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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Obama greets Raul Castro in Havana

Associated Press

HAVANA — Brushing off decades of distrust, President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro shook hands Monday in Havana's Palace of the Revolution, a remarkable moment for two countries working to put the bitterness of their Cold War-era enmity behind them.

Obama and Castro stood together as a Cuban military band played the national anthems of Cuba and the United States — stunning sounds in a country where resistance to the U.S. has been part of the national mission for decades. Greeting each other warmly, the two leaders inspected an honor guard before sitting down for a series of meetings.

Whether Obama and Castro could use the meeting — one of the first since Cuba's 1959 revolution and the only one in Cuba — to further the ambitious dip-

lomatic experiment they started 15 months ago was an open question, infusing Obama's historic trip to Cuba with uncertainty and tension for both governments.

For Obama, there was no better place than Havana to show that engagement can do more than isolation to bring about change on the communist island. Yet for the Cubans, the glaring question is whether their own government is ready to prove the ambitious diplomatic opening is more than just talk.

American companies, eager for opportunities in Cuba, were wasting no time. Obama announced that tech giant Google had struck a deal to expand Wi-Fi and broadband Internet on the island 90 miles south of Florida.

Outside the palace in Havana's sprawling Revolution Square, Obama posed for a photo in front of a giant sculpture of Er-

nesto "Che" Guevara, creating an indelible image sure to reverberate in Cuba and beyond. The revolutionary leader was once one of Fidel Castro's top lieutenants, his face an iconic symbol of Cuba's revolution. That revolution is reviled by critics of the Castro government.

Paying tribute to another Cuban independence hero, Obama adjusted a wreath at the foot of a 59-foot statue of Jose Marti, calling it "a historic moment."

"It is a great honor to pay tribute to Jose Marti, who gave his life for independence of his homeland," Obama wrote in the guestbook. "His passion for liberty, freedom, and self-determination lives on in the Cuban people today."

On his first full day in Cuba, Obama planned an event with U.S. and Cuban entrepreneurs aimed at championing Cuba's fledgling private sector. He was

to be feted in the evening at a state dinner, an honor illustrating just how far the U.S. and Cuba have come despite their deep ideological differences.

The long-awaited meeting between Obama and Castro was one of the most scrutinized moments of Obama's 2½-day trip to Cuba, the first while in office by a U.S. president in nearly 90 years. Since succeeding his brother, Fidel, in 2008, Castro has orchestrated economic and social reforms with broad-based impact — although to many Cubans and foreigners, they appear slow to materialize.

Yet Castro has given little ground when it comes to changing Cuba's single-party system or easing strict limits on media, assembly and political dissent. His government has also repeatedly chided Obama for saying he wanted to empower Cubans.

Iraq base where Marine died is new, 'defensive' outpost

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
AND TARA COPP

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A small American artillery base in northern Iraq where a Marine was killed Saturday by an Islamic State rocket had been established quietly days before the attack to provide protection to nearby troops, a U.S. military spokesman said Monday.

Staff Sgt. Louis F. Cardin, 27, an artilleryman with the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, was killed and several other Marines were injured in the attack at the newly established Fire Base Bell, where the American military has placed four 155 mm howitzer cannons alongside infantry-

men in a "defensive" role, said Army Col. Steve Warren, a Baghdad-based spokesman for the U.S.-led Operation Inherent Resolve.

The base is near the town of Makhmour and about 50 miles southeast of Mosul, the Islamic State group's capital in Iraq. The U.S. fire base was established to protect a nearby Iraqi base where American troops are preparing the Iraqi Army's 15th Division for the planned assault on Mosul. The existence of the base was only announced Sunday, after Cardin died.

It's the first time since U.S. troops returned to Iraq in 2014 to support the war against Islamic State militants that American troops have set up

such an outpost that is not immediately linked to an Iraqi base. Fire Base Bell is "a few hundred meters" from the Iraqi base, Warren said, but it is not intended to be used in offensive operations against the terrorist organization. Warren declined to say how many Americans were deployed to Bell, but he described it as "a company-sized element" of between 100 and 200 troops from the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

Bell is not a forward-based combat post, Warren said, though Marines have been fired upon there twice in the few days since they arrived. Warren said the forces are about 9 to 12 miles behind the front line established by the

Iraqi army.

"A combat outpost is something different," Warren said. "This is a fire base that is behind the [forward line of troops]. ... What they are there to do is simply shoot back if someone shoots at them or the forces at Makhmour."

While the Marines at Fire Base Bell are limited to defending themselves and other troops, Warren did not rule out the use of their artillery in future offensive operations if the Iraqi government were to request it. The howitzers could be used to support Iraqi forces as they push toward Mosul, an operation the U.S. military has said is still several months away.

Officer accused of assault in US custody

BY ERIK SLAVIN
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A Navy lieutenant who police say groped and punched a Japanese woman on a Tokyo-bound flight last week is in U.S. custody following his arrest, Navy officials said Monday.

Japanese police transferred the 33-year-old lieutenant to Naval Air Facility Atsugi officials Saturday night. Japanese prosecutors had not yet

charged the man Monday, which was a holiday in Japan. The officer could face both Japanese charges and counts under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Narita International Airport police told Stars and Stripes the officer reportedly touched another passenger, a 19-year-old Japanese college student, on the thigh and also punched her in the head repeatedly during a 90-minute period while aboard a flight from San Diego

to Tokyo on Thursday.

The alleged assault reportedly ended after another passenger notified a flight attendant and moved the woman to another seat.

The officer was arrested Friday after an investigation that began when the plane landed.

Initial reports indicated police were investigating simple assault charges. It is ultimately up to prosecutors to determine the severity of any charges.

The officer's arrest came

just days after a Navy seaman apprentice was charged with raping a woman at a hotel room on the island of Okinawa, where about half of U.S. forces are based.

Servicemembers in Japan remain under an overnight curfew that began after two reservist sailors on assignment to Okinawa were accused, and later convicted, of gang-raping a woman there in 2012.

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Navy Arctic exercises test readiness

BY AARON KIDD
Stars and Stripes

Sailors are trying to accurately forecast arctic weather for the first time from a temporary station on an ice floe in an attempt to predict the harsh conditions that can constrain military operations in the Arctic Circle.

In the region for ICEX 2016 — a five-week exercise designed to test the Navy's operational readiness while advancing scientific research — aerographer's mates from Fleet Weather Center in Norfolk, Va., are combining advanced atmospheric monitoring systems with traditional meth-

ods, such as cloud observation and weather balloons, to develop "tightly coupled weather, ocean and ice models to accurately forecast the harsh arctic conditions up to 90 days," a Navy statement said.

"The extreme weather patterns within a data-sparse region make this a very challenging learning opportunity," Petty Officer 2nd Class Zachary Yanez, an aerographer's mate from La Habra, Calif., said. "I am excited to be one of the few aerographer's mates that gets the opportunity to tackle this experiment and contribute to the further understanding of

this ever-changing region."

Since ICEX began earlier this month, the sailors have detected average temperatures of minus-14 degrees Fahrenheit, with wind chills reaching minus-46, said Petty Officer 1st Class Daryl Meer, an aerographer's mate from Hauppauge, N.Y.

"Providing accurate weather forecasts is critically important to the safety of personnel and operations [in the arctic]," he said. "These weather conditions can be deadly and extremely detrimental to operations if not properly understood."

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Iran to mark capture of US sailors

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

Iran's Revolutionary Guard plans to erect a statue commemorating the capture of 10 U.S. sailors earlier this year.

The sailors were detained Jan. 12 after their riverine patrol vessels suffered a mechanical failure and drifted into Iran's waters near Farsi Island.

The comments were made last week by Ali Fadavi, head of the Revolutionary Guard's naval forces, Britain's Daily Telegraph reported. The Revolutionary Guard's naval forces report to Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, not its president, Hassan Rouhani.

The statue likely will be built on the Iranian-controlled island of Kharg, a small tract in the Persian Gulf close to where the sailors were captured, the Telegraph reported. The monument could be included as a stop on the pro-military "Rahian-e-Nour" tour of historical locations from the Iran-Iraq War.

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Army didn't search for AWOL rape suspect

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Army Pvt. Jameson T. Hazelbower went AWOL after learning he was suspected of raping a 15-year-old girl. The self-described sex addict roamed free for nearly three months before local police collared him in Winnebago, Ill.

And that was only by chance, according to interviews, police reports and court-martial records.

An officer responded to a late-night call in March 2014 about

a suspicious vehicle parked in a cul-de-sac. Hazelbower, his pants down to his knees, was in the car with a girl, barely 14.

Hazelbower was listed as AWOL on Jan. 10, 2014, after he was informed he was suspected of forcible sodomy and sexual assault of a 15-year-old girl. In late February 2014, the service was informed of a second alleged victim, a 14-year-old. A third sexual assault victim, 15, later came forward.

The girl found in the car with Hazelbower when he was arrested told police she had been com-

municating with him through a social networking service and they had not met before.

Once in custody, Winnebago police found Hazelbower was pursuing another teenage girl in Illinois. For the two incidents in Illinois, Hazelbower received 30 months of probation.

Hazelbower was eventually convicted by a military judge in May 2015 of child rape, possession of child pornography, sexual abuse of a child, desertion and other charges. He was sentenced to 50 years of confinement.

Villanova survives, Texas A&M rallies

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Upset in the NCAA Tournament the last couple of years, No. 2 seed Villanova and its seniors made it to the Sweet 16 for the first time since 2009 and won't have to listen to talk of not making it to the second weekend.

Syracuse also silenced some doubters, and became one of a half-dozen ACC teams to make it to the round of 16.

But the best came in the night contests. Texas A&M roared back from 10 points down in the last 30 seconds to force overtime and won it over Northern Illinois in a second extra period. And Wisconsin nailed a buzzer-beating three to survive and advance.

A look at those moving on:

East Regional

No. 6 Notre Dame 76, No. 14 Stephen F. Austin 75: Rex Pflueger tapped in a miss with 1.5 seconds left and Notre Dame survived a valiant effort by Stephen F. Austin to reach the Sweet 16 for the second consecutive season.

With 17.5 seconds left, Notre Dame grabbed an SFA rebound down one and put it in the hands of Demetrius Jackson. The point guard drove to the basket and missed. Zach Auguste followed for the Irish (22-12) but could not convert. The ball slipped off the rim and with one hand Pflueger flipped it in for his only basket of the game.

A long heave from Stephen F. Austin (28-6) went wide and Notre Dame celebrated by swarming Pflueger.

The Irish advance to play Wisconsin Friday.

Thomas Walkup, the hero of Stephen F. Austin's first-round upset of West Virginia, scored 21.

No. 7 Wisconsin 66, No. 2 Xavier 63: At St. Louis, Bronson Koenig hit two three-pointers in the closing seconds, the last of them as the buzzer sounded, and Wisconsin edged Xavier.

The talented sharpshooter who failed to hit from beyond the arc in a first-round win over Pittsburgh connected from well beyond the 3-point line to tie it at 63 with 11.7 seconds remaining.

Edmond Sumner brought the ball up court for Xavier (28-6), and then drove to the basket, running over the Badgers' Zak Showalter and getting called for an offensive foul with 4.3 seconds to go.

Wisconsin (22-12) called timeout after crossing half court and coach Greg Gard drew up a play for his best outside shooter. Koenig got the inbounds pass in front of his own bench and buried the fall-away shot, sending the jubilant Badgers streaming onto the court and into another Sweet 16.

South Regional

No. 2 Villanova 87, No. 7 Iowa 68: Josh Hart scored 19 points and second-seeded Villanova advanced to the Sweet 16 for the first time since 2009 with a rout of Iowa.

Villanova's senior class, led by Ryan Arcidiacono and Daniel Ochefu, made it to the tournament's second weekend for the first time. They were upset in the round of 32 the last two seasons and didn't make it that far as freshmen.

The Wildcats (31-5) will meet third-seeded Miami on Thursday in Louisville, Kentucky.

There was no doubt in this one. Villanova led 54-29 at halftime and by as many as 34 points in the second half. The closest Iowa (22-11) got was 16 points in the final minutes.

No. 5 Maryland 73, No. 13 Hawaii 60: At Spokane, Wash., Melo Trimble scored 24 points and grabbed eight rebounds as Maryland beat Hawaii.

Diamond Stone added 14 points for Maryland (27-8), which advanced to the round of 16 for the eighth time in the past 22 years.

Mike Thomas had 19 points and 11 rebounds for Hawaii (28-6), which won a tournament game for the first time this

season.

Maryland will play Kansas next Thursday.

After a sluggish first half in which Maryland led 28-27, the tempo picked up in the second.

Hawaii went on a 10-4 run to take a 39-36 lead. Then the bottom fell out.

Midwest Regional

No. 10 Syracuse 75, No. 15 Middle Tennessee State 50: At St. Louis, the insufferable zone of Syracuse ground Middle Tennessee State's magical March ride to a halt, and the Orange beat the Blue Raiders.

Michael Gbinije poured in 23 points, Tyler Lydon added 14 and the Orange (21-13) used a 21-2 charge midway through the second half to crack open a close game and join five other ACC schools in advancing to the third round of the NCAA Tournament.

After teetering on the bubble a week ago, they'll play No. 11 seed Gonzaga on Friday in Chicago.

The Blue Raiders (25-10), who shredded so many brackets with their upset of second-seeded Michigan State, made things tough on Syracuse for a while. They led early in the second half and still trailed just 40-39 with 16:02 to go, but proceeded to make one of their next 16 field-goal attempts.

West Regional

No. 2 Oklahoma 85, No. 10 VCU 81: At Oklahoma City, Buddy Hield scored 19 of his 36 points in the final eight minutes to help Oklahoma hold off VCU.

Hield, who didn't score for more than 10 minutes to start the game, made 9 of 12 shots in the second half after going 2-for-8 in the first. The senior guard posted at least 30 points for the 11th time this season.

Jordan Woodard scored 17 points and Isaiah Cousins added 15 for the Sooners (27-7), who advanced to the Sweet 16 for

the second straight year. They will play either Northern Illinois or Texas A&M.

Melvin Johnson scored 18 of his 23 points in the second half, JeQuan Lewis scored 22 points and Michael Gilmore added 12 for VCU (25-11), which was trying to reach the Sweet 16 for the first time since its Final Four run in 2011.

No. 3 Texas A&M 92, No. 11 Northern Iowa 88 (2OT): Alex Caruso scored 25 points as Texas A&M overcame a 10-point deficit with less than 30 seconds remaining in regulation to come back for a double-overtime victory over Northern Iowa at Oklahoma City.

The win puts the Aggies (28-8) in the Sweet 16 for the third time in school history, the first since 2007.

Daniel House scored all 22 of his points in the second half and overtime, while Jalen Jones finished with 16 for Texas A&M — which has now won 10 of its last 11 games.

Jeremy Morgan had career highs of 36 points and 12 rebounds to lead the Panthers (23-13), who led 69-59 in the final minute of regulation before committing four turnovers in the final 29 seconds to spark the Aggies comeback.

No. 1 Oregon 69, No. 8 Saint Joseph's 64: At Spokane, Wash., Dillon Brooks scored 25 points to leading Oregon over Saint Joseph's in the second round of the West Regional.

Oregon (29-6) was carrying the banner for the rest of the Pac-12 after the conference posted a collective dud on the opening weekend. Five teams were sent home in the first round and Utah was routed by 11th-seeded Gonzaga in the round of 32, leaving the Ducks as the lone conference representative.

And they were tested by the Hawks, rallying from down 58-51 in the final five minutes to advance to the Sweet 16 for the first time since 2013. Brooks started the rally with a driving three-point play and put Oregon in front for good on a threepointer with 1:19 remaining.

DeAndre' Bembry led the Hawks (28-8) with 16 points.

No. 1 seeds South Carolina, Baylor cruise

Associated Press

Syracuse advanced to its first Sweet 16 in the women's NCAA Tournament in eight appearances. The Orange beat Albany, which couldn't pull over another upset after knocking out Florida in its first-ever tournament win.

And after a disappointing regular season, Tennessee was seeded seventh, the lowest ever for the proud program. But it didn't stop the Lady Vols from moving on to the round of 16.

A glance at those moving on:

Bridgeport Regional

No. 5 Mississippi State 74, No. 4 Michigan State 72: Victoria Vivians scored 24 points and Breanna Richardson hit a crucial three-pointer with 34 seconds remaining to lead host Mississippi State.

Richardson's three-pointer gave Mississippi State a 72-69 lead. Michigan State's Brannndais Agee was fouled while shooting a three-pointer on the ensuing possession, but could only convert one of the free throws.

Mississippi State (28-7) led 51-38 early in the third quarter, but Michigan State responded with the next 14 points to take a 52-51 advantage going into the fourth. Streaking top-seed UConn could be up next as the Huskies play tournament newcomer Duquesne on Monday for a spot in the Sweet 16.

Sioux Falls Regional

No. 1 South Carolina 73, No. 9 Kansas State 47: Tiffany Mitchell scored 16 of her 20 points in the first two quarters as host South Carolina opened a big lead and breezed into the Sweet 16.

No. 4 Syracuse 79, No. 12 Albany 59: Brittney Sykes scored nine of her 24 points during a third-quarter surge in leading host Syracuse.

No. 3 Ohio State 88, No. 6 West Virginia 81: Kelsey Mitchell scored 45 points to help host Ohio State beat West Virginia.

No. 7 Tennessee, No. 2 Arizona State: Diamond DeShields scored 24 points, Mercedes Russell added 12 and visiting Tennessee completed its improbable run to the Sweet 16.

Dallas Regional

No. 1 Baylor 84, No. 9 Auburn 52: Nina Davis scored 30 points as host Baylor advanced to the Sweet 16 for the eighth year in a row.

The Lady Bears (35-1) never trailed. Alexis Jones and freshman post Kalani

Brown both had 16 points, while senior point guard Niya Johnson had 10 assists in her last home game.

Baylor advanced to play Saturday against Texas A&M or Florida State.

No. 6 DePaul 73, No. 3 Louisville 72: Jessica January scored 18 of her season-high 25 points in the first half and DePaul held off host Louisville.

The junior guard's final point was the decisive margin as she made the second of two free throws with 14.5 seconds left. She also had a team-high eight rebounds and five assists.

No. 2 Oregon State 69, No. 10 St. Bonaventure 40: Jamie Weisner broke out of a slump and scored 23 points as host Oregon State took control after halftime to beat St. Bonaventure.

Sydney Wiese added eight points, six rebounds and six assists. Ruth Hamblin had 16 rebounds for the Beavers (29-4).



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Johnson sets Fontana mark

Associated Press

FONTANA, Calif. — Jimmie Johnson somehow saved his fastest lap for last, and Southern California's favorite racing son soared to another historic victory.

Johnson pulled away in overtime to beat Kevin Harvick on Sunday for his record sixth NASCAR Sprint Cup Series win at Fontana.

With his 77th career victory, Johnson passed Dale Earnhardt for seventh place in NASCAR annals. And he did it in style: Johnson was third on the late restart, but he surged past leader Denny Hamlin while giving a little bump to Harvick before side-drafting and pulling away.

After showcasing his famed skills to snare another landmark win, the 40-year-old Johnson got a bit reflective when asked about his place in the sport.

"I feel like physically and mentally, I'm the best that I've ever been in my career," the six-time series champion said. "I'm in the space I want to be in, which makes me want to stick around and do this for a lot of years. There's no guarantees about when you're going to win and have success, so I've been very, very fortunate to win 77 of these things, which blows my mind."

Johnson finished with his fastest lap of the race to claim his second overtime win of the young season, adding Fontana to Atlanta. He has won three of his last eight races after a 20-race winless skid in his Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet.

Harvick was in position to win for the second consecutive week before second-place Kyle Busch blew a tire with two laps to go. Hamlin got off pit road first for his first lead of the race, but Johnson's fresh

tires and cleverness gave him the speed needed to get ahead.

"I knew we had a great car, and the caution fell at a bad time," Johnson said. "The run before, I just didn't have the tires on the car to race with those guys. I got a great run off of Turn 2, and I thought, 'Man, I've got a shot at this thing,' which I didn't expect to have. Harvick has been so fast."

Johnson is from El Cajon, just outside San Diego. He won at Fontana in 2009 and 2010, but hadn't finished higher than ninth in his last four races at his closest thing to a hometown track.

Harvick finished second to Johnson for the ninth consecutive time that the California natives have occupied the top two spots.

"That was the worst it's taken off on the restarts," Harvick said of the last lap. "But we weren't good on the restarts for four or five laps unless we were by ourselves. We weren't able to drive it in like I needed to. Just didn't have the front tires turning, and then the back wouldn't grip. Still a good day for us."

Hamlin was third, followed by Joey Logano and Ricky Stenhouse Jr. Martin Truex Jr. was in contention until late contact with Logano, who left Truex furious.

The combination of Auto Club Speedway's aged asphalt and NASCAR's new low-downforce package led to the excellent entertainment value that most drivers expected in the closest race to Hollywood. Fontana showcased uncommonly close racing and multiple passes on one of the series' fastest tracks.

Man of Steel: Johnson soared to the win with the Superman logo emblazoned on his hood to promote Warner Bros.' upcoming "Batman v Superman: Dawn

of Justice" film. Johnson later donned a red cape, knowingly grinning at the cheesiness.

"Everybody was waiting for the chance to pull out a cape if we won here," Johnson said. "All the wins are special, but when you have props and a cause like this, it takes you to the next level."

Rough weekend: Busch's blown tire while he was in second place capped a hard-luck weekend for the defending Sprint Cup champion, who won here in 2013 and 2014. A day after Busch blew a tire while leading on the last lap and closing in on his fourth straight Xfinity Series victory, his streak of eight straight top-five Cup finishes also ended in dismaying fashion.

Big crash: Kyle Larson was unhurt after a frightening solo crash on the 48th lap that sent his entire car flying into the air. The Northern California native hit the wall head-on when he blew his left rear tire, but climbed out after landing on his wheels.

Bad crash: Danica Patrick then hit the wall hard with 79 laps to go after contact while passing Kasey Kahne, who was a lap down. Patrick and her team were angry with Kahne for the bump, with Patrick calling Kahne "pretty desperate."

Big finish: Fontana ended with a green-white-checkered finish for the second straight year. Brad Keselowski took it away from Harvick last year on the late restart. This track has a wealth of fantastic finishes — including 2011, when Harvick got around Johnson late to win.

Nowitzki, Mavs top Blazers

Associated Press

DALLAS — Dirk Nowitzki and Deron Williams played on Sunday as if everything was on the line.

Nowitzki scored 40 points and Williams had 31 points and 16 assists, all season highs, leading the Dallas Mavericks to a 132-120 overtime win over the Portland Trail Blazers.

Williams made a tiebreaking 3-pointer in overtime before Nowitzki scored eight straight points, all on assists by Williams.

"It's my job as a point guard," Williams said. "You've got to know when your good fella's hot."

The Mavericks moved within a half-game of the Trail Blazers for the sixth playoff position in the Western Conference. Dallas has 12 games to play, and Portland 11.

The Mavericks (35-35) also gained a tiebreaker by winning the first two of three games in the season series against the Trail Blazers (36-35). The teams play again in Portland on Wednesday.

"This was the tiebreaker game," Williams said. "We gained a full game on them, and we see them again next week."

Williams said he needed to be more aggressive offensively because Chandler Parsons, averaging nearly 14 points per game, was out with a sore right hamstring.

Rookie Mejri came off the bench to score 13 points with career highs of 14 rebounds, six blocked shots and 32 minutes played. He had played just 198 minutes in 23 games before Sunday.

Raptors 105, Magic 100: DeMar DeRozan scored 25 points to lead surging host Toronto to the win.

Luis Scola had 20 points as the Raptors moved within one game of idle Cleveland for the top spot in the Eastern Conference.

Pelicans 109, Clippers 105: Jrue Holiday scored 22 points, helping injury-riddled New Orleans to a win at home.

The Pelicans tipped off shortly after announcing All-Star forward Anthony Davis, who hurt his left knee on Friday night, would miss the rest of the season to treat that injury as well as a torn labrum in his left shoulder that he played with for much of the season.

Kings 88, Knicks 80: DeMarcus Cousins had 24 points and 20 rebounds, and visiting Sacramento had its best defensive performance of the season.

The Kings, who came in allowing a league-worst 109.6 points per game, easily surpassed their previous best of 88 points allowed, shutting down a Knicks team that played without leading scorer Carmelo Anthony.

Celtics 120, 76ers 105: Isaiah Thomas led six Boston players in double figures with 26 points as the visiting Celtics ended a four-game skid.

Jared Sullinger added 17 points and 13 rebounds for Boston, which swept the four-game season series against the 76ers to make it eight consecutive wins against Philadelphia. The Celtics avoided matching their longest losing streak of the season with the victory.

Jazz 94, Bucks 85: Gordon Hayward scored 18 points, including 13 during a decisive third quarter, as the Jazz won for the fifth time in six games.

Utah remained one game behind Dallas for the eighth and final playoff spot in the Western Conference.

Pens serve notice with rout of Capitals

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — The Metropolitan Division race has been over for weeks. The best regular season in the 41-year history of the Washington Capitals has seen to that.

The surging Pittsburgh Penguins, however, did more than delay the inevitable on Sunday night. They served notice Washington's path through the Eastern Conference might not be as easy as it seemed a month ago.

Rookie Tom Kuhnhackl had a goal and two assists on his way to a career-best three points and the Penguins denied the Capitals a chance to lock up the division title with a dominant 6-2 victory.

Matt Cullen, Trevor Daley, Justin Schultz, Chris Kunitz and Bryan Rust also scored for Pittsburgh. Sidney Crosby picked up two assists to push his scoring streak to 12 games as the Penguins won their sixth straight, five of them without star center Evgeni Malkin. Marc-Andre Fleury stopped 16 shots as the Penguins move into second place behind Washington in the Metropolitan.

"The start was a little slow the first 5 minutes but after that we really settled in," Crosby said. "Had a lot of jump, a lot of desperation."

The Capitals, not so much. Washington could have clinched the franchise's ninth division crown with two points but instead gave up a season-high six goals.

Ducks 3, Jets 2 (OT): Jakob Silfverberg scored at 4:01 of overtime to lift visiting Anaheim past Winnipeg.

Silfverberg's 13th goal of the season came as he was left all alone in front of Jets goalie Michael Hutchinson, who made a glove save on the first attempt but couldn't corral the rebound, allowing Silfverberg to score.

Jamie McGinn and Ryan Kesler scored for the Ducks in regulation, and John Gibson made 27 saves for his 17th win. Anaheim got its 40th win of the season and moved four points behind Los Angeles Kings for first place in the Pacific Division. Paul Postma and Blake Wheeler scored for the Jets, who last their third straight. Hutchinson finished with 30 saves.

Devils 2, Blue Jackets 1: Devante Smith-Pelly scored the tiebreaking goal 8:38 into the third period and Scott Wedgewood made 27 saves in his NHL debut to lead host New Jersey.

Reid Boucher also scored as the Devils ended a six-game losing streak against the Blue Jackets (1-5-1), less than 24 hours after

dropping a 6-3 decision in Columbus. Jared Boll scored for the Blue Jackets, while Joonas Korhonen made 20 saves.

Smith-Pelly did most of the work on his seventh goal in nine games in New Jersey. His forecheck on Nick Foligno forced the Columbus forward to send the puck around the boards. Devils defenseman Adam Larsson stopped it at the point and sent it to Smith-Pelly on the edge of the crease.

Wild 3, Blackhawks 2 (SO): Charlie Coyle scored the only goal in the shootout as Minnesota beat host Chicago for the fourth time in four meetings this season.

Coyle, the Wild's first shooter, beat Chicago's Scott Darling a night after he and Zach Parise scored in the tiebreaker in a home win over Carolina.

Devan Dubnyk stopped 29 shots through overtime and then was perfect in the shootout against Chicago's Jonathan Toews, Patrick Kane and Artemi Panarin.

Avalanche 3, Oilers 2: Gabriel Landeskog had a goal and an assist as visiting Colorado got its third straight win.

Tyson Barrie and Blake Comeau also scored for the Avalanche, who remained one point ahead of Minnesota for the second and final wild-card spot in the Western Conference.

Sharks 3, Coyotes 0: Tomas Hertl scored a power-play goal and James Reimer earned his second shutout in four starts with host San Jose.

Joel Ward also scored, Joe Pavelski added an empty-netter and Joonas Donskoi had two assists for the Sharks, who have won a season-high four straight home games to move to the brink of clinching the playoffs.

After missing the postseason last year for the first time since 2003, San Jose can seal up a bid this season with one more victory.

Flames 4, Canadiens 1: Sean Monahan had two goals and an assist to help visiting Calgary beat Montreal.

Joe Colborne and Johnny Gaudreau also scored for the Flames, who have points in four straight games.

Niklas Backstrom, playing for the first time in more than a year, finished with 21 saves.

Michael McCarron scored his first NHL goal for Montreal, which has lost four of its last five. Michael Condon stopped 30 shots.