

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Marines voice concern about readiness

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — If the Marines were called today to respond to an unexpected crisis, they might not be ready, a top Marine general told the Senate Armed Services Committee on Tuesday.

Gen. John Paxton, assistant commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, testified to lawmakers that the Marines could face more casualties in a war and might not be able to deter a potential enemy.

“I worry about the capability and the capacity to win in a major fight somewhere else right now,” he said, citing a lack of training and equipment.

Paxton, along with the vice

chiefs of the Army, Navy and Air Force, spoke to the Senate committee on the readiness challenges facing each service after 15 years of war and recent budget cuts.

For the Marines, he said units at home face the most risk because of fewer training opportunities with the best equipment deployed with forces overseas. And it would be these undertrained home units that would be called to respond to an unexpected crisis.

“In the event of a crisis, these degraded units could either be called upon to deploy immediately at increased risk to the force and the mission, or require additional time to prepare

thus incurring increased risk to mission by surrendering the initiative to our adversaries,” Paxton said. “This does not mean we will not be able to respond to the call ... It does mean that executing our defense strategy or responding to an emergent crisis may require more time, more risk, and incur greater costs and casualties.”

Communication, intelligence and aviation units are the hardest hit, Paxton said.

“All of our intelligence and communications battalions... would be unable to execute their full wartime mission requirements if called upon today,” he said.

The aviation units are faring

no better, Paxton said. Approximately 80 percent of Marine aviation units lack the amount of ready aircraft that they need for training and to respond to an emergency, he said.

Paxton was repeatedly questioned about the Marines’ ability to respond to contingencies after the high number of training accidents its aviation squadrons faced in the last year. The collision of two Marine Corps’ CH-53 Super Stallions off the coast of Hawaii in January raised questions whether budget cuts were leading to a higher number of pilot and crew deaths.

On Tuesday, Paxton said the service is looking at whether there is a connection.

## Campbell’s request on Taliban exposes rift

*The Washington Post*

A senior American general has proposed resuming offensive strikes against the Taliban, exposing a rift between the military and senior administration officials over the U.S. role in the war in Afghanistan, according to military officials.

Senior Pentagon officials complained that Gen. John Campbell, who commanded U.S. forces in Afghanistan until this month, broke with standard military procedure when he forwarded his proposal in recent weeks directly to the White House without the backing of Defense Secretary Ash Carter.

Campbell said he followed normal procedures in submitting his recommendations, which could draw the United States back into a broader air campaign against the Taliban.

The dispute comes as Afghan forces struggle to hold back resurgent Taliban forces, which have reclaimed some areas won at great cost during the U.S. troop surge. Many Taliban

fighters think “they are operating from a position of strength,” according to Campbell, speaking recently to troops at an American base in Afghanistan.

Any escalation of the U.S. role underscores the ongoing vulnerability of Afghan forces, and what is expected to be a violent 2016 summer fighting season, even as President Barack Obama attempts to meet his campaign promise of ending the war.

While Carter is open to enhancing support to Afghan forces and even targeting some Taliban leaders, “that doesn’t mean that he’s ready to veer in a different direction without a lot of careful analysis,” a senior defense official said. “There’s been no good, strong case for why doing that would change things in a way that’s helpful.”

Campbell, who is in the final weeks of a 37-year career in the U.S. Army, denied trying to go around his civilian bosses at the Pentagon. “Absolutely NOT,” he said in an email. “I forwarded

my recommendations through my chain of command, always have and this time was no different.” An official at U.S. Central Command supported Campbell’s account.

The proposals made by Campbell, before he left Kabul on March 2, include authorizing some U.S. air support for Afghan operations against the Taliban, conducting strikes against Taliban leaders, and placing American advisers with conventional Afghan forces closer to the front lines.

Campbell declined to discuss the specifics of his request, but a senior military official described it as a stopgap measure to give the Afghan forces time to build up their tiny air force and intelligence capabilities over the next several years.

Currently, U.S. commanders can strike the Taliban only when they pose a direct threat to U.S. forces or when Afghan troops are in grave danger of being overrun. Campbell’s request to broaden his authorities

to strike the Taliban is one of the few levers at the military’s disposal to increase pressure on militant leaders and drive them to the negotiating table for peace talks.

Pentagon officials said they would wait until Gen. John “Mick” Nicholson Jr., who assumed command from Campbell, concludes his initial review.

The White House said it is reviewing Campbell’s request but made clear that the emphasis for the U.S. military should be on helping Afghan forces develop the capabilities they are lacking, such as an effective air force, rather than taking on new missions in Afghanistan.

Campbell’s proposal is controversial in part because it would upend the White House’s policy that the United States, in keeping with a 2014 cessation of official U.S. combat operations, is no longer at war with the Taliban.

# N. Korea: Launches, nuke test looming

BY PAUL ALEXANDER

*Stars and Stripes*

North Korea took a slap at United Nations sanctions Tuesday as leader Kim Jong Un warned it soon would carry out another nuclear test and try out several types of ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

The threats were the latest in a string of virulent rhetoric that has coincided with the largest-ever U.S.-South Korean joint exercises and followed what the U.N. Security Council has called the toughest sanctions against Pyongyang in 20 years.

Kim has personally led the verbal assault in what appears to be an effort to show his poverty-wracked country that he is fully in charge amid reports he has not consolidated power more than four years after taking over following his father's death. He may also be rallying

support ahead of the first ruling Workers' Party congress in three decades in May.

The reclusive country's media have shown his signature on the order for the North's fourth nuclear test on Jan. 6, carried photos of him attending a multistage rocket launch a month later and inspecting what Pyongyang called a miniaturized nuclear bomb with a variety of missiles in the background.

He has been quoted as ordering the production of more nuclear bombs and preparations for using them on short notice, including possible pre-emptive attacks, and making threats to turn South Korea, the U.S. mainland and U.S. bases in the Pacific into a "sea of fire and ashes."

"A nuclear warhead explosion test and a test-fire of several kinds of ballistic rockets able to carry nuclear warheads will

be conducted in a short time to further enhance the reliance of nuclear attack capability," the official Korean Central News Agency quoted Kim as saying Tuesday.

This time he reportedly spoke while overseeing an environmental simulation for re-entry technology, one of the key elements in completing a system capable of delivering a nuclear weapon into space, then having it survive the rigors of the descent back through the atmosphere.

Pyongyang has made a series of boasts in recent months that analysts have questioned, including that the latest test involved a more powerful hydrogen bomb for the first time (the data collected indicate a similar yield to previous underground tests), that it has successfully fired ballistic missiles from a submarine (U.S. officials said photos appeared to have been

faked), that it has made a nuclear bomb small enough to fit into a warhead and that it could flatten Manhattan with one of its bombs.

If all of the claims are true, the North could bring to reality the bizarre videos it produced during the last crisis on the peninsula in 2013 that showed U.S. cities, including Washington, in flames.

Even if they aren't true yet, it's clear that Pyongyang is working hard to bring its nuclear dreams to fruition.

It also appears that war games on both sides of the Demilitarized Zone have taken on increasingly realistic scenarios. South Korean media have reported that the U.S.-South Korean exercises, which involve about 300,000 South Korean and 17,000 U.S. troops, are including drills on destroying the North's nuclear facilities and taking out its leadership.

## Militant leader targeted in US airstrike has died

*Associated Press*

BAGHDAD — Top Islamic State commander and feared ethnic Chechen jihadi fighter Omar al-Shishani has died of wounds suffered in a U.S. airstrike in Syria, a senior Iraqi intelligence official and the head of a Syrian activist group said Tuesday.

Al-Shishani, who was wounded in a U.S. airstrike earlier this month, died Monday outside the Islamic State group's main stronghold of Raqqa in Syria, the two told The Associated Press. There was no immediate confirmation of his death from the Islamic State group but the Islamic State-affiliated Amaq news agency denied he was killed, saying that the "he was not subjected to any injury." The outlet quoted an unnamed "source" for the denial, without giving further details or evidence that al-Shishani was still

alive.

The spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition, U.S. Army Col. Steve Warren, said on Tuesday that the coalition was able to "assess that he is dead" and that it "got the word Monday morning."

The red-bearded al-Shishani earlier served as the group's military commander for the territory it controls in Syria. He later became the commander of the group's ground forces, according to Hisham al-Hashimi, an Iraqi scholar and author who closely follows the group.

According to Rami Abdurrahman, of the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights which tracks the Syrian conflict through a network of activists on the ground, after al-Shishani was wounded, Islamic State "brought a number of doctors to treat him, but they were not able to."

## Female Marines allowed to wear crewneck undershirts

*Associated Press*

AUGUSTA, Maine — The U.S. Marine Corps is making it easier for women to cover up tattoos by allowing them to wear crewneck undershirts beneath their uniforms.

The Marines made the change Thursday after U.S. Rep. Chellie Pingree, D-Mich., complained that its dress policy unintentionally discriminated against female recruits because men are allowed to wear crewneck T-shirts.

Last month, Pingree urged the Marine Corps to amend its rules and accept Kennebunk, Me., resident Kate Pimental, 20. She has a tattoo just below her collarbone that says, "Let your smile change the world but never let the world change you."

The Marine Corps has a strict policy on tattoos — es-

pecially visible tattoos. Recruits can have no more than four tattoos, and they cannot contain any vulgar, racist, sexist or anti-American words or images or references to drugs. Additionally, sleeve tattoos that cover the arm are prohibited, as are visible tattoos on the neck.

The altered dress code means Pimental can now cover her tattoo, which she got shortly after turning 18.

"There is nothing I want more than to be able to serve as a Marine," she said.

Gen. Robert Neller, commandant of the Marine Corps, said in letter to Pingree that changing the dress code so qualified female applicants like Pimental can join the Marines will "add to the strength and power of today's Marine Corps."

# UConn women march toward history

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The next time the Huskies leave Connecticut they could be two wins from women's basketball history.

UConn's road to an unprecedented fourth straight national championship will begin at home.

The Huskies were the top overall seed in the women's NCAA Tournament that was revealed Monday night. UConn (32-0) won't have to leave the state until the Final Four in Indianapolis because it is in the Bridgeport Regional.

"I am kind of jealous of the people who get to play in Los Angeles," UConn's Morgan Tuck joked. "I mean, Storrs is great, but L.A. is great, too."

There is no doubt the Huskies have been great over the past three seasons, winning the title every year. Coach Geno Auriemma said they don't focus on what lies ahead.

"They know obviously that this is an opportunity for them to win the fourth national championship. They know that," he said. "And they've known it since the first time we met at halfcourt there for the first day of practice. The only other time it has been mentioned is in passing when they do something stupid and I say, 'Teams that are trying to do something great, they don't do that stuff, not in March.'"

Joining the Huskies as the other No. 1 seeds are South Carolina, Notre Dame and Baylor. UConn has already beaten the Gamecocks and Irish this season. The Huskies would face Baylor on April 3 in the national semifinals if both teams ad-

vance that far.

UConn and Tennessee have each won three straight women's titles, but no women's team has four consecutive championships. The UCLA men's team won seven in a row. A title this year would give Auriemma 11 in his career, breaking a tie with celebrated UCLA men's coach John Wooden.

First up for the Huskies, who have been a No. 1 seed for 10 straight years, is 16th-seeded Robert Morris. The Colonials won the NEC championship.

The top four seeds in each region will host the opening two rounds except for No. 4 Michigan State, which has a conflict. So fifth-seed Mississippi State will take over as the host.

Tennessee earned a No. 7 seed, the lowest in school history. The Lady Vols, who have played in every NCAA Tournament, will face Green Bay in the opening round at Arizona State.

"Is it where we usually are? No, but it's a great spot for us to go to work," Tennessee coach Holly Warlick said.

While Tennessee has to head west, fourth-seeded Stanford could be heading east. Tara VanDerveer's team hosts former player Jennifer Azzi and her San Francisco program in the opening round. If they can advance to the Sweet 16, the Cardinal will play in Kentucky. The third-seeded Wildcats won't have to leave the area until the Final Four. They host the opening two rounds and then would play in Rupp Arena for the regional.

"For our team to work hard enough and be able to earn a top-16 seed and host in Memorial Coliseum is great," Kentucky

coach Matthew Mitchell said. "So they had to earn that and I am grateful the committee put us in Lexington. We are going to have to really work hard to get a victory in the first round, but the prospects to get to play in Lexington for the Sweet 16 is exciting."

Tennessee, Kentucky and South Carolina are three of nine SEC teams to make the field. That ties the Big East (2011) for the most ever in the women's tournament.

Other notables from the bracket:

**Two-bid Ivy League:** Days after announcing the first Ivy League postseason tournament, the league earned the first at-large bid for either a men's or women's team with Princeton getting an 11 seed. The Tigers, who will face West Virginia, lost to Penn twice during the regular season — their only conference blemishes.

"I'm bursting with pride for my team and for this great University. Princeton just became the first team in Ivy League history to earn an at-large bid," coach Courtney Banghart said. "That's something that will mean so much to me for forever. As an Ivy League alum, I share in the significance of this day with the many great scholar-athletes and coaches that are a part of this special league."

Penn is a No. 10 seed and will face Washington in the opening round.

**Newcomers:** Duquesne headlined five first-time NCAA Tournament teams. The ninth-seeded Dukes are the only at-large team of the group and open up against Seton Hall. Other newcomers include Buffalo, Central Arkansas, Iona and Jacksonville.

**Goodbye Tobacco Road:** For the first

time since 1988, Duke, North Carolina and N.C. State all missed the tournament. The Blue Devils, who had been in the tournament the past 21 years, were on the bubble to get in.

**Left out:** Iowa, N.C. State, Ohio and UTEP were the first four teams left out of the field, according to the NCAA. Princeton, Missouri, Purdue and St. Bonaventure were the last four in.

"I think the toughest decision with the first four out was that there was a large group of teams looking a lot alike," NCAA women's basketball committee chair Chris Dawson said. "Each team had their own merits. Through our vetting and voting process we came up with the last four I mentioned."

**Double duty:** There are 24 programs that have both their men's and women's teams in the NCAA bracket, including women's top seeds UConn, Notre Dame and Baylor.

**Lady Bulldogs return:** After a one-year absence, Georgia is back in the NCAA women's tournament.

The Lady Bulldogs (21-9) claimed a No. 8 seed in the Lexington Regional and will face Indiana in their opening game Saturday.

Georgia had a resurgence under first-year coach Joni Taylor, who took over after Andy Landers announced his retirement. The Lady Bulldogs made 20 straight NCAA appearances under Landers — and 31 overall — before missing out last season.

## Storylines to watch as men's tourney begins

Associated Press

LAWRENCE, Kan. — The overall No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament hasn't made it out of the opening weekend the past two years, so you better believe the boys at Kansas feel as if they have something to prove.

Even after their 12th straight Big 12 championship.

"It's something I've said since I've been here: You come to Kansas to make deep runs in the tournament and we haven't done that," Jayhawks forward Landen Lucas said. "We have the team to do that. It'll be tough, but we've been tested — battle-tested — and we're ready to make a run."

So are 67 other teams that will begin dancing this week.

The field set Sunday may be the most wide open it has been in years, and the Jayhawks may have the best odds of making it to Houston for the Final Four. But they were favored to do so the past two years, too, and were ousted by Stanford and Wichita State before they could even think about playing for a championship.

That's the unpredictable nature of the NCAA Tournament.

"I'm not concerned about the second

weekend at all right now," said coach Bill Self, whose team opens against Austin Peay in the South Region, then could face No. 8 seed Colorado or No. 9 seed UConn. "All I'm concerned (about) right now is the first weekend."

So, what story lines will dominate the opening weekend? Here are some of them:

**Big 12 or bust:** The Jayhawks weren't the only Big 12 flop last season. No. 3 seeds Baylor and Iowa State lost their openers and the league didn't get anybody to the Elite Eight. Can the seven teams that made this year's NCAA Tournament field find retribution?

**Momentum matters:** UConn roared through its conference tournament to solidify its spot in the field, not unlike it did in winning the 2011 and '14 national titles. But if having momentum is a good thing this time of year, not having it is just as bad. Iowa was once considered a potential No. 1 seed but fell all the way to a seventh seed, while teams such as Providence and Southern Cal have also had trouble lately.

"Our fans love this time of year," UConn coach Kevin Ollie said. "I love it as a coach."

**Toughest ticket:** Good luck getting a seat in Des Moines. The Jayhawks have a three-hour drive from their campus in Lawrence, while blue-bloods Kentucky, UConn and Indiana are joining them there. The only thing that would have driven up the price more is if the Hawkeyes (headed to Raleigh), Iowa State (off to Denver) or Northern Iowa (sent to Oklahoma City) were playing close to home.

**Going global:** There will be plenty of international flair to this tournament. Utah star Jakob Poeltl was born in Austria, Buddy Hield of Oklahoma is from the Bahamas and Domantas Sabonis of Gonzaga is the pride of Lithuania. Iowa's Peter Jok was born in Sudan, Cheick Diallo of Kansas in Mali. Kentucky 7-footer Skal Labissiere is originally from Haiti and Amida Brimah of UConn is from Ghana.

**Rivalry weeks:** The committee insists it doesn't consider rivalries when it slots the field, and every year it's hard to believe it. Potential matchups this year include longtime Southwest Conference foes Texas and Texas A&M, perennial powers Kentucky and Indiana, football foes Notre Dame and Michigan, and Jim Boheim against Tom Izzo — err, Syracuse against Michigan State.

"We're all just going to focus on Chattanooga," Hoosiers coach Tom Crean said of their first-round opponent. "We're only guaranteed one game right now and that's against Chattanooga."

**Philly pride:** Speaking of rivals, it was a banner year for the Big 5. Second-seeded Villanova and No. 10 seed Temple could meet in a second-round game in the East Region, and Saint Joseph's is the No. 8 seed in the West. For what it's worth, the Wildcats went 4-0 against their Big 5 brethren this season.

**Committee's conscience:** The selection committee gets dissected every year, but putting Michigan and Tulsa in the field and leaving Monmouth and St. Bonaventure out was practically inviting criticism. Those two teams can make the committee feel a whole lot better about their decision by winning a couple games. They meet each other in a First Four matchup before facing No. 6 seed Notre Dame.

"It's just a matter of the way things work out when we apply — strictly apply — our procedures for seeding," committee chair Joe Castiglione said, "and then, of course, when we get into bracketing."



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# Curry celebrates 28 with 27

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Stephen Curry sliced himself a piece of red velvet birthday cake in the locker room and had a quick sample, then assured everybody he has no plans of slowing down in his late 20s.

Curry had 27 points, five rebounds and five assists on his 28th birthday, and the Golden State Warriors beat the New Orleans Pelicans 125-107 on Monday night for their record 49th straight regular-season home victory.

"I hope to keep getting better, that's the mission, and I'll never be satisfied with where I'm at," Curry said. "I always want to find different ways to improve. I guess I'm officially in my prime, but we'll see how far this thing can go."

Draymond Green added 14 points and 12 rebounds for the Warriors (60-6), who are 31-0 at Oracle Arena this season. With 16 games to go, they remain one game ahead of the 1995-96 Chicago Bulls' pace in their record 72-win season.

"Sixty and 6 sounds good," Curry said. "It's a big accomplishment."

Birthday songs, MVP chants, and a serenade and piece of cake from his toddler daughter, Riley, made it a great day for Curry — all after his fifth Western Conference Player of the Week award this season and second in two weeks.

He shot 4-for-9 from three-point range and 10-for-16 overall.

Anthony Davis had 22 points and 11 rebounds for the Pelicans.

Klay Thompson added 18 points for Golden State, which swept the teams' first-round playoff series last year 4-0.

The Warriors clinched the Pacific Division during their off day Sunday, giving the franchise back-to-back Pacific titles for the first time since the 1974-75 and 1975-76 seasons.

"It's so rare in the NBA, in your first coaching job, to inherit a great team. They

had already won 50-plus before I even got here," coach Steve Kerr said. "I'm pretty lucky to coach these guys."

The Pelicans opened the season at Oracle Arena on Oct. 27 and New Orleans coach Alvin Gentry received his championship ring after serving as Warriors associate head coach last season as the franchise captured its first title in 40 years.

The teams played twice in five days to start the season.

"No one plays like those guys," said Gentry, who stopped to see Curry afterward and was gifted with two autographed hats. "All of a sudden the flood gates open and that's what they're capable of doing."

**Thunder 128, Trail Blazers 94:** Russell Westbrook had 17 points, 16 assists and 10 rebounds in his 12th triple-double of the season as host Oklahoma City beat Portland.

Westbrook had the 31st triple-double of his career and matched Sacramento's Rajon Rondo for the most assists without a turnover in a game this season.

**Jazz 94, Cavaliers 85:** Rodney Hood scored 28 points as host Utah, playing without leading scorer Gordon Hayward, beat Cleveland.

The Jazz remained two games behind the Houston Rockets and Dallas Mavericks for the last Western Conference playoff spot, while the Cavaliers stayed 2½ games ahead of Toronto in the East.

**Mavericks 107, Hornets 96:** Chandler Parsons had 24 points and nine rebounds as Dallas ended host Charlotte's season-high, seven-game winning streak.

Dirk Nowitzki added 23 points and 11 rebounds for the Mavericks, who moved back above .500 after losing five straight games. Deron Williams chipped in with 15 points.

**Bulls 109, Raptors 107:** Reserve Doug McDermott scored 29 points to

lead visiting Chicago to its ninth straight victory.

E'Twaun Moore and Nikola Mirotic added 17 points apiece as Chicago swept Toronto in the series for the second straight season, handing the Raptors just their second loss in their last 16 games at home. Toronto's last win against Chicago was on Dec. 31, 2013.

**Rockets 130, Grizzlies 81:** Donatas Motiejunas scored 18 points and Trevor Ariza 16 as host Houston coasted to its most lopsided win of the season.

The Rockets, who never trailed, were up by 24 at halftime and used a 32-point third quarter to extend the lead to 97-54. Houston cleared the bench to start the fourth quarter with the game well in hand.

**Heat 124, Nuggets 119:** Justise Winslow scored 20 points and fellow rookie Josh Richardson added 17 as host Miami held off Denver.

Dwyane Wade scored 19 points and Joe Johnson added 18 for the Heat. Hassan Whiteside finished with another double-double off the bench, scoring 12 of his 18 points in the fourth quarter and adding 10 rebounds.

**Wizards 124, Pistons 81:** John Wall had 15 points and 12 assists as host Washington routed Detroit to end a five-game losing streak and gain ground in the playoff race.

Nene scored a season-high 20 points off the bench to lead seven Wizards players in double figures during Washington's biggest win and Detroit's worst loss of the season.

**Suns 107, Timberwolves 104:** Mirza Teletovic made a three-pointer with 1.2 seconds left to lift host Phoenix over Minnesota.

P.J. Tucker scored a career-high 23 points and Teletovic had 21 for the Suns, who won at home for the first time since Feb. 27..

# NFL exec says CTE link exists

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — An NFL official has acknowledged a link between football and the brain disease CTE for the first time.

Jeff Miller, the NFL's senior vice president for health and safety, spoke about the connection during an appearance Monday at a congressional committee's round-table discussion about concussions.

Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., asked Miller: "Do you think there is a link between football and degenerative brain disorders like CTE?"

Miller began by referencing the work of Boston University neuropathologist Dr. Ann McKee, who has found CTE in the brains of 90 former pro football players.

"Well, certainly, Dr. McKee's research shows that a number of retired NFL players were diagnosed with CTE, so the answer to that question is certainly 'yes,' but there are also a number of questions that come with that," Miller said.

Schakowsky repeated the question: "Is there a link?"

"Yes. Sure," Miller responded.

The NFL has not previously linked playing football to chronic traumatic encephalopathy, a disease linked to repeated brain trauma and associated with symptoms such as memory loss, depression and progressive dementia. It can only be detected after death. Among the players found to have CTE in their brains were Hall of Famers Junior Seau and Ken Stabler. During Super Bowl week, Dr. Mitch Berger, a member of the NFL's head, neck and spine committee, would not draw a direct line from football to CTE.

Miller appeared at the discussion of concussions before the House Committee on Energy & Commerce. ESPN first reported Miller's appearance before the committee.

Last month, Berger, chair of the department of neurological surgery at the University of California, San Francisco, repeatedly said that while the types of degenerative changes to the brain associated with CTE have been found in late football players, such signs have also been found "in all spectrums of life."

Tao, a protein that indicates the presence of CTE, "is found in brains that have traumatic injuries," Berger said, "whether it's from football, whether it's from car accidents, whether it's from gunshot wounds, domestic violence — it remains to be seen."

Miller said he was "not going to speak for Dr. Berger" when asked by Schakowsky about those comments.

Just before Miller spoke, McKee was asked the same question about the link between hits in football and CTE. She responded "unequivocally" there is, and went into details about her research findings.

Miller told the committee that the entire scope of the issue needs to be addressed.

"You asked the question whether I thought there was a link," he said. "Certainly based on Dr. McKee's research, there's a link, because she's found CTE in a number of retired football players. I think that the broader point, and the one that your question gets to, is what that necessarily means and where do we go from here with that information."

# Kings hand Blackhawks 4th loss in 5 games

Associated Press

CHICAGO — The Los Angeles Kings were so good they turned Jonathan Quick's record-breaking shutout into an afterthought.

That was just fine with Quick, too.

Quick made 32 saves, Kris Versteeg had a goal and an assist and the Kings routed the slumping Chicago Blackhawks 5-0 on Monday night in a matchup of Western Conference powers looking for another championship run.

Quick's 41st career regular-season shutout snapped a tie with John Vanbiesbrouck and Frank Brimsek for the most by an American-born goaltender.

"It's a team effort, too, to get a shutout, so you're thankful for all your teammates of the years," Quick said.

Milan Lucic, Vincent Lecavalier, Dustin Brown and Tyler Toffoli also scored as Los Angeles improved to 8-2-1 in its last 11 games. Quick's fourth shutout of the season helped the Pacific Division leaders kill off each of Chicago's six power-play opportunities.

The Blackhawks (41-23-6) lost for the fourth time in five games, including three in a row against St. Louis, Dallas and Los Angeles — three potential playoff opponents. The defending Stanley Cup champions are just 9-10-2 since their franchise-record 12-game win streak.

"It seems like for whatever reason, the season's been up and down throughout the whole year," forward Patrick Kane

said. "You go on stretches where you win 12 in a row, and we've got this little stretch going right now. Obviously we want to shore that up before playoffs, and make sure we're going in there feeling consistent about our game."

The slide has dropped Chicago into third in the tough Central Division with just 12 games left on its schedule.

The Blackhawks' much maligned penalty killers had a perfect night, but Quick was solid for Los Angeles (41-22-5) and the Kings made the most of their opportunities. The Kings won two of three in the season series between the winners of the last four Stanley Cups.

"We're familiar with them. They're familiar with us," Quick said. "We've played a lot against each other the past few years. It's a game that you don't need to do much video or much like that. You know what you're going to get."

**Islanders 3, Panthers 2:** Cal Clutterbuck scored the tiebreaking goal with 1:39 remaining to cap New York's three-goal third period in a victory over visiting Florida.

Kyle Okposo and Josh Bailey scored earlier in the third as the Islanders scored all their goals in a 5½-minute stretch after trailing 2-0 heading to the final period. Thomas Greiss finished with 23 saves as the Islanders snapped a two-game skid and pulled one point behind the cross-town-rival Rangers for second place in the Metropolitan Division.

**Predators 3, Oilers 2:** James Neal had

his sixth career hat trick, leading visiting Nashville to a win over the Oilers.

The Predators have earned at least a point in 15 of their last 16 games. They swept the three-game season series from Edmonton.

Jordan Eberle and Iiro Pakarinen scored for the Oilers.

**Flames 7, Blues 4:** Michael Frolik scored three times, including two short-handed goals, as host Calgary snapped St. Louis' six-game winning streak.

Sean Monahan had two goals and Joe Colborne and Mark Giordano also scored for Calgary. Dougie Hamilton and Johnny Gaudreau each had three assists.

**Ducks 7, Devils 1:** Jakob Silfverberg scored three goals for his first NHL hat trick, leading host Anaheim to a rout of New Jersey.

Corey Perry scored his team-high 29th goal, Nick Ritchie had his first in 25 NHL games and Ryan Kesler got the go-ahead goal early in the second period. Andrew Cogliano added a goal and two assists, helping Anaheim beat the Devils for the fifth straight time.

**Jets 5, Canucks 2:** Marko Danov had two goals and an assist as visiting Winnipeg beat Vancouver.

Tyler Myers and Alexander Burmistrov each added a goal and an assist for the Jets, and Mark Scheifele also scored to extend his points streak to eight games. Mathieu Perreault had two assists and Michael Hutchinson finished with 26 saves.