for the Predators, who took a one-point lead over St. Louis. The Blues have played one fewer game.

Ducks 3, Bruins 2: Ryan Getzlaf scored 3:09 into overtime to lift visiting Anaheim over Boston.

Getzlaf, who also assisted on Corey Perry's tying goal late in the third period, beat Bruins goalie Tuukka Rask from the slot with a wrist shot over his shoulder to snap the Ducks' two-game skid.

Rangers 5, Senators 1: Chris Kreider had two goals and an assist as visiting New York clinched a playoff spot.

Dan Boyle, Mats Zuccarello and Tanner Glass also scored for the Rangers, who have 101 points.

Hurricanes 5, Penguins 2: Eric Staal had a goal and two assists for host Carolina.

Ryan Murphy, Jay McClement, Alexander Semin and Andrej Nestrasil also scored for Carolina, which had been 0-3-3 in its last six home games since a 7-4 win over Edmonton on March 8.

Capitals 3, Devils 2 (OT): On a quiet night for Alex Ovechkin and Nicklas Backstrom, host Washington got goals from Evgeny Kuznetsov, Karl Alzner and Eric Fehr, along with 29 saves from Braden Holtby.

Rookie Kuznetsov's tenth goal of the season came 73 seconds into the extra period, redirecting a shot from defenseman Matt Niskanen.

Sharks 6, Red Wings 4: Patrick Marleau scored twice and Antti Niemi made 30 saves in visiting San Jose's victory over Detroit.

Marc-Edouard Vlasic, Matt Nieto, Chris Tierney and Logan Couture also had goals for San Jose, which ended a two-game skid.

Panthers 4, Maple Leafs 1: Brandon Pirri scored twice for visiting Florida to send Toronto to its seventh straight loss.

Roberto Luongo delivered a solid performance in goal and Jonathan Huberdeau, Steven Kampfer and Pirri scored second-period goals to put Florida in front. Pirri added a late empty-netter for his 20th of the season.

Jets 5, Canadiens 2: Ondrej Pavelec made 39 saves for his sixth consecutive win to lead host Winnipeg past Montreal.

Mark Scheifele and Jim Slater each had a goal and an assist and Blake Wheeler, Dustin Byfuglien, and Adam Lowry also scored for the Jets.

Avalanche 4, Canucks 1: Gabriel Landeskog and Alex Tanguay each had a goal and an assist, and Reto Berra made 33 saves for visiting Colorado.

Jarome Iginla also scored and Ryan O'Reilly added two assists as Colorado snapped a three-game losing streak. John Mitchell added a late empty-net goal.