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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Iraq weighs cost of US-led strikes in Tikrit

The Washington Post

TIKRIT, Iraq — In the make-shift Iraqi army command headquarters for the operation to clear Tikrit, Brig. Gen. Mohammed Ibrahim reads out the coordinates for targets that planes from the U.S.-led coalition are to strike: the local council building, the teacher's institute, a local mall.

As he speaks, other planes find their mark, and the headquarters, a former chemical engineering building at the city's university, shudders from the reverberations.

Since U.S. planes joined the battle to retake Tikrit last week, commanders here say the strikes have killed top Islamic State leaders and have reduced the capacity of the militants to move. However, the decision to call in strikes is also a gamble — because it has drastically reduced the manpower of pro-government forces.

Some Shiite militiamen have drawn back from the fight to protest U.S. involvement. While that may suit the American commanders, who do not wish

to be seen giving air cover to Iranian-backed paramilitary groups, Iraqi officers on the ground are struggling to plug the gap while negotiations take place to persuade the militiamen to return to the battle.

By Sunday, most of the Shiite militiamen formerly based at the university compound had departed.

The headquarters of the Shiite militia Kitaeb Imam Ali, which has been fighting on the front lines with Iraqi special forces, was empty.

"Orders," Maj. Raed Abbas al-Zubaidi, a commander with the militia, explained over dinner on Saturday night before his departure. He would not say where they came from.

His men are leaving their positions on the edges of Qadisayah, just outside the university compound's perimeter, to move to the town of Baiji, he said. Their withdrawal gives the regular armed forces a chance to assert themselves in a battle from which they have largely been excluded. But Iraqi commanders are evidently not happy about the extent of the

pullback. As a Shiite sheikh visited on Saturday from southern Iraq, one army commander implored him to persuade militiamen to say.

"Right now we need them, and honestly, they've achieved a lot of victories," said Lt. Gen. Abdulwahab al-Saidi, a commander with Iraq's special forces who is heading the operation to retake the city.

The army is reliant on the manpower brought by what has become known in Iraq as the "popular mobilization." It is a term that originated last summer to describe the tens of thousands of volunteers who answered a religious call to fight, but it has largely come to refer to Shiite militias.

U.S. involvement has brought to the surface rifts between the militiamen and the government, with militia leaders reacting angrily to the coalition strikes in an operation they were leading.

An Iranian commander who was advising the militias here, Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani, has returned to Iran, according to official photographs released

by the Iranian leadership.

Brig. Gen. Ghassan Nouradin, a senior Iraqi army officer, said that politics has complicated military efforts. "We have the problems of the groups fighting in a sectarian way," he said. "We also have the problem that the state wants to prove itself on the ground."

Two battalions of soldiers were being sent to the university to replace the retreating militiamen, army commanders said. A group of 54 volunteers from the southern city of Karbala was dispatched to help hold defense lines at the university. But there are doubts as to whether that is enough to compensate.

U.S. officials have said there are about 4,000 soldiers and that they outnumber Islamic State militants here by at least 10 to 1. But in operations in Diyala and Jurf al-Sukhar, south of Baghdad, pro-government forces have relied on overwhelming manpower — largely from militiamen — to win the fight. Soldiers lack the experience in street-to-street fighting necessary in Tikrit, some say.

1 dead after car tries to ram NSA gate at Fort Meade

The Associated Press

FORT MEADE, Md. — A fire erupted Monday when two people in a car tried to ram a National Security Agency gate at Fort Meade, killing at least one person, according to preliminary reports cited by two U.S. officials.

An FBI spokeswoman said the incident was not believed to be linked to terrorism.

The two federal officials said at least one of the people in the car died after the fire erupted. Both spoke on condition of anonymity because they were

not authorized to discuss an ongoing incident on the record.

A senior defense official said the two men were dressed as women. That official also spoke on condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to discuss an ongoing incident.

The NSA is headquartered on the sprawling Army installation near Baltimore.

FBI spokeswoman Amy J. Thoreson said in an email Monday that the shooting scene is contained. The agency is working with the U.S. Attorney's Office in Maryland to determine

if federal charges are warranted, she said.

Thoreson also said FBI agents are interviewing witnesses.

Local television showed two damaged vehicles near a gate and emergency workers loading an injured, uniformed man into an ambulance. Aerial news images showed that one of the damaged vehicles was a white SUV marked "NSA Police." Its front end was crumpled, and the hood was up. The other was a dark, unmarked SUV.

A building on the NSA campus was damaged by gunfire earlier this month. Authorities

captured a man March 3 who they believe fired that night on the NSA site, as well as earlier at several nearby places and two moving vehicles. The suspect in that case, Hong Young, told police he heard voices directing him to fire on one of the occupied vehicles.

In addition to the NSA, Fort Meade is home to the Defense Information Systems Agency and the U.S. Cyber Command. About 11,000 military personnel and about 29,000 civilian employees work on the property.

Carter talks to potential recruits at school in Pa.

BY JON HARPER
Stars and Stripes

ABINGTON, Pa. — Joining the military has its perks, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter told students Monday as part of a national trip focused on recruiting and retention to build “the force of the future.”

In a speech at Abington Senior High School, Carter talked to the students about what their country can do for them.

“We too often talk about sacrifice alone,” he said. “We probably don’t spend enough time highlighting the opportunities that exist and ... how fulfilling and rewarding military life can be.”

The Pentagon chief said popular culture has given young people a skewed view of what it’s like to be in the armed forces.

“Movies like ‘American Sniper,’ video games like ‘Call of Duty,’ TV commercials with troops coming home — you see all those, and they’re most likely where you see our military every day unless you have a family member or a friend who’s serving,” Carter told the students, but those images are “only a slice of what our military does.”

He pointed out that servicemembers get to work with cutting-edge technologies like cyberspace, robotics and biomedical engineering, and that not all troops deployed overseas are at austere outposts or com-

bat zones.

“They’re not just defending our country against terrorists in places like Afghanistan and Syria and Iraq,” Carter told the potential recruits. “Ask Lt. Matt Capps, Abington Class of 2000, who’s currently a Navy helicopter pilot stationed in Hawaii. That sounds pretty good.”

The head of the Defense Department touted the financial incentives of serving in the military, noting that all troops are eligible for GI Bill benefits, which will pay up to \$284,000 for a veteran to attend college.

“At a time when student loans account for over \$1 trillion of debt in America, that’s unbeatable,” he said.

He said that many employers value military service, making the armed forces a potential stepping stone to a successful career in the private sector.

“We want people to consider military and public service because when it comes to working in national security, no matter what you do — military or civilian — you will be better off for having been a part of this incredible mission,” he said. “Whether it’s the people, the skills or the experiences, nothing else compares.”

Monday’s speech kicked off Carter’s national trip to talk about the value of military service.

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Officials: Co-pilot treated for suicidal tendencies

DUESSELDORF, Germany — The co-pilot of Germanwings Flight 9525 that crashed into the French Alps last week had received treatment for suicidal tendencies several years ago, prosecutors said Monday.

Duesseldorf prosecutors said co-pilot Andreas Lubitz, 27, had received psychotherapy “with a note about suicidal tendencies” for several years before becoming a pilot.

“In the following period, and until recently, further doctor’s visits took place, resulting in sick notes without any suicidal tendencies or aggression against others being recorded,” prosecutors’ spokesman Ralf Herrenbrueck said in a written statement.

He did not say where th is at treatment took place. Lubitz trained to be a pilot both in Germany and at the Lufthansa training facility in Phoenix, Ariz.

From The Associated Press

Ex-Navy worker gets prison in forgery case

BY STEVEN BEARDSLEY
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — A former Navy civilian employee convicted of lying to investigators and forging documents was sentenced Friday to 12 months in prison.

Steven William Ashton, 42, was convicted in December on six counts of making false statements and falsifying records during an investigation into his housing benefit and a side business. He was acquitted of three other charges, including theft.

The sentence was handed down by a judge for the U.S. District Court for Southern Iowa.

The former NATO and Host Nations Program manager for the Navy’s Europe, Africa and Southwest Asia region, Ashton was arrested at the Naples base in Capodichino in February 2014 after indictment by a grand jury. He was released on bail during an eight-day trial in his home state of Iowa.

Prosecutors claimed Ashton

accepted \$360,000 in improper housing benefits over nearly 10 years after his move into a condominium belonging to his girlfriend, who would later become his wife. They said he later forged a lease in his father-in-law’s name to explain the benefit to investigators and that he forged other documents to help him extend his stay in Naples.

A second, superseding indictment accused Ashton of lying and forging documents related to his side venture, Blackgrid Consulting, a firm that connected U.S. contractors to overseas contacts. Prosecutors said Ashton created paperwork showing he had disclosed the business to his superiors and asked for the advice of a military lawyer.

Prosecutors accused Ashton in court pleadings of using his contacts from his Navy job to support his personal business, but they never charged the former Navy civilian with conflict of interest.

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Yemen rebels shell Aden amid Saudi airstrikes

The Associated Press

SANAA, Yemen — Yemen’s Shiite rebels and security forces loyal to the former president launched a fresh offensive Monday against the southern city of Aden, shelling it and battling local militias, but were pushed back by at least two airstrikes on the fifth day of a Saudi-led air campaign, security officials said.

The rebels, known as Houthis, accused the Saudi-led coalition of bombing a displaced-persons camp in the northern rebel stronghold of Saada, killing 40 people, including women and children. The report was car-

ried on the rebels’ TV network.

However, witnesses told The Associated Press that the camp — used to house displaced people from an earlier conflict that ended five years ago — is now occupied by Houthi forces and that most of those killed were fighters.

It was not immediately possible to resolve the conflicting accounts.

Aden, the economic center of the Arab world’s poorest nation, was declared the provisional capital by embattled President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi before he fled the country last week.

Spartans bound for Final Four

The Associated Press

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Travis Trice vowed a day earlier that he wasn't going to cry should the Michigan State Spartans continue their improbable run to the Final Four.

The senior guard's vow lasted no more than 10 seconds once the final horn sounded following Michigan State's 76-70 overtime victory over Louisville in a thrilling NCAA Tournament East Regional final Sunday.

Amid the frenzied celebration, Trice squatted down at center court and began to sob uncontrollably.

"I was actually trying to hold it in," Trice said. "I try to keep it even keeled. I'm mad that I even cried now."

That's when senior forward Branden Dawson interjected by saying that was the first time he's ever seen Trice cry.

Counted out for done as recently as six weeks ago, the seventh-seeded Spartans (27-11) let it all out in a thrilling display of perseverance and defensive grit to oust the fourth-seeded Cardinals (27-9).

"I'd like to tell you that I thought five different times this year that we were good

enough to get to a Final Four, but I'd be lying to you," said coach Tom Izzo, who described this as the best of seven regional final victories he has enjoyed. "But I think the burning desire to be in this Final Four, and they didn't want to be a group that didn't make it. I think it was more of the battle cry all year long."

Trice led the Spartans with 17 points. Dawson had 11 rebounds, including a key putback of Bryn Forbes' missed 3-point shot with 31.7 seconds left in overtime. And Denzel Valentine scored 15 points for a Michigan State team that won for the 12th time in 15 games. It's a run that included them knocking off second-seeded Virginia last weekend and third-seeded Oklahoma in the regional semifinal on Friday.

Michigan State will face Duke, which beat Gonzaga 66-52 in the South Regional final, on Saturday in Indianapolis.

Wayne Blackshear had 28 points for the Cardinals (27-9) in a game that featured 11 lead changes.

There could have been a 12th with 4.9 seconds left in regulation, when Cardinals forward Mangok Mathiang hit his first free throw to tie the game on a shot that hit off the heel of the rim and bounced high

and in. But he wasn't so fortunate on his second one, which also hit the heel and bounced wide left.

"Sometimes it can be a cruel game. I was positive we were going to win it when the first free throw went in because it shouldn't have gone in," Cardinals coach Rick Pitino said. "It's very difficult for all the players. But real proud of our guys."

Louisville was denied a shot of making its third Final Four in four years, and 11th overall.

It's the ninth Final Four appearance for the Spartans, and first since 2010, when they lost 52-50 to Butler in the national semifinals. Izzo has led them to seven Final Fours including the 2000 national championship.

The Spartans did it with a roster that was regarded as having less talent than the team that lost in the regional final to Connecticut a year ago. Michigan State lost three of its top four scorers.

"Everybody doubted us. Everybody had us down and out," Valentine said. "They didn't have us making the tournament. We just kept strong. We believe in ourselves."

No. 1 Duke eliminates Gonzaga

The Associated Press

HOUSTON — Mike Krzyzewski is living in the moment with his youngest team ever, not thinking too much about the significance of his latest trip to the NCAA Final Four.

With their trio of freshmen starting, the Blue Devils are going to their 16th Final Four, and a record-tying 12th for Krzyzewski, after a 66-52 win over Gonzaga on Sunday to win the South Regional.

"Just being with these kids and sharing this moment and this Final Four, I'm so happy, I'm so happy for them and to be with them," Coach K said. "I love my team. ... They're taking me to Indy, which is kind of neat."

Justise Winslow, the freshman playing home in Houston, finished with 16 points after rolling his left ankle early in the game, and had a big 3-pointer in the closing minutes. Tyus Jones scored 15 points, while Jahliil Okafor had nine points and eight rebounds.

"Coach has been to however many Final Fours, but this is his first one with this group and that's what means the most," Winslow said. "Living in this moment, living right now."

Duke (33-4), the region's No. 1 seed, is going to Indianapolis to play Michigan State in the Final Four. The other national semifinal game Saturday has undefeated Kentucky playing Wisconsin.

South Carolina advances; Notre Dame tops Baylor

The Associated Press

GREENSBORO, N.C. — Someday, South Carolina coach Dawn Staley will eventually rename a play after star guard Tiffany Mitchell.

But the Gamecocks aren't changing anything just yet.

They might have to run it again — at their first Final Four.

Mitchell scored 21 points and made all the key plays down the stretch to help South Carolina beat Florida State 80-74 on Sunday in the Greensboro Regional final.

Mitchell reeled off seven consecutive points, putting the Gamecocks ahead to stay and then extending that lead to five points by hitting a three-pointer on the play that Staley says will someday be called "Mitch."

"Tiffany Mitchell is the person we want the ball in her hands when we need a basket," Staley said.

Alaina Coates, the regional's most outstanding player, finished with 14 points, A'ja Wilson added 10 and Asia Dozier hit four free throws in the final 20 seconds for the top-seeded Gamecocks (34-2).

Playing from behind for most of the day, they shot 61 percent while rallying to win their seventh straight and keep the best season in school history going.

Next stop: Tampa, Fla., to face the Oklahoma City Regional winner on April 5.

"It put South Carolina on the map," Staley said. "The regular season that we had, the success that we've had in (the Southeastern) Conference, when you hurdle over being a regional champion

and going to the Final Four, it puts your name in history. So it was a history-making game for us."

Leticia Romero scored 13 points and Brittany Brown had 12 for the second-seeded Seminoles (32-5). The best season in program history ended after they set the school record for wins and reached their first Atlantic Coast Conference championship game.

Oklahoma City Regional

Notre Dame 77, Baylor 68: It would be easy to forgive Muffett McGraw if she started taking Final Four appearances for granted.

After all, the Notre Dame women's coach has become a regular of sorts on college basketball's biggest stage — reaching her fifth straight Final Four with a 77-68 win over No. 2 seed Baylor on Sunday night.

Despite the top-seeded Fighting Irish's wild success, their longtime coach has only grown more appreciative of the ride as the wins have piled up.

In fact, McGraw — likely because this season's success was less expected than some of the others — encouraged her youthful group to enjoy every part of this week leading up to next weekend's clash with fellow top-seed South Carolina (34-2) in Tampa, Fla.

"I'm planning on celebrating it a little bit more because they need that," McGraw said. "They need to understand how special this is, and I will enjoy watching the freshmen enjoy it because for them it's the first time, and it's going to be a really special one."

Browns GM gets 4-game suspension

CLEVELAND — Browns general manager Ray Farmer has been suspended by the NFL for the first four games next season for sending text messages to the sideline during games.

Farmer, who has acknowledged sending the messages, will not be paid during his suspension, the league said in a statement on Monday. His ban begins on midnight of the Sunday preceding the Browns' first regular-season game and will end immediately after the Browns' fourth regular-season game. The league said during his suspension that Farmer cannot be involved in any club matters. He is also prohibited from being at the Browns' offices, practice facility or games.

The Browns were also fined \$250,000, but the league did not strip the team of any 2015 draft picks. Cleveland has two first-round selections (No. 12 and 19) and six of the first 115 picks.

During its investigation, the league said it found no evidence that Browns owner Jimmy Haslam or other team executives knew about the texts.

"I respect the league's decision and understand that there are consequences for my actions," Farmer said in a statement. "Accountability is integral to what we are trying to build and as a leader I need to set the right example."

NFL VP of football operations Troy Vincent said Farmer used a cellphone on "multiple occasions" during games in 2014.

Hernandez's fiancée on stand for 2nd day

FALL RIVER, Mass. — The fiancée of former New England Patriots player Aaron Hernandez testified in his murder trial Monday that she removed a box from their basement at his request the day after the slaying.

Shayanna Jenkins testified for a second day after being called to the stand by prosecutors. Jenkins, 25, is Hernandez's high school sweetheart and the mother of his 2-year-old daughter. She was compelled to testify under a grant of immunity.

Hernandez, 25, is charged with killing Odin Lloyd on June 17, 2013. Lloyd, 27, was dating Jenkins' younger sister. He was found shot to death in an industrial park less than a mile from the home Hernandez and Jenkins share.

Jenkins, wearing her large diamond engagement ring, said on questioning from Assistant District Attorney William McCauley that Hernandez called her the day after Lloyd was killed and told her it was important to toss the box.

"He told me to go downstairs in our storage room and remove a box from our home," Jenkins said. "I believe he said it was important."

Downstairs, she found a cardboard box, open on top, that had smaller boxes and cardboard inside, obscuring what was underneath, she said. Jenkins said she didn't look inside the box or ask Hernandez what was inside. Instead, she said, she put it inside a trash bag and covered it with baby clothing, then borrowed her sister's car and drove around the area.

She said she threw it in a trash bin but could not remember where.

"I don't know. I found a random dumpster," she said.

Prosecutors have said the box may have held evidence or the murder weapon, which was never found.



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Thunder rally from 20-point deficit

The Associated Press

PHOENIX — Russell Westbrook had 33 points, nine rebounds and seven assists, and the Oklahoma City Thunder rallied from 20 points down to beat the Phoenix Suns 109-97 on Sunday night.

D.J. Augustin scored 13 of his 19 points in the fourth quarter for the Thunder, who ended a four-game road skid. Steven Adams had 13 points and 16 rebounds, and Dion Waiters scored 18 points.

Oklahoma City pulled away with a dominant final period and stayed 2½ games ahead of New Orleans for the eighth and final playoff spot in the Western Conference. Westbrook was 10 of 29 from the field and 12 of 14 from the foul line while playing 38 minutes.

Markieff Morris scored 24 points for the Suns, who dropped four games behind Oklahoma City. Rookie reserve T.J. Warren had 18 points, and Eric Bledsoe and Marcus Morris scored 15 apiece.

Cavaliers 87, 76ers 86: LeBron James scored 20 points, Kyrie Irving added 17 and host Cleveland hung on for the victory.

The Cavaliers earned their 16th straight home win despite being held scoreless in the final 4:04.

Spurs 103, Grizzlies 89: Kawhi Leonard had 25 points and 10 rebounds, and host San Antonio cruised to the victory.

The Spurs won for the 13th time in 16 games to remain sixth in the Western Conference. Tiago Splitter finished with 15 points, and Tim Duncan and Boris Diaw scored 10 apiece.

Nets 107, Lakers 99: Brook Lopez had 30 points and 11 rebounds, and host Brooklyn kept up its playoff push with its third straight victory.

Joe Johnson added 18 points, eight rebounds and seven assists for the Nets, who moved a half-game ahead of Boston and Indiana for eighth place in the Eastern

Conference. The Celtics lost 119-106 to the Los Angeles Clippers.

Clippers 119, Celtics 106: J.J. Redick scored 27 points, Chris Paul had 21 points and 10 assists, and visiting Los Angeles earned its seventh consecutive win.

Blake Griffin had 21 points and nine rebounds for Los Angeles, which jumped out to a 68-47 halftime lead. DeAndre Jordan had 15 points and 14 rebounds, and Matt Barnes scored 18 points.

Pacers 104, Mavericks 99: C.J. Miles made a key three-pointer with a minute left and finished with 28 points, helping host Indiana to the victory.

The Pacers pulled even with Boston for ninth place in the Eastern Conference, a half-game behind Brooklyn for the final playoff spot.

Heat 109, Pistons 102: At Miami, Dwyane Wade scored 40 points one day after having fluid removed from his balky left knee, and Udonis Haslem set season

highs with 18 points and 13 rebounds.

James Ennis matched his season best with 16 points, Mario Chalmers scored 11 and Goran Dragic had 10 for the Heat, who strengthened their hold on the No. 7 spot in the Eastern Conference standings.

Rockets 99, Wizards 91: James Harden had 24 points and Corey Brewer scored 15, leading Houston to the road win.

Rockets center Dwight Howard had 11 points and 10 rebounds in 19 minutes in his third game back from a right knee injury.

Pelicans 110, Timberwolves 88: Anthony Davis had 28 points and nine rebounds, powering host New Orleans to the victory.

Omer Asik had 15 points for New Orleans, and Eric Gordon added 12 points. The Pelicans shot 57.3 percent and were never threatened after opening a double-digit lead early in the fourth quarter.

Back-to-back home wins for Penguins

The Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — David Perron and Sidney Crosby scored in the shootout, and the Pittsburgh Penguins won their second home game in as many days, 3-2 over the San Jose Sharks on Sunday night.

After the Penguins killed off the final 3:52 of overtime while short-handed — the result of Patric Hornqvist's high-sticking double-minor — Perron and Crosby beat Sharks backup goalie Alex Stalock to his stick side on Pittsburgh's first two attempts of the shootout.

Marc-Andre Fleury stopped Melker Karlsson, and when Logan Couture's shot struck the crossbar after Crosby's goal, the game was over and Pittsburgh (95 points) officially pulled back into a tie for second place in the Metropolitan Division.

"There's different turning points in the season that change your momentum both ways," Pittsburgh coach Mike Johnston said, "and tonight could be a big turning point for our team."

Hornqvist and Chris Kunitz had first-period goals for Pittsburgh, which had won just one of its previous seven before coming from behind to beat Arizona 3-2 on Saturday.

Ben Smith and Couture had second-period goals for San Jose, which wrapped up a seven-game, 12-day road trip with a 3-3-1 record.

The Penguins got two points despite playing with only five defensemen. Christian Ehrhoff (upper-body) and Kris Letang (concussion) are out, and the team's salary cap situation doesn't allow for any reinforcements to be called up.

Letang was released from the hospital Sunday after taking a hit from Arizona's Shane Doan on Saturday.

Capitals 5, Rangers 2: Alex Ovechkin scored twice and Jason Chimera added two goals in the third period to rally visiting Washington past New York.

Ovechkin had a goal in each of the first two periods, and Chimera broke a 2-2 tie 4:41 into the third with his first in 21 games. He made it 4-2 with 12:20 remaining, and Marcus Johansson added an empty-netter with 2:23 left. Braden

Holtby made 23 saves.

Flames 5, Predators 2: Lance Bouma scored two goals to lead Calgary past host Nashville.

Playing their third game in four days, the playoff-bound Predators' four-game winning streak came to an end.

Islanders 5, Red Wings 4: Frans Nielsen's goal 16 seconds into the second period broke a 3-3 tie and New York held on to beat Detroit for its first home win this month.

The Islanders came in winless in seven previous home games, last winning at Nassau Coliseum over Calgary on Feb. 27, and with only one victory in their last eight contests overall.

Bruins 2, Hurricanes 1 (OT): David Pastrnak scored on a nice centering pass from Carl Soderberg at 4:23 of overtime, giving Boston a win over host Carolina.

The win put the Bruins three points ahead of Ottawa and four up on Florida in their race for the eighth and final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference. Ottawa has a game in hand on both of the teams.

Panthers 4, Senators 2: Jaromir Jagr scored two goals and Dan Ellis made 25 saves as Florida defeated host Ottawa.

The win pulled the Panthers within a point of Ottawa for ninth place in the Eastern Conference.

Ducks 4, Devils 2: John Gibson made 26 saves and Anaheim took another step to securing the NHL's best regular-season record with a victory over host New Jersey.

The Ducks won their third straight and opened a three-point lead over Nashville and Montreal in the race for the Presidents' Trophy. Anaheim has four games left in the regular season, one less than the Predators and two fewer than the Canadiens.

Blackhawks 4, Jets 3: Jonathan Toews deflected in the winning goal with 31 seconds left in regulation to lead Chicago past Winnipeg.

Toews' 25th goal of the season came after he redirected Niklas Hjalmarsson's long shot. Andrew Shaw, Brad Richards and Patrick Sharp also scored for Chicago.

Hamlin earns his 5th Martinsville victory

The Associated Press

MARTINSVILLE, Va. — Denny Hamlin just needed a visit to Martinsville Speedway to get his racing team back on track.

Now, with his spot in NASCAR's Chase for the championship virtually assured, they can work to make it better.

Hamlin passed teammate Matt Kenseth for the lead with 28 laps to go Sunday and ended Toyota's 32-race winless streak in the NASCAR Sprint Cup race at Martinsville Speedway. It was his fifth victory on NASCAR's oldest, smallest circuit.

"We had a very fast car, but obviously some pit road issues, but we overcame it," Hamlin said after his 25th career victory, which was helped along by a serious blunder that took four-time champion Jeff Gordon out of contention late.

Hamlin's pit crew, unlike Gordon, made their mistake early enough in the race to recover. Before the event was 200 laps old, Hamlin was penalized when his crew failed to control a tire on pit road. It dropped him from the lead to 22nd place.

He was back in the top 10 by the midpoint, and stalking the leaders shortly thereafter.

Hamlin also held off a five-lap, bumper-to-tail challenge from Brad Keselowski at the finish. There was some bumping and nudging, and a big wiggle for Hamlin in the final fourth turn, but Keselowski never caused him to spin.

The race was run without reigning rookie of the year Kyle Larson, who watched from a North Carolina hospital where he was undergoing testing after fainting at an autograph session on Saturday. Regan Smith drove in his absence, finishing 16th.

Keselowski was second, followed by Joey Logano, Kenseth and David Ragan, giving Joe Gibbs Racing three cars in the top five. The jolt was especially appreciated in a week when the team announced that President J.D. Gibbs is being treated for a "symptoms impacting areas of brain function," an issue that has left doctors with very few answers thus far.

Logano, the pole-sitter, was trying to become the first driver to sweep a weekend at Martinsville, having won the truck race Saturday. He led 109 laps, but said his car at the end was not as strong as the leaders.

Montoya wins Indy opener

The Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — There was never a doubt that Team Penske would win the IndyCar Series opener.

After the four Penske drivers led every on-track session through the streets of St. Petersburg and qualified 1-2-3-4, the only question was which Penske driver would end the weekend celebrating in Victory Lane.

Juan Pablo Montoya wasn't anyone's first pick.

Yet the Colombian pulled it off Sunday, when he grabbed the lead from teammate

Will Power during green-flag pit stops, then slammed the door closed on Power's lone attempt to get back to the front.

Montoya won his second race since his return last season to IndyCar.

Montoya's only win last year came on the oval at Pocono. This win at St. Pete was his first IndyCar victory on a road or street course since Vancouver in 1999.

Power, the reigning IndyCar champion, settled for second after leading 75 laps.

Tony Kanaan broke up the Penske party with a third-place finish for Chip Ganassi Racing, and was followed by Helio Castroneves and Simon Pagenaud as Penske put all four drivers in the top five.