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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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SOCOM probing SEAL weapons issues

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The general in charge of U.S. Special Operations Command said Tuesday that he is looking into claims that Navy SEALs and other elite forces have shortages of key equipment.

Gen. Joseph Votel assured House lawmakers that the command will resolve any problems that it discovers in equipping special operators, such as a lack of service weapons, in preparation for increasingly common missions around the world.

Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., and other House lawmakers raised the alarm last month on supply shortages in the special operations community, causing soldiers to dip increasingly into their own pockets to purchase basic military gear such as helmets, global positioning devices and medical supplies.

Most concerning, according to Hunter, is SEALs are now asked to hand over their personalized weapons after returning from deployment so they can be handed off to other SEALs who are deploying.

“I look forward to talking to Navy Special Warfare Command about this specific issue and make sure we understand it,” said Votel, who was testifying to members of the House Armed Services Committee.

Votel said the issue might be related to maintenance and the high usage of SEAL weapons.

“These guys do put a lot of rounds through the weapons,” he said. “What we do try to do is ensure with that many rounds going through our weapons that they do have the right level of depot maintenance when they do come back from deployments or long training periods.”

Hunter, who wrote a letter in February to the Navy Special Warfare Command about the concerns, brushed aside the general’s suggestion.

“This is not a factor of too many rounds going through the weapon barrel, and then you just change out the barrel anyway,” Hunter said.

He said the weapons are the most important pieces of equipment for the SEALs. They put time into calibrating

their weapons and applying optics and lasers, then are forced to turn them over for reconfiguration.

The military has increased its reliance greatly on special operations forces since 9/11. As such operations hit a high mark, other reports of supply shortages have come up as well.

Last month, the nonprofit group Troops Direct reported the Marine Corps Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team deployed to Benghazi, Libya, after the embassy attack there and lacked crucial equipment including sniper supplies and batteries.

Meanwhile, troops often have to buy their own medical equipment such as tourniquets, and shell out about \$1,000 each for their own helmets or \$500 for GPS devices, according to the group.

The shortfalls in SEAL weapons have surfaced as the Navy Special Warfare Command budget increased by \$11 million during the past couple of years, according to Hunter.

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Pentagon: Osprey pilots not solely to blame in 2000 crash

BY TARA COPP

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — U.S. Marine Corps pilots Maj. Brooks Gruber and Lt. Col. John Brow were incorrectly blamed as the primary cause of a V-22 Osprey crash that took their lives and killed 17 other Marines in April 2000, the Pentagon said Tuesday in an unusual reversal clearing the pilots’ names.

Gruber and Brow’s Osprey crashed in Marana, Ariz., on April 8, 2000, during a nighttime combat scenario test flight. At the time little was known about the limits of safe flight for the innovative tilt-rotor Osprey, which could perform like a helicopter and an airplane. The Osprey program was under intense pressure to show progress to avoid having

its budget cut, and subsequent investigations by the Government Accountability Office found that the Navy reduced the amount of testing the Osprey’s primary contractor had to complete before pushing it into the military’s hands. After a second fatal Osprey crash later that year, the program was temporarily halted. It was declared operational seven years later.

The investigation immediately following the 2000 Marana crash found that decisions that Brow and Gruber made in their rate of descent and air speed before the crash were two of many factors leading to the accident. However, when the Marines briefed the media that summer on the crash, “human errors” were characterized as being the primary “fatal factor” leading to the crash.

Those words have haunted the families ever since, and spurred a relentless fight by the pilots’ widows, Connie Gruber and Trish Brow, to clear their husbands’ names.

On Tuesday, the Pentagon officially stated that blame was inaccurately attributed in 2000.

“While I cannot in good faith overlook that their actions were the last in a long chain of events that ultimately caused the tragic events on April 8, 2000, I believe the links in the chain leading up to the crash made the accident — or one like it — probable, or perhaps inevitable,” Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Work wrote in correspondence released by the Pentagon on Tuesday.

In making his decision, Work reviewed all of the investigations and reports on the crash.

He said he agreed with the investigation findings, but disagreed with how those findings were ultimately characterized by the Pentagon and allowed to focus primarily on the pilots.

“I therefore conclude it is impossible to point to a single ‘fatal factor’ that caused this crash.”

“I hope this letter will provide the widows of Lieutenant Colonel Brow and Major Gruber some solace after all of these years in which the blame for the Marana accident was incorrectly interpreted or understood to be primarily attributed to their husbands.”

Connie Gruber and Trish Brow sent statements late Tuesday celebrating the release of the letter.

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Special ops interrogate top militant

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A new U.S. special operations team has been questioning a key Islamic State leader in Iraq since seizing him in a raid last month, U.S. officials said Wednesday. It is believed to be the first case of a top Islamic State militant captured alive in that country.

The officials would not identify the militant by name or provide other details, but the raid appears to be the first major success by the Pentagon's new expeditionary targeting force that recently began operating in Iraq. It aims to disrupt operations by the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria and gather intelligence that can be used to conduct follow-on raids and strikes.

The militant has been held in Iraq for two to three weeks, the officials said, calling the development important because of his leadership position in the extremist group and the information they could glean from him.

The officials weren't authorized to speak publicly about the raid and demanded anonymity. The New York Times, also citing anonymous officials, was first to report the capture and said the militant was being interrogated by American officials at a temporary detention facility in Irbil in northern Iraq.

Pentagon press secretary Peter Cook wouldn't confirm the capture, but said the goals of the new expeditionary targeting force include capturing Islamic State group leaders.

"Any detention would be short-term and coordinated with Iraqi authorities," he said.

Defense Secretary Ash Carter has spoken about the team several times over the past few months but has emphasized his intention to keep a lid on details of its actual operations in Iraq and Syria. He told Congress in early December about the team's planned deployment.

Clinton, Trump in Super shape

Associated Press

MIAMI — Democrat Hillary Clinton and Republican Donald Trump seized decisive Super Tuesday victories with math and momentum on their side, leaving rivals scrambling for last-chance, long-shot strategies. For the Republican establishment, the search was increasingly dire.

Trump's seven victories in states across the country amounted to a GOP establishment collapse with no clear sign of rapid recovery. While his rivals promised to fight on, the party remained deeply divided over the preferred Trump alternative. Sen. Marco Rubio won only liberal Minnesota. Sen. Ted Cruz took his

home state of Texas, neighboring Oklahoma and Alaska.

Clinton also won seven of the states that weighed in Tuesday. Bernie Sanders won his home state of Vermont, as well as Minnesota, Oklahoma and Colorado.

In his victory speech, Trump sent a chilling warning to the GOP establishment. A moment after Trump professed to have good relationships with his party's elite, he issued a warning to House Speaker Paul Ryan, who had declared earlier Tuesday that "this party does not prey on people's prejudices." Trump said that if the two don't get along, Ryan is "going to have to pay a big price."

Clinton, meanwhile, called for "love and kindness" — a

contrast to hard-edge Trump — while Sanders promised to fight on to the convention.

Both victors spoke from Florida, which did not vote Tuesday but where the general election is often won or lost.

Both Rubio and Cruz said they would fight on.

"Our campaign is the only campaign that has beaten, that can beat, and that will beat Donald Trump," Cruz thundered to supporters gathered at the wood-paneled Redneck Country Club in Stafford, Texas.

Still, he'd been counting on more appeal in the Southern states and among evangelical Christian voters. Trump, who dubs his surging campaign the "Trump Train," has derailed those plans.

Astronaut returns from year in space

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Astronaut Scott Kelly returned to Earth on Wednesday after an unprecedented year in space for NASA, landing in barren Kazakhstan with a Russian cosmonaut who shared his whole space station journey.

Their Soyuz capsule parachuted onto the central Asian steppes and ended a science-rich mission at the International Space Station that began last March and was deemed a steppingstone to Mars.

It was a triumphant homecoming for Kelly and Mikhail Kornienko after 340 days in space. Kelly pumped his fist as he emerged from the capsule, then gave a thumbs-up. He smiled and chatted with his doctors and others as photographers crushed around him in the freezing cold.

"The air feels great out here," a NASA spokesman at the scene, Rob Navias, quoted Kelly as saying. "I have no idea why you guys are all bundled up."

Clearly animated and looking well, he said he didn't feel much

different than he did after his five-month station mission five years ago.

Kelly and Kornienko had checked out of the space station 3½ hours earlier. In total, they traveled 144 million miles through space, circled the world 5,440 times and experienced 10,880 orbital sunrises and sunsets during the longest single spaceflight by an American.

Kelly posted one last batch of sunrise photos Tuesday on Twitter, before quipping, "I gotta go!"

Reports: Chinese vessels left disputed atoll

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — Chinese coast guard ships were sighted two weeks ago at a disputed South China Sea atoll, sparking fears Beijing may take control of it, but they were gone when the Philippine government checked on Wednesday, the country's top diplomat said.

Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario said it's uncertain if the

Chinese ships would return to Jackson Atoll in the Spratlys, adding that Philippine defense authorities were constantly monitoring the disputed region. News reports implying that China has occupied the atoll may not be accurate, he said.

"They might be back tomorrow, they may not, but the defense authorities would have to observe," del Rosario told

reporters.

Mayor Eugenio Bito-onon Jr., who heads a Philippine-claimed region in the disputed Spratly Islands, said he saw the Chinese ships at the atoll for two straight days last week while flying over the area. He said Chinese government vessels have not been stationed at the atoll in the years he has been passing by the uninhabited, ring-shaped reef.

College player battles PTSD

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Emotional leader. Never-quit player. Gritty. Kyler Erickson is all those things for the Nebraska-Omaha basketball team.

Most of all, he's a survivor.

Erickson was only a few feet away when a gunman burst into the office of his high school five years ago and started firing, fatally wounding an assistant principal and seriously injuring the principal. The sights and sounds Erickson was exposed to that horrific day led to his diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder over a year later.

Now healed, Erickson has made it his vocation to get the word out to young people to seek help if they are in mental distress. He recently was named to the prestigious Allstate Good Works Team, an award that honors athletes who have dedicated themselves to bettering the lives of others. His website, KylerErickson.com, details his journey and has attracted more than 75,000 views from 113 countries. He's volunteered for the National Alliance on Mental Illness and the last two years has spoken to groups at more than 50 schools, churches and mental health organizations in Nebraska and California, where his father lives.

"Mental health is single-handedly the most overlooked aspect of high school and college," he said. "In one of my videos I say it's kind of like a poison. You back away from it. People don't want to touch it or talk about it."

"By telling my story, what I'm saying is that we need to talk about, we need to get you help. My story is, 'Hey, I got help, and now I'm playing D-I basketball in Omaha and we're playing really well.' It's a story of how successful you can be afterward."

Erickson, the Mavericks' sixth man most

of the season, entered the starting lineup a couple weeks ago for one of the nation's highest-scoring teams. Omaha (18-12) is the No. 3 seed in the Summit League tournament that starts Saturday and will be trying to make the NCAA Tournament in its first season of eligibility.

Erickson's life changed Jan. 5, 2011. The night before he had hurt his ankle in a game for Millard South High School in Omaha. He was icing the ankle in the nurse's office — located within the administrative office area — when a senior who had been suspended that morning burst in and began shooting.

Erickson, another student and two administrators rushed into a bathroom in the nurse's office and huddled together until the gunman left the building. The shooter later was found dead from a self-inflicted gunshot. When Erickson stepped out of the bathroom, he saw blood-covered staff members who had gone to the aid of the two victims.

"For me, the screams were the worst part," Erickson said. "It was like a horror film but real life. I couldn't get those screams out of my head."

Rhonda Erickson said her son was distant, clearly not his usual happy self, in the months that followed. It wasn't until after he had left for Northwest Missouri State in the fall of 2011 that he and his family came to realize how seriously the shooting traumatized him.

Kyler redshirted his first year at Northwest Missouri, but he was barely functional in his new environment. He would wake up in the middle of the night seeing ghostly figures standing over him. He would go on crying jags if he heard loud noises in his dormitory. He struggled to concentrate. His anguish remained locked up inside until he poured out his heart to an athletic trainer in February 2012.

When he returned to Omaha in May, he began three months of a therapy called eye movement desensitization and reprocessing. Erickson would go into a room with his therapist for one hour twice a week, and a light board would flash in different patterns in front of him as he relived the harrowing experiences of Jan. 5, 2011.

Erickson explained that the treatment caused the memories to gradually shift from the right side of his brain, which is attached to one's emotions, to the left side. Eventually, Erickson could look back at the shooting from a position of strength, as an event he overcame.

Erickson didn't get much playing time in 2012-13 at Northwest Missouri, and he transferred to Omaha with no promise there would be a spot for him on the team. But a player got hurt, and coach Derrin Hansen asked Erickson to join the scout team for 2013-14. Last season, Erickson appeared in 22 games, and this season he's averaging 3.6 points in 19 minutes a game — 6.0 points in 30 minutes since starting the last five.

"There's an absolute huge difference in him, and I credit this Omaha basketball team to how well he's doing right now," said his older sister, Kayla. "Kyler was meant to represent his city and his team in such a positive way, and he feeds off that."

Kyler said he plans to continue advocating for mental health causes after he graduates in May with degrees in business management and entrepreneurship.

"He has overcome adversity, and the best thing about Kyler is he's able to go out and speak to youth about how they can overcome whatever issues they have," Hansen said. "When I was 21 or 22, I wasn't nearly that mature. No way could I have done that. He has, and that just speaks volumes about who he is."

DBs Berry, Norman are tagged

Associated Press

Where are the NFL All-Pros without contracts going?

Nowhere, it appears.

Super Bowl most valuable player Von Miller and fellow All-Pro players Josh Norman and Eric Berry were given franchise tags Tuesday, the league's deadline to do so. Tags govern players' ability to negotiate moves to other franchises.

In all, nine players were slapped with the franchise tag and one, Dolphins defensive end Olivier Vernon, got the transition tag.

Broncos linebacker Miller was the only player to get the exclusive tag, at \$14.129 million, meaning no other team can make him an offer.

Panthers cornerback Norman and Chiefs safety Berry were among the eight who received non-exclusive designations, so other clubs can make offers, but their current teams have the right to match or get compensated with two first-round draft picks.

Also getting tagged with free agency set to begin on March 9 were Redskins quarterback Kirk Cousins, Jets defensive end Muhammad Wilkerson, Bears receiver Alshon Jeffery, Ravens placekicker Justin Tucker, Bills tackle Cordy Glenn and Rams cornerback Trumaine Johnson.

The players have until July 15 to work out a long-term contract with their teams. If they can't — and most franchises are eager to get these players locked up for several years — then the salary for 2016 is determined by the tag designation.

Some highlights of deadline day:

Von Miller, Denver (\$14.129 million): The Broncos weren't taking any chances on losing the 26-year-old, regarded by many as the best overall player in the NFL.

"We've had productive talks with Von's representation, and we'll continue those discussions with the goal of making sure Von remains a Bronco well into the future," general manager John Elway said in a statement.

Eric Berry, Kansas City (\$10.806 million): The Comeback Player of the Year, Berry was diagnosed with lymphoma midway through the 2014 season and immediately began treatment. After going through chemotherapy, he was deemed cancer-free last summer, and the 27-year-old Berry then had the best season of his six-year career. A 2010 first-round pick, Berry made 55 solo tackles and two interceptions while providing inspiration not only for the Chiefs, but for all athletes.

Josh Norman, Carolina (\$13.952 million): The Panthers have seen Norman, 28, develop into one of the best cover men in the NFL. Norman had four interceptions in the first four games last season, returning two for touchdowns, then quarterbacks stopped throwing his way. Opposing passers had a league-worst 54.0 quarterback rating when throwing at Norman, who expects to remain in Charlotte.

Ovechkin tops Russia's World Cup roster

Associated Press

MOSCOW — With a broken foot, Alex Ovechkin once got on a plane the day after the Washington Capitals were eliminated from the playoffs to represent Russia at the world hockey championship.

It's something the three-time NHL MVP will gladly do again at the World Cup of Hockey after headlining Russia's 16-man roster for the tournament on Wednesday.

"Doesn't matter which tournament, it's huge honor," Ovechkin said. "It's nice to be in the list, and I'm proud to represent my country."

Ovechkin was joined on the roster by Capitals teammate Evgeny Kuznetsov, Pittsburgh Penguins center Evgeni Malkin and Detroit Red Wings forward Pavel Datsyuk. Ovechkin, Malkin and Datsyuk are part of Russia's old guard from the past two Olympics, while Kuznetsov could provide a major spark after being left off the Olympic team in Sochi in 2014.

Finland also announced a roster full of NHL players, with forwards Mikko Koivu

of the Minnesota Wild and Jussi Jokinen of the Florida Panthers joining Boston Bruins goalie Tuukka Rask.

"They are a great mixture of experience, talent, and open-mindedness," Finland coach Lauri Marjamaki said. "For the players the World Cup is a huge thing. Their motivation is high and they all want to be part of the team."

The rest of the teams were to announce their rosters later Wednesday.

Kuznetsov hasn't played for Russia in a men's best-on-best tournament yet in his career.

"He was playing for the national team in world championship, but I think it's kind of different level of the tournament," Ovechkin said of the World Cup. "I think it's kind of (like) Olympic Games because all the best players are going to be there and it's — it's kind of something close to Olympic Games."

With 20 goals and 45 assists, Kuznetsov is fifth in the NHL in scoring. He'll only be 24 when he suits up for Russia during the World Cup, which begins Sept. 17 in

Toronto. Ovechkin expects Kuznetsov to get better in time.

"Everybody knew he had like, talent to be one of the best players in the league," Ovechkin said. "He's still young, obviously. In the future, he's going to be more mature, have more experience, and I'm pretty sure 20 goals is just the beginning for him. He can score 40, you know, easily in this league if he's going to continue what he's doing, and he's going to be a top player."

Speaking after the Capitals' 3-2 victory against Malkin and the Penguins on Tuesday night, Ovechkin deferred to Russia coach Dmitry Kurbatov about how much representation the KHL might have at the World Cup. The first 16 players are all playing in the NHL, but there's room for more when the final seven are named by June 1.

Ovechkin will be playing in his second World Cup after dressing for two games the last time the event was held in 2004. He was the youngest player in the tournament back then.



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Villanova rolls to Big East title

Associated Press

VILLANOVA, Pa. — No longer at the top of the national poll, Villanova is still No. 1 in the Big East.

Stitch another year on the championship banner, the Wildcats are again the class of the conference — a familiar regular-season coronation they can only hope doesn't produce the same old early March exit.

Kris Jenkins scored 14 straight points and a career-high 31 overall, leading No. 3 Villanova to an 83-62 romp over DePaul (9-20, 3-14) on Tuesday night and the outright Big East championship.

The Wildcats (26-4, 15-2) are Big East champs for the third straight season and had already clinched the top seed for the conference tournament next week in New York. The Wildcats won the tournament in 2015.

"It's something at the end of the year, we will take great pride in," coach Jay Wright said. "We really do take pride in the regular season. We evaluate our program by what we do in the regular season. That's how we make all our decisions."

But the ultimate jury is in March, where the Wildcats haven't advanced out of the opening weekend of the NCAA Tournament since 2009. The Wildcats were eliminated three times in that span as a No. 1 or 2 NCAA seed.

No. 4 Virginia 64, Clemson 57: At

Greenville, S.C., Malcolm Brogdon scored 18 points and the Cavaliers (23-6, 12-5

Atlantic Coast Conference) rallied after blowing a double-digit lead to beat the Tigers (16-13, 9-8).

No. 6 Oklahoma 73, No. 19 Baylor 71: Buddy Hield scored 23 points in his final home game, and the Sooners (23-6, 11-6 Big 12) squandered a 26-point lead before regrouping to beat the Bears (21-9, 10-7).

No. 11 Louisville 56, Georgia Tech 53: Chinanu Onuaku made two free throws with 30.9 seconds remaining and Damion Lee added two more with 10.7 left to help the host Cardinals (23-7, 12-5 Atlantic Coast Conference) survive the Yellow Jackets (17-13, 7-10).

No. 12 Indiana 81, No. 16 Iowa 78: Yogi Ferrell had 20 points, including a crucial three with 37 seconds, and the visiting Hoosiers (24-6, 14-3) clinched their second outright Big Ten title in four years with a victory over the Hawkeyes (20-9, 11-6).

No. 15 Purdue 81, Nebraska 62: Vince Edwards scored 20 points and A.J. Hammons had 12 of his 16 points in the second half to lead the visiting Boilermakers (23-7, 11-6 Big Ten) past the Cornhuskers (14-16, 6-11).

No. 17 Duke 79, Wake Forest 71: Grayson Allen scored 30 points for the host Blue Devils (22-8, 11-6 Atlantic Coast

Conference) in their victory over the Demon Deacons (11-19, 2-16).

No. 20 Texas A&M 81, Auburn 63: Danuel House scored 19 points and the visiting Aggies (23-7, 12-5 Southeastern Conference) rolled off 20 straight points in a come-from-behind victory over the Tigers (11-18, 5-12).

No. 22 Kentucky 88, Florida 79: Jamal Murray scored 21 points and Tyler Ulis added 19 as the visiting Wildcats (22-8, 12-5 Southeastern Conference) handed the Gators (17-13, 8-9) a fourth consecutive loss.

Navy 78, Lafayette 70: Tilman Dunbar made 13 of 14 free throws and finished with 22 points and eight assists, while Shawn Anderson scored 21 with four assists and three steals to help host Navy beat Lafayette in the first round of the Patriot League tournament.

The Midshipmen, who snapped a four-game skid, will play Lehigh (15-14) in the quarterfinals Thursday night.

Utah State 78, Air Force 65: Chris Smith and Jalen Moore scored 23 points each and Utah State broke away through the second half to defeat host Air Force.

Smith drained five three-pointers and Moore four, including a trey late in the first half that sparked an 8-0 run to intermission.

Hayden Graham led Air Force (14-16, 5-12) with 14 points, C.J. Siples added 13.

Warriors top Hawks in overtime

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Draymond Green somehow caught Andrew Bogut's baseline save pass at his knees and avoided a diving Kent Bazemore, then let the ball fly as his legs split in the air.

Green hit an off-balance three-pointer as the shot clock expired with 40.2 seconds remaining in overtime, and the Golden State Warriors escaped with a 109-105 win against the Atlanta Hawks on Tuesday night while Stephen Curry watched in street clothes with an injured ankle.

"It's just a desperation heave," Green said. "It's just one of those things sometimes the ball just bounces your way and that one fell for me, unlike a lot of the other ones."

Klay Thompson made a go-ahead three-pointer with 2:54 remaining and another big basket at the 11.4-second mark on the way to 26 points. The Warriors won their second straight overtime game to earn a franchise-best 43rd straight regular-season home victory and 25th in a row this season.

Golden State (54-5) can tie the Bulls' 44-game unbeaten mark at home from March 30, 1995, to April 4, 1996, when the Warriors host Oklahoma City on Thursday. They are also chasing the '95-96 Chicago team's record 72-win season.

The Warriors won their sixth straight overall, improved to 5-0 in OT and haven't lost at Oracle Arena since a 113-111 defeat to the Bulls on Jan. 27, 2015.

Atlanta's Paul Millsap missed a wide open three-pointer with 24 seconds left in regulation, and then Thompson and Bogut each missed potential winning shots in the closing seconds.

Millsap scored 19 points for Atlanta, which rallied from a 14-point deficit to force overtime before dropping to 0-4 in OT.

Reigning NBA MVP Curry sat out with a tender left ankle he injured at Oklahoma City on Saturday night before hitting the long, winning three-pointer in overtime.

Heat 129, Bulls 111: Hassan Whiteside scored a career-high 26 points and grabbed 14 rebounds, and host Miami set a franchise record by shooting 67.5 percent while rolling past Chicago.

Joe Johnson added 24 points in his Miami home debut. The previous Heat record for shooting percentage in a regular-season game was 63.4 percent on Dec. 16, 2013, against Utah.

Trail Blazers 104, Knicks 85: Damian Lillard scored 30 points, CJ McCollum had 21 of his 25 in the second half and Portland earned its sixth straight road victory.

Hornets 126, Suns 92: Kemba Walker scored 26 points, leading host Charlotte to the runaway win.

Al Jefferson had 19 points and seven rebounds for the Hornets, who have won nine of 12. Nicolas Batum and reserve Jeremy Lamb scored 15 points apiece.

Mavericks 121, Magic 108: Wesley Matthews scored 21 points, and host Dallas beat Orlando for its third straight win.

The Mavericks made a season-high 56 percent of their field goal attempts (43-for-77).

Lakers 107, Nets 101: D'Angelo Russell scored 39 points and hit two of his eight three-pointers in the final minute to lead host Los Angeles over Brooklyn.

While Kobe Bryant sat out with a sore right shoulder, the Lakers snapped their eight-game losing streak with a spectacular game from the 20-year-old Russell, who scored 16 points in the fourth quarter and went 14-for-21 from the field.

McDavid, Oilers edge Sabres in OT

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — For much of last season, it looked like Connor McDavid might end up with the Buffalo Sabres. The first overall pick in last year's NHL Draft got to show the city what it's missing Tuesday night.

McDavid scored twice, including in overtime, to lead the Edmonton Oilers to a 2-1 victory over the Sabres in an anticipated matchup against another top rookie, Jack Eichel.

Cam Talbot made 31 saves for the Oilers as Edmonton began a four-game trip with its second straight win.

McDavid and Eichel provided a buzz for this game even though the Oilers and Sabres are both among the NHL's bottom five teams. McDavid was the first pick in last year's draft and Eichel went second, and both players are considered potential generational talents.

McDavid scored 22 seconds into the game, then got the winner by blowing past Buffalo's defense seconds after Eichel

spun around a defender and missed just wide with a twirling backhand shot.

"I thought (Eichel) and (McDavid) were the two best players on the ice tonight," Oilers coach Todd McLellan said. "They are fun players to watch and they didn't disappoint by any means."

Capitals 3, Penguins 2: Matt Niskanen scored the winner during a third-period power play to help host Washington overcome Pittsburgh in an entertaining, back-and-forth showdown that could be a first-round playoff preview.

Blues 4, Senators 3 (SO): Patrik Berglund scored the shootout winner in the 11th round as St. Louis outlasted host Ottawa.

Trailing 3-0, the Senators scored three unanswered goals to force overtime, including one by Jean-Gabriel Pageau with less than a second left in the third period.

Bruins 2, Flames 1: Patrice Bergeron scored the tiebreaking goal with 3:24 left to lift host Boston over skidding Calgary. Landon Ferraro also scored and Tuukka

Rask stopped 24 shots as the Bruins won for the third time in four games.

Hurricanes 3, Devils 1: Joakim Nordstrom scored on a rebound with 1:29 remaining as visiting Carolina defeated New Jersey in a game between teams fading from playoff contention.

Wild 6, Avalanche 3: Charlie Coyle and Nino Niederreiter each scored twice to give host Minnesota a victory over Colorado and possession of the final Western Conference playoff spot.

Predators 5, Stars 3: Shea Weber had a goal and two assists in his return from a three-game injury absence to lead streaking Nashville over visiting Dallas.

Panthers 3, Jets 2: Reilly Smith had two goals and Jaromir Jagr scored the winner early in the third period to send visiting Florida past Winnipeg.

Jagr is two points from tying Gordie Howe (1,850) for third in NHL history.

Islanders 3, Canucks 2: Thomas Hickey scored the tiebreaking goal in the third period to help New York beat host Vancouver.

Injury forces Vonn to end season early

Associated Press

LONDON — Lindsey Vonn's ski season is over.

The overall World Cup leader said Wednesday she was leaving the racing circuit early because her left knee injury was more serious than originally thought.

Vonn crashed on Saturday in a super-G race in Andorra after catching a spot of soft snow. X-rays showed a hairline fracture and the American raced Sunday in the combined event, extending her overall lead by finishing in 13th place.

But she said Wednesday there was not one hairline fracture, but three more significant fractures.

"After the super combined on Sunday, I went to Barcelona

where more precise MRI and CT equipment was available and scans were performed on Tuesday morning," Vonn said in a statement on her website. "Those images showed that there was not just one hairline fracture, but in fact three. And the fractures are not hairline, but instead they are significant enough that they are not sufficiently stable to permit me to safely continue skiing."

Because of the results of the tests, the four-time overall champion said she decided to end her season immediately, calling it "one of the toughest decisions of my career."

With eight races to go, Vonn leads the overall World Cup standings with 1,235 points, followed closely by Lara Gut of Switzerland with 1,207. Viktoria Rebensburg of Germany is third with 914.