

STARS AND STRIPES®

Thursday, March 10, 2016

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

PENTAGON REPORT JUSTIFIES DEPLOYMENT OF MILITARY SPY DRONES OVER AMERICA AS

RARE AND LAWFUL

USA Today

The Pentagon has deployed drones to spy over U.S. territory for non-military missions over the past decade, but the flights have been rare and lawful, according to a new report.

The report by a Pentagon inspector general, made public under a Freedom of Information Act request, said spy drones on non-military missions have occurred fewer than 20 times between 2006 and 2015 and always in compliance with existing law.

The report, which did not provide details on any of the domestic spying missions, said the Pentagon takes the issue of military drones used on American soil “very seriously.”

The Pentagon has publicly posted at least a partial list of the drone missions that have flown in non-military airspace over the United States and explains the use of the aircraft.

The site lists nine missions flown between 2011 and 2016, largely to assist with search and rescue, floods, fires or National Guard exercises.

A senior policy analyst for the ACLU, Jay Stanley, said it is good news no legal violations were found, yet the technology is so advanced that it’s possible laws may require revision.

“Sometimes, new technology changes so rapidly that existing law no longer fits what people think is appropriate,” Stanley said. “It’s important to remember that the American people do find this to be a very, very sensitive topic.”

Other federal agencies own and operate drones. The use of unmanned aerial system drones over the U.S. surfaced in 2013 when then-FBI director Robert Mueller testified before Congress that the bureau employed spy drones to aid investigations but in a “very, very minimal way, very seldom.”

The inspector general analysis was completed March 20, 2015, but not released publicly until last Friday.

It said that with advancements in drone technology along with widespread military use overseas, the Pentagon established interim guidance in 2006 governing when and whether the unmanned aircraft could be used domestically.

The interim policy allowed spy drones to be used for homeland defense purposes in the U.S. and to assist civil authorities.

But the policy said that any use of military drones for civil authorities had to be approved by the secretary of defense or someone delegated by the secretary. The report found that defense secretaries have never delegated that responsibility.

The report quoted a military law review

article that said “the appetite to use them (spy drones) in the domestic environment to collect airborne imagery continues to grow, as does Congressional and media interest in their deployment.”

Military units that operate drones told the inspector general they would like more opportunities to fly them on domestic missions if for no other reason than to give pilots more experience to improve their skills, the report said. “Multiple units told us that as forces using the UAS capabilities continue to draw down overseas, opportunities for UAS realistic training and use have decreased,” the report said.

A request for all cases between 2006 and 2015 in which civil authorities asked the military for use of spy drones produced a list of “less than twenty events,” the report said. The list included requests granted and denied.

Shortly before the inspector general’s report was completed a year ago, the Pentagon issued a new policy governing the use of spy drones. It requires the defense secretary to approve all domestic spy drone operations. It says that unless permitted by law and approved by the secretary, drones “may not conduct surveillance on U.S. persons.” It also bans the use of armed drones over the United States for anything other than training and testing.

Joint US-Somali helicopter raid targets al-Shabab

The Washington Post

U.S. special operations forces conducted a joint U.S.-Somali helicopter raid against the terrorist group al-Shabab in Somalia on Tuesday, according to U.S. defense officials.

A defense official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the operation because it had not been made

public, said there were no U.S. or Somali casualties.

Pentagon spokesman Navy Capt. Jeff Davis said that the U.S. role in the raid was strictly in an advisory capacity and that U.S. forces did not accompany the Somali troops to the objective. Davis would not say what that objective was, though he did specify that the aircraft used in the raid were

American.

The latest U.S. raid comes just days after a series of airstrikes hit an al-Shabab training camp approximately 120 miles north of Mogadishu. The strikes, carried out in waves by both drones and fixed-wing aircraft, killed more than 150 al-Shabab fighters — an unprecedented number of casualties for the U.S.-led air campaign against

the group.

U.S. officials said the training camp was targeted because the fighters posed an “imminent threat” to U.S. and African Union forces in the region. The United States has a small contingent of advisers in the war-torn country in a bid to help train, advise and assist their African Union counterparts.

US sends three B-2 bombers to Pacific

By TARA COPP
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The United States has deployed three B-2 Spirit stealth bombers to support U.S. Pacific Command, U.S. Strategic Command announced Wednesday.

The aircraft is the United States' most advanced bomber and part of its nuclear deterrent defenses.

It is not the first time the United States has deployed B-2 bombers to the Pacific Command. Last fall, the U.S. Air Force deployed three B-2s to Guam. In March 2013, the U.S. sent two B-2s to conduct a fly-over near Seoul, South Korea. All three bomber deployments followed North Korean missile tests.

In recent weeks, U.S. and South Korean officials have publicly discussed providing additional strategic defenses for South Korea, including deploying the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, missile defense system. The officials announced they were discussing its deployment in response to long-range missile launches in early February by North Korea.

Previously, U.S. and South Korean officials had not publicly acknowledged any discussions on the deployment of the THAAD missile defense system due to pressure placed on South Korea by China not to accept the system. U.S. officials now emphasize the deployment of THAAD would be to protect South Korea and the approximately 28,500 U.S. soldiers based there.

On Tuesday, North Korea announced it has developed the capability to put a miniaturized nuclear weapon on a ballistic missile, the same day the Air Force deployed the B-2s.

Expert: Japan should join US patrol effort in South China Sea

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Japan and other nations should join the U.S. and conduct freedom-of-navigation patrols in the South China Sea, a Japanese defense expert said Thursday.

U.S. patrols and surveillance flights in a region where China has been reclaiming land and building military facilities have put Washington at odds with Beijing, which maintains a claim to about 90 percent of the South China Sea.

Japan is already helping allies in the region boost their militaries, Tetsuo Kotani, a senior fellow at The Japan Institute of International Affairs, told reporters at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan. For example, Japan has provided Vietnam with six coastal patrol boats and it is sending 10 more to the Philippines. Just this week, Tokyo agreed to lease five aircraft to the Philippines to help patrol the waters it disputes with China.

Japan's strategy should be to help those nations establish a "mini Japan Coast Guard" and a "mini Japan Maritime Self-

Defense Force" to patrol the South China Sea, he said.

"If other international partners join, it will provide more legitimacy for the U.S. action," Kotani said. "The more partners join, the better the leverage."

The call echoes comments by U.S. Navy Vice Adm. Joseph P. Aucoin, 7th Fleet commander, who told reporters in Australia last month that it would be in the region's "best interests" if Australia and other nations sent warships within 12 nautical miles of disputed territory, according to the Sydney Morning Herald.

An international freedom-of-navigation effort would put pressure on China to abide by the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea, which sets rules for resolving maritime disputes, Kotani said.

A Law of the Sea challenge by the Philippines to China's island-building currently is being considered by an international tribunal in The Hague, Netherlands. But, even if the tribunal rules in favor of the Philippines, Kotani said he doesn't expect China to comply.

China's island-building is part of an effort, including the

deployment of strategic submarines from Hainan Island, to turn the South China Sea into "a Chinese lake" — something that would undermine U.S. deterrence and Japanese security, Kotani said.

"Japan's prosperity and security relies heavily on regional and global security. For Japan, the No. 1 challenge is the rise of Chinese power," he said.

The moves being made by the U.S. and other nations to prop up smaller countries in the region are not sitting well with China. Chinese officials on Thursday expressed alarm at the increased cooperation between Japan and the Philippines, for example.

"If the Philippines' actions are to challenge China's sovereignty and security interests, China is resolutely opposed," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei told a daily news briefing, according to a Reuters report.

"I also want to point out that Japan is not a party to the South China Sea issue, and we are on high guard against its moves," Hong said in the Reuters report.

Central Command pick could push for more revisions to Afghanistan exit plan

The Washington Post

President Barack Obama's nominee to head U.S. Central Command said on Wednesday he would recommend extending the U.S. mission in Afghanistan if local forces don't improve their record against the Taliban and other militants.

Army Gen. Joseph L. Votel, who currently heads U.S. Special Operations Command, said during his confirmation hearing that the U.S. military may not be able to provide needed

support to Afghan forces under a White House plan to halve the U.S. military footprint of 9,800 troops by the time Obama steps down next January.

"If [Afghan forces] demonstrate uneven performance similar to the 2015 fighting season, and continue to struggle with their sustainment systems, it will be difficult to address those challenges" under the current plan to downsize the U.S. mission, Votel said in remarks submitted to the Senate

Armed Services Committee.

Votel said he would recommend change to Obama's departure plan if a review by the incoming commander in Afghanistan, Gen. John "Mick" Nicholson, concludes that Afghan forces aren't making enough progress. He said those changes could include an extension to a hands-on advisory missions for Afghan military and police, "which will require maintaining bases and personnel."

Army's Minato first active cadet to have jersey retired

Associated Press

WEST POINT, N.Y. — Perched on the shoulders of her Army teammates and tears glistening in her eyes, Kelsey Minato gallantly fought the emotion of the moment as she glanced up at her No. 5 hanging from the rafters of West Point's Christl Arena.

Senior night turned into something very special for Minato. The academy retired her number in a brief postgame ceremony, making her the first West Point athlete so honored while still active.

"It means a lot to me," Minato said, parents Dorothy and Rick by her side. "At the same time, it's something I wouldn't have gotten if I didn't have teammates like this. A lot of the credit has to go to them."

Spoken like the quintessential teammate Minato has been since arriving at West Point nearly four years ago. Rick Minato, whose family has a history of service in the Army dating to World War I, said all it took was one look at the campus for Kelsey to know it was the right place.

Was it ever.

Minato, who on Saturday captured her third Patriot League player of the year award, is the leading scorer in school and league history. Her 2,477 career points eclipsed the league record of 2,462 set in 2003 by Bucknell's Molly Creamer.

And in her four years she has led Army to a 6-2 record against Navy, part of her class's school-record 97 wins.

All that from a guard generously listed at 5-foot-8 who was lightly recruited in high school at Huntington Beach, Calif., even though she set the scoring record there, too, and had her No. 5 retired.

"College coaches look for the 6-4 stud, athletic. They look for speed and strength, but not always is the greatest athlete the greatest player," Huntington Beach coach Russell McClurg said. "Kelsey is the most unassuming kid you'll ever meet. She doesn't look the part, but my God, she can play the part."

And against anybody. She had 23 points at Duke this season and 27 in an NCAA Tournament first-round game at Maryland as a sophomore, to name just two.

What's rather remarkable is that her game is nearly a carbon copy of NBA star Stephen Curry's. Blink and all you'll likely hear is — SWISH! — from beyond the arc or after a dash through the paint.

"It's amazing," McClurg said. "You look at her muscle memory. It's so uncanny. You have the female version of a Steph Curry-type player in the same era. I swear, if they were related, OK, it makes sense."

Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski, a West Point graduate, saw it firsthand. The summer before last, he brought the USA Basketball men's national team to his alma mater's campus and called out Minato and Curry for a three-point shooting contest with a regulation ball. Curry sank a couple more shots, but Coach K tabbed Minato the winner, saying Curry stepped over the three-point stripe too many times.

"She is, without question, the greatest offensive perimeter player I've ever coached, male or female," said Army coach Dave Magarity, whose experience spans more than three decades and includes a stint at Marist where he mentored Rik Smits and others who went on to the NBA. "She has such a great feel for the game."

On senior night against Boston University on Feb. 24, Army fell behind 5-0 and Minato responded with four straight 3s, all touching nothing but net as the Black Knights assumed control. She finished with 30 points in a 34-point victory.

That she could have scored a lot more was a minor irritation for Magarity.

"They think I'm crazy, but I just think she passes up way too many open looks," Magarity said. "But she's so selfless. There's times where she needs to be a little more — I don't want to say selfish — but a little more opportunistic. I mean, we're talking about one of the best shooters in the country."

Minato's greatest gift might just be that unselfishness.

"Her demeanor on and off the court is so admirable. I look up to her," 6-foot-2 senior center Aimee Oertner said. "She's a great example for kids, everybody in the corps, and all the girls coming in."

"She's a great teammate. That's why, I think, her teammates love her. They would set a million screens for her," added Magarity, just the second coach to take both a men's and women's program to the NCAA Tournament. "I've coached kids where when you're that good and you get that much notoriety, it creates a level of resentment or underlying jealousy. I've never sensed that. She just has a way about her."

The end of her Army career is so very close for Minato, who has been enamored with the game since her dad stuck a ball in her hands at age 3 and began teaching her in the driveway at home. Her career path after graduation is set to take her to field artillery for the start of the Army's five-year commitment, and her class will be the first in academy history to be commissioned with combat positions open to qualifying women.

Magarity is hopeful basketball will be part of that future. Creamer's Patriot League success afforded her an opportunity to play in the WNBA, and Magarity wants Minato to at least get that chance. He said she is headed to the Final Four at Indianapolis in April and will take part in the WNBA combine there on championship weekend.

"There's been conversations about giving her the opportunity to try out," Magarity said. "There's different ways of doing it. I just think that because of her profile, once she's done (at West Point) why wouldn't you let her do that?"

Regardless of what happens after the season, the 10th anniversaries of Army's first NCAA Tournament appearance and the death of former coach Maggie Dixon at age 28 have made this a memorable moment in time for Minato and the Black Knights (26-2, 17-1 Patriot League). Army is the top seed in the league tournament and eyeing another NCAA Tournament berth.

"Maggie, I think, would have really enjoyed the hell out of her (Minato)," Magarity said. "She took a group of kids who were overachievers and went to an NCAA Tournament. The irony of this being her 10-year anniversary coming up in April ... blows my mind."

NASCAR leader under fire after Trump endorsement

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — When Brian France endorsed Donald Trump for president, the chairman and chief executive of NASCAR thought of it as nothing more than a "routine endorsement."

He's been dealing with the fallout ever since.

France's decision to personally back the front-runner for the Republican nomination has roiled a sport his family built from the ground up. It's threatened a decade of work to broaden NASCAR's appeal among minorities, upset one of the most powerful teams in the sport and risked a break with corporate sponsors.

"I was frankly, very surprised, that my diversity efforts for my whole career would have been called into question, over this, in my view, a routine endorsement," France said Wednesday in an interview with The Associated Press.

France acknowledged he's had to have conversations with sponsors since making the endorsement, which came as NASCAR is seeking a new main sponsor for its top series.

"I made a few phone calls and clarified some things," he said. "That kind of goes with the territory."

Bosh says he's clot-free and hopes to return

MIAMI — Chris Bosh's latest blood-clot scare is over. His quest to rejoin the Miami Heat's playoff push is not.

Bosh released a statement Thursday announcing he does not currently have deep vein thrombosis — or blood clots in his leg — and that he remains hopeful of getting back on the court with the Heat at some point this season.

Bosh did not offer any potential time-tables for his return.

"I know there have been many questions regarding my health and when I will play again," Bosh said. "My situation this year has never been life threatening. I am feeling great and currently I do not have deep vein thrombosis."

Bosh's statement did not say if he was still on bloodthinners.

"Together with the Miami Heat, I am working with doctors, exploring the best precautionary treatment options and taking every necessary step to make sure I am healthy for myself, my family and my team," Bosh said. "I have been working out, training with the team, watching film of the games, walking through plays, and have attended home games despite not being visible to the public."

From The Associated Press

Holy Cross completes run to Patriot League title

Associated Press

BETHLEHEM, Pa. — Holy Cross players stuck strands of a basketball net in the back of their hats.

That's one superb souvenir to cap a monumental run.

Winless on the road in regular-season conference games, the Crusaders turned into Patriot League Tournament road warriors — and the path is extended all

the way to the NCAA Tournament.

Malachi Alexander scored 26 points and Holy Cross sealed its stunning run to the Patriot League title and an NCAA Tournament berth with a 59-56 victory over Lehigh on Wednesday night.

The Crusaders are 14-19 and had lost all nine conference road games during the regular season. Once the tournament started, the Crusaders won at Loyola, beat top-seeded Bucknell, won at Army, then

knocked off second-seeded Lehigh (17-15).

The Crusaders are in the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2007.

Alexander made 6 of 7 three-pointers, more than enough for the ninth-seeded Crusaders to end Lehigh's school record-tying 11-game winning streak.

Holy Cross is the 25th team to ever make the NCAA Tournament with a losing record.

"They suffered through a lot and, at

the end, they came through," coach Bill Carmody said.

The Crusaders straightened their season out in the conference tournament and became the lowest-seeded team to win the Patriot League.

"It's been a hard, hard year," Carmody said. "When you're 5-13 or have 19 losses, that's tough on everybody. The people in Worcester, the Holy Cross alumnus. It's tough on the psyche."



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Broncos hurting while Giants make big splash

Associated Press

The Super Bowl champions, the Denver Broncos, lost their second quarterback in less than a week when the NFL free agency began on Wednesday.

With Peyton Manning retired, his supposed successor Brock Osweiler headed to Houston. Broncos defensive end Malik Jackson went to Jacksonville and linebacker Danny Trevathan to Chicago.

Denver clearly has been weakened although at least Super Bowl MVP Von Miller was franchise tagged and won't be going anywhere.

"We've stayed true to our philosophy of building a team of players who want to be Denver Broncos and want to be here. That's been a successful approach for us," general manager John Elway said.

"While we did offer a very competitive and fair long-term contract to Brock, we ultimately had to remain disciplined while continuing to assemble a roster that can compete for championships."

Osweiler started the last seven games of the regular season when Manning was injured, but was benched in the playoffs when Manning returned.

"It was very difficult," Osweiler said about leaving Denver. "I'd be lying to you if I said anything else. I had a tremendous four seasons there in Denver and those are four years that I'll always hold close to my heart. But bottom line coming to Houston was an opportunity that I couldn't pass up."

The quarterback arrived in Houston on Wednesday night after agreeing to a four-year contract reportedly worth \$72 million.

The Carolina Panthers, which fell 24-10 to Denver in the Super Bowl, retained All-Pro fullback Mike Tolbert and re-signed defensive end Charles Johnson to a lower salary.

Moments after former Miami pass rusher Olivier Vernon agreed to terms on a five-year, \$85 million contract, Giants general manager Jerry Reese might have echoed the defensive end's agent David Canter when he tweeted "What a day."

Given one last opportunity by Giants co-owner John Mara to bulk up a roster that had not made the playoffs in four years, Reese made a huge splash in free agency. New York agreed to terms with Vernon, former Rams cornerback Janoris Jenkins and former Jets defensive tackle Damon "Snacks" Harrison.

Combined with their own defensive end Jason Pierre-Paul signing his one-year, \$10.5 million contract shortly after Wednesday's 4 p.m. start time, Reese will have addressed immediately major weaknesses in the defensive front and the secondary.

All were expected to sign five-year deals as early as Thursday, shortly after they arrive at the Giants' training center for physicals.

The Giants also came to agreement on a pay cut for wide receiver Victor Cruz, whose salary will be reduced from \$7.9 million to \$1.3 million. Incentives could bring his salary to \$5.5 million.

Cruz hasn't played most of the last two seasons, first because of a torn patellar tendon suffered in 2014. A calf strain required surgery and kept him off the field all of last season.

Vernon, the 6-foot-2, 261-pound centerpiece of Reese's \$200 million spending spree was regarded as the premier pass-rusher in this year's free-agent class. The 25-year-old had 7½ sacks in 16 starts in 2015 while being a constant presence in the backfield. He is expected to pair with Pierre-Paul to rejuvenate the NFL's weakest pass rush.

The Jenkins signing will likely end Prince Amukamara's Giants career. The

2011 first-round draft pick was told by the Giants to test the open market, where he expects to land a contract in the \$10 million per year neighborhood despite an injury history that caused him to miss 25 out of 80-games in his career.

Jenkins will get slightly more than \$12 million annually, making him the second-highest-paid cornerback behind the Jets' Darrelle Revis' \$14.024 million average.

In Jenkins, the Giants will gain a durable, productive cornerback to pair with Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie to provide immediate improvement to the league's worst pass defense. The cornerback finished last season with three interceptions, has 10 picks and 35 breakups since 2012, one of only five cornerbacks to achieve those levels. He has six touchdowns in his career.

Among other moves, All-Pro running back Doug Martin re-signed with Tampa Bay for five years, while center Alex Mack chose Atlanta over Cleveland.

DeMarco Murray, the 2014 Offensive Player of the Year with Dallas, spent a fruitless season in Philadelphia and was traded to Tennessee.

Tampa Bay's Martin, the top running back on the market, will get more than \$35 million, with \$15 million guaranteed, from the Buccaneers. Martin has had two outstanding seasons with the Buccaneers and two injury-filled years.

Also, Indianapolis released veteran receiver Andre Johnson. Johnson was a mainstay in Houston for 12 years, making two All-Pro teams, but was a disappointment with the Colts in his only season in Indy with 41 catches for 503 yards and four touchdowns.

Westbrook boosts OKC over Clippers

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Russell Westbrook had 25 points, a career-high 20 assists and 11 rebounds to help the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Los Angeles Clippers 120-108 on Wednesday night.

According to STATS, it was the first triple-double with at least 20 points and 20 assists since Rod Strickland did it for the Washington Wizards in 1998.

It was the 30th triple-double of Westbrook's career and his 11th this season. The Thunder are unbeaten this season when Westbrook gets a triple-double.

Kevin Durant had 30 points and 12 rebounds, and Serge Ibaka added 15 points for Oklahoma City. Jeff Green scored 23 points, J.J. Redick had 22 and Chris Paul added 12 points and 16 assists for the Clippers.

Warriors 115, Jazz 94: Stephen Curry made a zippy crossover to shed his defender then banked in a 55-footer at the halftime buzzer, and Golden State beat Utah to extend its record regular-season home winning streak to 46.

Klay Thompson scored 23 points, and Curry wound up with 12 points and 10 assists on a quiet night in which he struggled to find his stroke early. Draymond Green added 17 points, seven rebounds and five assists as Golden State (57-6) improved to 28-0 at Oracle Arena this season.

Cavaliers 120, Kings 111: Kevin Love converted a four-point play with 1:32 remaining, Kyrie Irving scored 30 points and Cleveland hung on to beat host Sacramento.

LeBron James had 25 points and 11 rebounds. Tristan Thompson added 18 points and 15 rebounds, and Love finished with 17 points and 10 rebounds.

Celtics 116, Grizzlies 96: Isaiah Thomas scored 16 of his 22 points in the third quarter as Boston turned a three-point deficit into a 16-point lead before coasting to their 14th straight home victory, over Memphis.

The Celtics have not lost in Boston in more than two months, a span that has seen them climb from ninth in the East into the conference's No. 3 seed.

Hornets 122, Pelicans 113: Kemba Walker scored 35 points as host Charlotte held off New Orleans for its 11th victory in 13 games.

Pistons 102, Mavericks 96: Marcus Morris scored 20 points, including two three-pointers during a decisive fourth-quarter run, and Andre Drummond had 25 points and 17 rebounds in Detroit's victory over host Dallas.

Bucks 114, Heat 108: Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 24 points and Khris Middleton made four free throws in the closing seconds to help Milwaukee hold off visiting Miami.

Rockets 118, 76ers 104: James Harden scored 29 points and Dwight Howard added 21 points and 18 rebounds to help Houston beat host Philadelphia.

Knicks 128, Suns 97: Sasha Vujacic scored a season-high 23 points in a rare start, Carmelo Anthony also had 23 and visiting New York beat Phoenix.

Kings rally past Capitals in OT

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The Los Angeles Kings took an early three-goal lead and then gave it all back to the Washington Capitals in the third period.

Jeff Carter made sure the Kings edged the NHL leaders in a thriller that might have a little extra meaning in a few months.

"If we want to win the Cup, there's a good chance we'll have to go through them," Carter said.

Carter scored with 2:10 left in overtime and the Kings rebounded for a 4-3 victory over Washington on Wednesday night.

Vincent Lecavalier, Jake Muzzin and Milan Lucic scored in a dominant first period for the Kings, who reclaimed the Pacific Division lead from Anaheim with their seventh victory in nine games.

T.J. Oshie, Nicklas Backstrom and Dmitry Orlov scored in the third for the Capitals, who awoke from two somnolent periods for a furious finish. Braden Holtby stopped 26 shots in Washington's second

loss in six games.

"The LA Kings are not going to let you come into this building and have an easy game," Washington coach Barry Trotz said. "We took a while to engage into it, and once we did, we were fine. It's a good learning lesson, and maybe down the road we can run into each other again, and it'll be a good reminder for us."

Avalanche 3, Ducks 0: Semyon Varlamov stopped 37 shots, Nathan MacKinnon got his 21st goal and host Colorado ended Anaheim's 14-game point streak.

Andreas Martinsen and Shawn Matthias also scored to help the Avalanche earn a critical win. They're in a heated race with Minnesota for the final wild-card spot in the Western Conference.

Blues 3, Blackhawks 2 (SO): Kevin Shattenkirk scored the decisive goal in the sixth round of the shootout to lift St. Louis over visiting Chicago.

David Backes and Troy Brouwer scored in the third period for the Blues and Jake Allen stopped 33 shots through overtime

to earn his 22nd win of the season.

Flames 3, Predators 2 (OT): Johnny Gaudreau scored twice 10 seconds apart in the first period, then set up Mikael Backlund's winner in overtime to lead host Calgary over Nashville.

Anthony Bitetto got his first career goal and Mike Fisher also scored for Nashville. Carter Hutton stopped 31 shots.

Maple Leafs 4, Islanders 3 (SO): William Nylander scored the tying goal late in regulation and Nikita Soshnikov had the only goal of the shootout to lift host Toronto past New York.

Zach Hyman and Morgan Rielly also scored in regulation and Garret Sparks stopped 24 shots for the Maple Leafs, who had lost six straight (0-5-1) — including the last five by one goal.

Canucks 3, Coyotes 2 (OT): Markus Granlund scored 1:42 into overtime to help Vancouver beat visiting Arizona.

Kevin Connauton and Tobias Rieder scored for the Coyotes, who have lost nine of their last 10 games.