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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Successful raid marks shift in US strategy

Los Angeles Times

As the Islamic State group expands its global reach by directing and inspiring attacks in the West, the U.S. is stepping up its offensive in Iraq and Syria, including increased military operations, additional U.S. forces and targeted raids to wipe out the militant group's top leadership.

The Islamic State group's No. 2, Rahman Mustafa Qaduli, also known as Abu Ala Afri and Haji Imam, was killed in one such raid in Syria on Thursday, Defense Secretary Ash Carter said Friday. An influential finance minister for the Islamic State group and a close adviser to the group's leader, Abu Bakr Baghdadi, Qaduli died as special operations forces attempted to capture him in his vehicle, according to officials who were not authorized to speak publicly about the details of the mission. Qaduli had been monitored by U.S. surveillance for several

days before the operation was launched, officials said.

The raid was part of what American officials are calling a new phase in the 18-month-old campaign to storm Islamic State compounds in a series of late-night raids with Iraqi and Kurdish forces. The operations have already killed or captured several top militants and netted key sources of intelligence, including laptops and cellphones. Interrogations with captured militants have shed light on the shadowy group, U.S. officials said.

The intelligence has set off a domino effect in which one raid has led to others and provided targeting information for daily bombing runs that have blown up militant-held oil production sites and cash hoards.

"We've learned a great deal, and we continue to learn about who is who in ISIL so we can kill them, about how they get their finances so we can dry that up,"

Carter said, using an acronym for the Islamic State group. "And the forces that we're working with on the ground in both Iraq and Syria continue to gather strength because our strategic approach for the retaking of territory is to help local forces to do so."

The town of Shadadi in eastern Syria was seized from the Islamic State group last month by the Kurdish YPG, with the help of U.S. special forces. In recent days, the Islamic State group has lost significant ground in Palmyra to the Syrian army, backed by Russian airstrikes. The Pentagon estimates that the group has lost 20 percent of Syrian territory it controlled at its peak in 2014, and 40 percent of Iraqi territory.

Still, the U.S. knows that victory is not yet within grasp, particularly if the group continues to inspire or help carry out deadly attacks such as the one this week in Brussels and pre-

vious attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, Carter said.

As the Islamic State loses ground in Syria and Iraq, the group will likely turn even more of its attention to attacks in Europe and the West, said Daniel Benjamin, a former State Department counterterrorism coordinator who now teaches at Dartmouth College.

"They have a profound need to show they are still in the game, capable of still inflicting attacks against the West, particularly because the sheen is off the Islamic State itself," Benjamin said.

Christopher Harmer, an analyst at the Institute for the Study of War in Washington and a retired Navy officer, said Islamic State leaders once instructed foreign recruits to come to the caliphate to wage jihad. Now, they instruct the recruits to stay put. "They want fighters to mount attacks at home or elsewhere," he said.

Belgian officials issue warrant for new suspect

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — Belgian prosecutors issued an arrest warrant Saturday for a new suspect in the attacks on the Brussels airport and subway as authorities moved to clean up damage caused by the explosions.

The federal prosecutor's office said a warrant has been issued for a man identified only as Faycal C. He is wanted for "involvement in a terrorist group, terrorist killings and attempted terrorist killings," the statement said.

A police raid was conducted at his home. No arms or explosives were found, prosecutors said.

Belgian media are reporting that a man called Faycal Chef-

fou has been identified as the man suspected of fleeing Brussels airport after two alleged accomplices blew themselves up there.

The developments come as Brussels airport officials moved to assess the damage caused by twin explosions at the terminal on Tuesday.

Authorities have wrapped up their investigation of the crime scene at the airport, and will allow engineers into the building to check its structural safety and information technology systems — and whether any damage can be repaired quickly.

Brussels Airport, which handles 23.5 million passengers annually, said it would be Tuesday at the earliest before flights

resume.

The transport disruptions will do little to ease the worries of jittery Europeans, who are wondering how many violent extremists remain at large and where and when they might strike again.

Authorities believe both the Brussels attacks and the Nov. 13 bombings in Paris that killed 130 people were plotted from Belgium.

Heavily armed police swept into Brussels neighborhoods Friday in operations linked to the attacks. Signs of a large police operation remained visible Saturday at the quiet tram station in Schaerbeek district in Brussels where a man was shot.

The man, who was sitting

with a young girl and holding a bag, was ordered by police "to put the bag far from him." After he did so, police shot him twice.

Local residents have mixed feelings about the intervention.

"The security services are doing their work," said Timothee Bunkyezi, 54, a student who believes that for such a large-scale operation, the intelligence the police were working on must have been solid.

But Marie-Madeleine Yamotia, 40, a nurse who lives right opposite the bus stop, expressed concern for the child who was with the suspect.

"It's traumatizing for the little one," she said. "We don't know. Is he really a suspect? Here, we doubt it a little."

\$20 tribute to fallen dad yields millions in aid

By CARLOS BONGIOANNI
Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — Just over two years ago, Myles Eckert spotted something green sticking out of the snow as he, his mom and his sister stopped for lunch at a restaurant near Toledo, Ohio.

“Money!” he said to himself as he retrieved a partially exposed \$20 bill.

Little did Myles know, but that \$20 find would lead to more than \$2 million of charitable contributions, worldwide celebrity status and a prestigious award at the 2016 Citizen Honors Award ceremony, held Friday at Joint Base Myer-Henderson next to Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

At the annual event, Myles received the Congressional Medal of Honor Society’s new Young Hero Award, which recognizes “leadership, courage, character, integrity and service.” Myles was selected for his “volunteer philanthropic work on behalf of Gold Star children” — those who have lost parents to war.

So how exactly did finding \$20 lead to all the recognition?

From a hotel room in Arlington just before Friday’s ceremony, Myles acknowledged feeling uncomfortable about all the attention, especially when he was asked about that February day in 2014.

“I don’t really remember much about it,” he said.

Myles, who was one day shy of his 11th birthday on Friday, was 8 at the time. He recalled being thrilled at first about the possibility of buying something. Then, he and his sister, Marlee, talked about giving it as a tip to the waitress. Once inside the restaurant, however, he changed his mind after seeing a man dressed in a military uniform. It triggered thoughts of his father, Army Sgt. Andy Eckert, who died in Iraq just weeks after Myles was born in 2005.

Myles wrote a note to the servicemember in the restaurant

and enclosed the bill.

“My dad was a soldier. He’s in heaven now,” the note said. “I found this 20 dollars in the parking lot when we got here. We like to pay it forward in my family. It’s your lucky day! Thank you for your service.” The boy signed the note “Myles Eckert, a gold star kid.”

Touched by the gesture, Air Force Lt. Col. Frank Dailey took a picture of the neon-green Post-it sticky note and sent it to his daughter in a text message. She posted it online, and it went viral. Soon, local media got wind of the story. Then, CBS News ran a national story on Myles’ generous act. People from around the world began sending money to the Eckert family.

Tiffany Eckert, Myles’ mother, said the family decided all the money they received should go to charities that support military families. The family originally partnered with a charity called Snowball Express, which received \$1.8 million in a matter of months.

At Friday’s ceremony, the Congressional Medal of Honor Society also recognized the following Citizen Honors awardees:

■ Chris Mintz, of Roseburg, Ore., an Army veteran who was shot five times when he confronted a shooter at Umpqua Community College on Oct. 1, 2015, preventing further loss of life.

■ James Vernon, of Morton, Ill., who subdued an attacker who threatened to kill 20 middle school students and their parents participating in an after-school chess club meeting at the public library on Oct. 13, 2015. While all of the children were unharmed, Vernon was injured in the attack.

■ Retired Air Force Lt. Col. Eileen Hadvavny, of Charleston, S.C., who has had a lifetime of service in support of veterans through her volunteer work with the Red Cross, Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion.

Navy tug lost for 95 years found off Calif.

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A U.S. Navy tugboat that sank nearly a century ago has been found by a team of government researchers off the San Francisco coast, officials announced Wednesday.

The USS Conestoga departed San Francisco Bay for Pearl Harbor in March 1921. But the boat never made it to Hawaii, and her 56-man crew was declared lost. The boat was never found despite a search that covered hundreds of thousands of square miles and was the biggest air-and-sea search of its time.

Officials from the Navy and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced that the tug has been found about 30 miles off the coast, near the Farallon

Islands.

NOAA is in the midst of a multiyear effort to map roughly 300 shipwrecks in the waters off San Francisco. The discovery process began in 2009 when a coastal survey documented a possible shipwreck near the islands. In October 2015, a joint NOAA and Navy mission confirmed the Conestoga’s identity.

The 170-foot steel tugboat, one of the largest seagoing tugboats in the period, was launched in 1903. It originally was built to tow coal barges for the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company.

When the Conestoga failed to arrive in Hawaii, the Navy launched a massive search, finding only a lifeboat with the letter “C” on its bow off Manzanillo, Mexico.

Suicide bombing at Iraqi soccer field kills dozens

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Iraqi officials say the death toll from a suicide bombing at a soccer stadium that was claimed by the Islamic State group has climbed to 41, with another 105 people wounded.

The security and public health officials provided the updated toll Saturday on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief reporters.

The bombing took place Friday during a match in the small stadium in the city of Iskanderiyah, 30 miles from the capital, Baghdad. Saying it had targeted Shiite militiamen, the Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attack via a statement posted online, SITE intelligence group, a monitoring organization, reported.

The bombing came as Iraqi

military spokesman Yahya Rusoul announced that Iraqi troops and Sunni tribal fighters recaptured the town of Kubeisa in western Anbar province from the Islamic State group.

A day earlier, Islamic State fighters were pushed out of a string of villages in Iraq’s northern Nineveh province under cover of heavy coalition airstrikes.

Iraqi ground forces are working to build on recent gains in Anbar and to prepare for an eventual push on the northern city of Mosul, the largest city held by the militants in the “caliphate” they declared across parts of Iraq and Syria. The U.S.-led coalition estimates that the Islamic State group has lost 40 percent of the territory it once held in Iraq and about 20 percent of its territory in Syria.

Four ACC teams advance to Elite Eight

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Marcus Paige scored 21 points and North Carolina continued its offensive prowess, moving to the Elite Eight for the 20th time since 1975 with a 101-86 victory over Indiana on Friday night in the East Regional.

The top-seeded Tar Heels (31-6) will meet sixth-seeded Notre Dame on Sunday, determining one of two guaranteed Atlantic Coast Conference spots in the Final Four. The Fighting Irish beat Wisconsin 61-56 on Friday.

It will be the same case in the Midwest Regional, where top-seeded Virginia will face 10th-seeded Syracuse, meaning at least half the Final Four will be from the ACC. Since the East and Midwest champions play in the Final Four, the conference will have a team play for the national title.

Bryce Johnson had 20 points and 10 rebounds for the Tar Heels, who are in the regional final for the seventh time in coach Roy Williams' 12 years and for the first time since 2012.

Yogi Ferrell had 25 points to lead Indiana (27-8) while Troy Williams added 21.

Kennedy Meeks had 15 points for the Tar Heels while Justin Jackson and Joel Berry II both had 14.

"A lot of people have been saying, 'Carolina's not shooting the ball well outside,'" Berry said. "We have capable shooters outside. We have the shooters, it's just we want to play inside out and not force so many threes. Sometimes you can rely on threes so much, you get away from learning how to score inside."

Paige finished with six threes, tying the North Carolina NCAA Tournament record set by Shammond Williams in 1998. Both did it in nine attempts.

"You can't worry about other teams," Berry said. "We're going to continue playing the way we're playing and it'll take care of ourselves."

North Carolina has scored at least 83 points in each of its three NCAA Tournament games and the Tar Heels kept up their incredible shooting from the second-round win over Providence when they shot 60.7 percent in the second half (17-for-28).

With Paige leading the way, the Tar Heels had another half shooting better than 60 percent. They made 18 of 29 shots (62.1 percent), including 7 of 8 three-point attempts and they missed one of 10 free throws. They weren't near the 60 percent pace in the second half, finishing at 51.6 percent for the game (32-for-62).

The Tar Heels were scoring almost at will, especially inside, where the Hoosiers were no match for Meeks, Johnson and Jackson.

This was the 28th straight game North Carolina held its opponent to under 50 percent shooting. Only Maryland (50.8 percent) hit more than half its shots against the Tar Heels this season.

North Carolina led by as many as 22 points and Indiana was able to get within 10 points three times in the second half.

"They were consistently making shots inside, outside, to start the game," Ferrell said. "Going up against a great team like North Carolina, you can't come out to a slow start. Got to be clicking on all cylinders. We couldn't stop them to start the game."

Paige couldn't miss in the early going, hitting four three-pointers and a jumper before he finally missed. The only thing that slowed him down was fouls. He picked up his second with 9:34 left and spent the rest of the half on the bench.

The Tar Heels led by as many as 16 points in the first half but Indiana scored the final five points of the half to get within 52-41.

The game was played before a sellout crowd of 20,686 at Wells Fargo Center.

Notre Dame 61, Wisconsin 56: At Philadelphia, Demetrius Jackson stripped the ball and scored the go-ahead layup with 14.7 seconds left and the Fighting Irish advanced to the brink of its first Final Four in 38 years by beating the Badgers in the other East Regional semifinal.

Jackson sealed the win with a second steal — credit this win to the Pluck of the Irish — and sank two free throws to send the Irish (24-11) into a regional final for the second straight season.

Notre Dame lost to Kentucky a year ago. This year, the Irish will get a shot at top-seeded North Carolina on Sunday.

"Maybe there's some destiny involved in this thing," coach Mike Brey said.

Both of these teams needed last-second game-winning shots in the second round to advance to the Sweet 16.

After a plodding 30 minutes, the dramatics Friday night came right on time.

With a third straight Final Four berth at stake, Vitto Brown's three-pointer with 26 seconds left put the Badgers (22-13) up 56-53. But the winning formula that helped the Badgers upset undefeated Kentucky a year ago was nowhere to be found in the final 2 minutes. A season of upheaval that included longtime coach Bo Ryan's retirement in December ended with a dud of a performance in Philadelphia.

Ethan Happ led the Badgers with 14 points and 12 boards. Wisconsin star Nigel Hayes was a non-factor, scoring 11 points on just 4-for-12 shooting.

"I didn't think I did a good enough job finishing around the rim," Hayes said.

V.J. Beachem scored 19 points, Zach Auguste had 13 points and 12 rebounds and Jackson scored 16 points and the Irish have their first Final Four since 1978 in sight.

With Hayes slumping, Wisconsin let the Irish hang around and make a run even with the kind of gory shooting numbers that would have had them blown out against a Villanova or Kansas.

Yet the Irish tied it at 34 on Jackson's runner and Auguste had a monster block from behind on Hayes that sparked some life into a stagnant game. Hayes snapped the tie with a three the next time down and a snoozer suddenly felt like March Madness. Hayes had missed 20 straight three-pointers.

Zak Showalter flew out of nowhere and slammed home a miss that put the Badgers up 39-38.

The Badgers needed more of the same — but were doomed by off-kilter three-point shooting (6-for-20) and 17 turnovers.

"We never quite got to where we needed to get taking care of the ball all year," coach Greg Gard said. "And part of it is our youth. Part of it is things we've still got to mature through and grow."

Wisconsin held a 23-19 lead at halftime and it was the lowest scoring first half of the season for the Fighting Irish.

But 10 points in the final 46 seconds pushed the Fighting Irish into the Elite Eight.

"It's been a very surreal, excruciating year in some regards, exhilarating in others," Gard said. "It's also my job now as the steward of this program to help them navigate through this, learn from this ... and help our other guys take this and turn the page eventually."

Midwest Regional

Virginia 84, Iowa State 71: At Chicago, Anthony Gill finished with a season-high 23 points, and Mike Tobey came off the bench to score 18, leading the top-seeded Cavaliers to a victory over the Cyclones in the Midwest Regional semifinals.

They withstood a second-half push by the fourth-seeded Cyclones (23-12) after grabbing a big lead in the early going and advanced to their first regional final since 1995.

Virginia (29-7) will face Syracuse — a 63-60 winner over Gonzaga — on Sunday. A win would send the Cavaliers to their first Final Four since 1984 and give both Virginia coach Tony Bennett something in common with his father, Dick, who Dick coached Wisconsin to one in 2000.

"I feel like we've just gotten better and better," ACC Player of the Year Malcolm Brogdon said. "We've battled through our ups and downs, and it's a huge accomplishment."

Georges Niang had another big game for Iowa State, finishing with 30 points after scoring 28 against both Iona and Arkansas-Little Rock in the first two rounds, but he also committed four fouls.

For the Cyclones, an up-and-down first season under coach Steve Prohm ended on a disappointing note. With a chance to go farther than they ever did under predecessor Fred Hoiberg, they never could recover from a flat start in the arena where "The Mayor" now coaches the Chicago Bulls despite a rather fast tempo that was more to their liking.

"We have a lot to hold our heads high for," forward Jameel McKay said. "But right now, it's obvious we're going to be down."

Iowa State got outscored 52-36 in the paint, with Gill finishing two points shy of a career high and Tobey missing his personal best by one. Gill had eight rebounds while Tobey grabbed seven.

Those two were big reasons why the Cavaliers shot just over 56 percent and came away with the win even despite a quiet game from Brogdon. He had 12 points and five assists.

"I thought the pace of play wasn't a big deal either way," Prohm said. "When you really look and break it down, we turned it over a little bit too much (12 times) and they shot 56 percent from the field. In tournament play, we can't give up that many."

Syracuse 63, Gonzaga 60: At Chicago, Michael Gbinije made a go-ahead layup with 22 seconds left, and the Orange advanced to their 10th Elite Eight under head coach Jim Boeheim with a victory over the Bulldogs in the other Midwest Regional semifinal.

Tyler Lydon sealed the win with a block on Josh Perkins' runner in the final seconds. Lydon then grabbed the ball and

made two foul shots before Domantas Sabonis' desperate fling was well off at the buzzer.

"These guys have fought all year, and every game we've been behind, we've been in some tough situations, and they've battled through them all year," Boeheim said.

Next up is an all-ACC matchup with Virginia on Sunday for a spot in the Final Four. The Orange lost 73-65 to the Cavaliers on Jan. 24, but that was a long time ago.

Syracuse's rocky season included a nine-game suspension for Boeheim as part of an NCAA investigation that found a history of improper benefits and academic misconduct stretching back years. Then the Orange dropped five of six down the stretch, putting their spot in the NCAA Tournament in jeopardy.

So when 10th-seeded Syracuse trailed Gonzaga 57-48 late in the second half, the Orange were just fine. They turned to their aggressive full-court pressure to shut down the Bulldogs and storm into their first regional final since 2013.

"We just love each other, love the game so I think that's what's carrying us," Lydon said.

Gbinije scored 20 points and Trevor Cooney had 15 for Syracuse (22-13), which shot 36.1 percent from the field, but forced 17 Gonzaga turnovers. Tyler Roberson added nine points and 12 rebounds.

"We knew we deserved to be here and we're showing it," Roberson said, "so we just wanna keep it going."

Kyle Wiltjer had 23 points for No. 11 Gonzaga (28-8), and Sabonis finished with 19 points, 17 rebounds and five blocked shots. The rest of the Bulldogs accounted for just 18 points.

"Too many turnovers, and then just those darned offensive rebounds there at the end," coach Mark Few said.

Sabonis' rebound basket gave the Bulldogs a nine-point lead with 6:24 to play, but it was their last field goal of the night. Roberson's foul shot got Syracuse within one before Gonzaga gave it right back with a 10-second violation. Lydon also had a key block on Sabonis to help keep it a one-point game.

Gbinije drove inside in the final 30 seconds and missed his first attempt before grabbing the rebound and putting it in for a 61-60 lead. Cooney then had a hustle steal on the other end, but stepped out of bounds in a close call that had fans looking for TV monitors all over the arena to see if they agreed.

"It was important that we made a stop at the end because after looking at that picture after the game, it looked like he was not out of bounds, so that would have been a tough way to lose," Boeheim said. "But I don't know if they could see that picture or not. I don't know what happened."

With the crowd standing, Perkins drove into the lane and Lydon stepped up for the block before grabbing the ball and getting fouled with 1.6 seconds left. The freshman forward swatted six shots in all.

"I thought I had a good look at it. But he blocked it," Perkins said. "Taller, longer arms. If the opportunity comes, I'm shooting again. Just credit to him."



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Guatemala blanks US in qualifier

Associated Press

With a 2-0 loss at Guatemala, the United States forced itself into what basically amounts to a must-win situation when the teams meet again Tuesday night in Columbus, Ohio.

American coach Jurgen Klinsmann made some puzzling lineup choices and the team's defense self-destructed Friday night in Guatemala City.

"I think it was a lack of focus, concentration, and wrong decisions," Klinsmann said. "We have to take responsibility for it, every one of us — coaches, players — and move on and get it done on Tuesday."

Edgar Castillo's poor backpass set up corner kicks that led to Rafael Morales' goal in the seventh minute. A goal kick by Paulo Motta went most of the length of the field in the 15th, and 36-year-old Carlos Ruiz ran onto the ball, came in alone on goalkeeper Tim Howard and doubled the lead.

"Sloppy," Howard said. "It's almost something like you can't account for."

Seeking their eighth straight World Cup berth, the Americans had been unbeaten in 21 games against Guatemala since January 1988 and had never lost to Los Chapines in World Cup qualifying.

"Maybe it was a lack of focus, but these places are very difficult to come play at," defender Omar Gonzalez said.

Trinidad and Tobago (2-1) leads Group C with seven points after rallying for a 3-2 win at St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Guatemala (2-0-1) is one point back. The U.S. (1-1-1) has four points and St. Vincent (0-3) is last.

In September, the Americans play at St. Vincent and host Trinidad to complete the regional semifinals. The top two teams advance to the six-nation regional finals.

"We always said that World Cup qualifying is a long road, a tricky road, a difficult road," Klinsmann said.

Klinsmann already was criticized fol-

lowing his team's semifinal elimination in last year's CONCACAF Gold Cup and a loss to Mexico in the Confederations Cup playoff.

He started Gonzalez and Michael Orozco in central defense after John Brooks returned to Germany on Friday because of a bruised left knee and defender Matt Besler sustained a concussion in training Thursday. Fabian Johnson, a midfielder and defender who has a groin injury, didn't dress; midfielder Jermaine Jones is suspended; and Jozy Altidore, the top American forward, was limited to entering in the 66th minute as he recovers from yet another hamstring injury.

Howard started for the U.S. at the last two World Cups, but lost his starting job at Everton and was appearing in his first match since Jan. 24.

Geoff Cameron started at right back rather in the more central role he usually plays for Stoke; DeAndre Yedlin started in midfield rather than right back, his position with Sunderland; and Mix Diskerud was in a defensive midfield role, which he doesn't play for New York City.

Cameron switched to the center and Yedlin moved to right back when Gyasi Zardes entered in the 59th.

Castillo, making his first national team appearance in two years, made a wide backpass that Howard couldn't get to and rolled over the end line, leading to the first goal. Guatemala's first corner kick was chested over the line by Orozco, leading to a second. Morales jumped over Mix Diskerud, who appeared to slip, to meet Jean Marquez's corner and Morales nodded the ball off Diskerud and to the left of a diving Howard, just inside the post.

Klinsmann said a defender was supposed to be on the line.

"We write everything on the white board. It's in the locker room," Klinsmann said. "It shouldn't happen."

Ruiz scored his 60th international goal when Motta's goal kick went the length

of the field, with Michael Bradley deciding not to head it. Ruiz burst past three Americans, ran onto the ball and slotted it under Howard from just inside the penalty area.

"A sequence of mistakes," Klinsmann said, "from Michael not heading the ball to the center backs thinking that Michael has it."

Motta blocked Bedoya's shot in the 23rd minute, used his right leg to stop Dempsey's 8-yard shot following a pass from Yedlin in the 52nd minute, then slid to stop Bedoya's effort with his chest and had a kick save on Altidore in the 82nd.

Morales' header off a corner kick glanced off Dempsey and the crossbar in the 71st.

Asked what has to get better Tuesday, Bradley said simply: "Everything."

Notes: The U.S. under-23 team tied 1-1 at Colombia in the first leg of its Olympic qualifying playoff. ... In the other Group C match, Trinidad and Tobago (2-0-1) rallied for a 3-2 win at St. Vincent and the Grenadines (0-3) as Kenwyne Jones scored in the 58th and Levi Garcia got goals in the 71st and 82nd. Myron Samuel converted a penalty kick for the hosts in the 45th and Shandel Samuel scored in the 77th. ... In Group B, Panama (1-1-1) tied 0-0 at (0-2-1) Haiti and Costa Rica (2-0-1) drew 1-1 at Jamaica (1-1-1). Je-Vaughn Watson put the hosts ahead in the 16th, but Johnny Acosta tied the score in the 68th. ... In Group A, Nelson Bonilla's 88th-minute goal gave host El Salvador a 2-2 tie against Honduras. Alberth Ellis scored in the 19th minute and Antony Lozano in the 59th for the Catrachos (0-2-1). Pablo Punyed scored in first-half stoppage time for El Salvador (0-1-2). Mexico (3-0) won 3-0 at Canada (1-1-1) on goals by Javier Hernandez, Hirving Lozano and Jesus Corona.

Thompson, Curry lead Warriors

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Klay Thompson scored 40 points and Stephen Curry added 33 to help the Golden State Warriors become the second team to post back-to-back 65-win seasons with a 128-120 victory over the Dallas Mavericks on Friday night.

Draymond Green added 19 as the Warriors won their 52nd straight regular-season home game and improve their record to 65-7 following a 67-win season a year ago. The only other team to win at least 65 games in consecutive seasons was Chicago in 1995-96 and 1996-97.

Golden State hit 21 three-pointers to give them a record 938 on the season, breaking the mark of 933 set by Houston last season. Dallas hit 18 threes as the teams combined for a record 39 on the night.

Wesley Matthews scored 26 points and J.J. Barea added 21 for the short-handed Mavericks, who were without three usual starters.

Spurs 110, Grizzlies 104: LaMarcus Aldridge had 32 points and 12 rebounds and San Antonio beat similarly short-handed Memphis to match the best home start in league history with its 37th victory in a row.

San Antonio's streak tied the season-opening mark set by the Chicago Bulls in 1995-96 during their record 72-victory season. The Spurs have won 46 consecutive regular-season games at home, dating to March 2015.

Timberwolves 132, Wizards 129 (2OT): Karl-Anthony Towns had 27 points and 10 rebounds and visiting Minnesota dealt a blow to Washington's playoff hopes.

The 10th-place Wizards fell 3½ games behind Detroit for the Eastern Conference's eighth and final playoff spot.

John Wall had 22 points and a season-high tying 16 assists, and Marcin Gortat had 19 points and 14 rebounds for Washington. But Gortat missed a pair of free throws with a chance to take the lead late in the second overtime.

Rockets 112, Raptors 109: James Harden had his third triple-double this season with 32 points, 13 assists and 11 rebounds as Houston beat visiting Toronto to snap a three-game skid.

It's Toronto's second straight loss overall and its ninth loss in a row in Houston, where the Raptors haven't won since 2007.

Pistons 112, Hornets 105: Andre Drummond had 18 points and 14 rebounds and Detroit overwhelmed visiting Charlotte with its highest-scoring first half of the season en route to a win.

Detroit led 72-56 after two quarters and won its fifth straight game, taking a two-game lead over Chicago for the eighth and final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference.

Heat 108, Magic 97: Hassan Whiteside scored 26 points, grabbed 12 rebounds and blocked five shots to lead host Miami past Orlando.

Nuggets 116, Lakers 105: D.J. Augustin scored 20 points and Jusuf Nurkic added a career-high 18 in Denver's victory over host Los Angeles.

Hawks 101, Bucks 90: Jeff Teague scored 12 of his 18 points in the fourth quarter and Atlanta overcame poor three-point shooting to beat visiting Milwaukee.

Kings 116, Suns 94: DeMarcus Cousins had 29 points and 11 rebounds and host Sacramento beat Phoenix.

Capitals eye Presidents' Trophy

Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. — The Washington Capitals got a missing piece back and it helped them move within grasping distance of the Presidents' Trophy — and the top seed when the playoffs start next month.

Defenseman John Carlson scored at 2:17 of overtime in his return to the lineup, Braden Holtby made 22 saves and the Capitals all but clinched the NHL's best record in the regular season with a 1-0 victory over the New Jersey Devils on Friday night.

"He looked a lot more like he did the first stint of the year," Holtby said after Carlson played for the first time since Feb. 24, his second injury stint this season. "When he came back (earlier) you could tell there was something still going on. It's a good sign for us. He looks like he's moving better, not favoring a leg at all."

The win gave Washington 111 points. The Capitals can clinch their first Presidents' Trophy since 2009-10 and the No. 1 seed for the playoffs with a point against the Blues on Saturday or Dallas losing earlier in the day.

On the winner, Carlson took a pass from Jason Chimera and ripped a shot from the right circle that beat Scott Wedgewood.

"It was a quick play. I saw him walk down the wall and I had my eye on him and I tried to follow the pass," said

Wedgewood, whose shutout streak was stopped at 159 minutes, 34 seconds. "He put it in a good spot. Take nothing away from him but it would have been nice to keep them off the board for a shootout opportunity."

Wedgewood, who shut out Pittsburgh on Thursday night, has given up two goals in three NHL starts. He stopped 25 shots Friday.

Chimera took a pass from Marcus Johansson on the winning play, circled the Devils' net and found Carlson in the circle for his seventh goal of the season.

Carlson sensed that the three Devils on the ice were very tired and he considered not shooting the puck right away to wear them down more, then changed his mind.

"When you score, the net seems a little bit bigger," said Carlson, who was sidelined 13 games this time. "You feel a little bit better about your game. Maybe it gives you a little bit of pep in your step and that wouldn't hurt me right now."

Blues 4, Canucks 0: Brian Elliott made 15 saves for his third straight shutout and host St. Louis beat Vancouver to clinch a playoff spot and tie Dallas for the Central Division lead.

Robby Fabbri had a goal and an assist, Kyle Brodziak, Fabbri, Carl Gunnarsson and Joel Edmundson also scored, and Paul Stastny had two assists.

Elliott hasn't allowed a goal since returning from a lower-body injury March

19.

The Canucks have a seven-game winless streak at 0-6-1, their longest streak since January and February in 2014. They have been shut out in four of their last five games.

Lightning 7, Islanders 4: Tyler Johnson and Jason Garrison scored 23 seconds apart midway through the third period as host Tampa Bay beat New York.

Tampa Bay defenseman Anton Stralman left in the first with a non-displaced fracture of the left fibula after getting checked by Anders Lee. Stralman will miss the rest of the regular season, but coach Jon Cooper didn't rule out a return at some point in the playoffs.

Johnson had a go-ahead rebound goal at 10:09 before Garrison stopped a 26-game goal drought and put the Lightning up 6-4. Garrison also had two assists after going 18 games without a point.

Tampa Bay also got goals from Nikita Kucherov, Vladislav Namestnikov, Steven Stamkos, Andrej Sustr and Victor Hedman, who had an empty-netter. The Lightning host Florida on Saturday night with first place in the Atlantic Division at stake. Both teams have 91 points.

Brock Nelson, Shane Prince, Johnny Boychuk and Nikolaj Kulemin scored for the Islanders. They remain a point behind third-place Pittsburgh in the Metropolitan Division.