

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## Families' Turkey exit permanent?

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN  
*Stars and Stripes*

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — The first military families ordered to leave Turkey because of deepening security concerns in the region arrived in Germany on Wednesday afternoon and were to continue on to the States. Their departure from Turkey will most likely be permanent.

"It was a pretty full plane of folks," said Kris Gault, a spokeswoman for U.S. Air Forces in Europe–Air Forces Africa. The family members on the first flight into Ramstein Air Base have all opted to return to the States, Gault said, and were expected to continue their journey later Wednesday evening.

Families were being transported from Turkey on C-17 military aircraft and commercial planes operated by Air

Mobility Command's Patriot Express charter flights.

"Families are being briefed on all their options," Julie Weckerlein, a spokeswoman for U.S. European Command, said.

Those options include returning to one's home of record in the States or moving to a follow-on assignment if there is one, she said. Families with school-age children will also likely be able to stay at Ramstein temporarily so their kids can finish out the school year, Air Force officials at Ramstein said.

In all scenarios, the military is paying expenses such as transportation and lodging for those families.

Upon arriving at their destination, families will be greeted by a team that will address housing, medical, financial and educational needs, Weckerlein said.

The mandatory departure,

ordered Tuesday by the State and Defense departments, affects about 670 dependents of military and civilian personnel at Incirlik and those at smaller bases in Izmir and Mugla. The families of U.S. diplomats in the same areas are also ordered to depart.

No specific threat triggered the dramatic move to pull most dependents out of Turkey, the Pentagon said Tuesday.

"This was a decision made out of an abundance of caution, given the overall picture, the security threats that ... we looked at in the region," Defense Department spokesman Peter Cook said.

Weckerlein added that "they've been considering this for some time."

"While realizing how disruptive this is for our families," she said, "the top priority is their safety, security and well-being."

## AF wife hurt in Brussels attacks dies

BY TARA COPP  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The wife of an Air Force officer who was at Brussels Airport during the recent terrorist attacks there died as a result of her injuries, according to news reports.

Gail Minglana Martinez, 41, was the wife of Air Force Lt. Col. Kato Martinez.

The Martinez family was at the airport March 22 when terrorists affiliated with the Islamic State group detonated suitcase bombs near the security screening and check-in area.

Martinez, one of four Americans killed in the Brussels attacks, was from Corpus Christi, Texas.

Her husband and four children remain hospitalized.

Air Force officials declined to confirm reports of her death, citing privacy concerns.

On tributes posted to the social media websites Twitter and Facebook, family members grieved the loss of Martinez, whom they remembered as "fearless."

"Our family is still in shock over the loss of our family member Gail," her cousin Edwina Minglana posted to Twitter. "#Brussels."

In describing how Gail Minglana Martinez lived out her life, Edwina Minglana wrote: "Nothing was a barrier. You were the influential leader among all of us cousins."

Martinez had just celebrated her 21st wedding anniversary. Her Facebook page is filled with pictures of her family's travels in Europe during Kato Martinez' assignment to Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum.

## 3 brigades' levels in Europe by '18

BY STEVEN BEARDSLEY  
*Stars and Stripes*

NAPLES, Italy — The U.S. Army will begin rotational deployments of an armored brigade combat team in Europe starting next February, the military announced Wednesday, in a move that will raise the number of American troops on the Continent in response to a more assertive Russia.

Each rotating brigade will bring its own equipment, including scores of tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles, U.S. European Command said in a statement.

Meanwhile, the Army will repair and upgrade its already pre-positioned weapons and equipment and place them at sites in Belgium, the Nether-

lands and Germany.

Both decisions — part of the military's \$3.4 billion request to fund European operations in the coming fiscal year — are designed to win approval from both west and east European nations at odds over how best to respond to the threat from Russia. Congress has yet to approve the funding request.

While the Baltic nations, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria have asked for a more permanent stationing of American or NATO troops in their region, western European countries — Germany in particular — have opposed it. The continuous presence of an armored brigade, to be rotated every nine months, skirts the issue of permanence.

"This is a big step in en-

hancing the Army's rotational presence and increasing their combat equipment in Europe," EUCOM commander Gen. Philip Breedlove said in a statement. "This army implementation plan continues to demonstrate our strong and balanced approach to reassuring our NATO allies and partners in the wake of an aggressive Russia in eastern Europe and elsewhere."

The military has not said where the rotational brigade will be stationed, a question on the agenda of this summer's NATO summit in Warsaw, Poland. The rotational brigade will bring Army manpower and equipment levels in Europe to three full brigades by the end of 2017.

# Parents of Marine in Osprey crash suing

Associated Press

HONOLULU — The parents of a Marine killed in the crash of an MV-22 Osprey in Hawaii last year have sued the aircraft's manufacturers and unnamed government agencies.

The lawsuit accuses Boeing Corp., Bell Helicopter Textron Inc. and Eaton Aerospace of negligence and recklessness.

The airplane-and-helicopter hybrid aircraft crashed at a military base outside Honolulu with 21 Marines and a Navy corpsman on board. Two Marines were killed, including Lance Cpl. Matthew Determan, 21, of Ahwatukee, Ariz.

His parents, Michael and Charlesa Determan, filed the lawsuit in federal court in Honolulu on Monday. Other defendants include unnamed government agencies and individuals the plaintiffs say they're unable to identify until attorneys are able to examine documents and interview witnesses.

Boeing and Bell Helicopter

spokesmen referred requests for comment to the Marine Corps.

Marine Corps spokeswoman Capt. Sarah Burns said in a statement the Marines are committed to ensuring their aircraft are safe and that air crew who fly them are thoroughly trained. She said the Marines diligently investigate accidents.

In November, a Marine Corps investigation found the MV-22 aircraft flew in sandy or dusty conditions for an extended period before its engine stalled. The stalled left engine then put the Osprey in an unavoidable freefall.

The probe said the pilots didn't violate any regulations or flight standards, but investigators found a proper risk assessment should have prompted the pilots to choose a different flight path or landing site to avoid dust or sand.

Investigators have recommended changes to help pilots make better decisions in similar situations.

# Some post-9/11 vets being denied VA aid

BY HEATH DRUZIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs is wrongfully denying services to roughly 125,000 post-9/11 veterans with other than honorable discharges, according to a joint study released Wednesday by two veterans advocacy groups and Harvard Law School.

Some veterans are missing out on benefits such as health care, housing help for the homeless and disability services, in part, because the VA's own rules are in contravention of the original GI Bill of Rights passed by Congress in 1944, according to the study. That represents roughly 6.5 percent of post-9/11 veterans, including more than 33,000 who served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Veterans who have served since 9/11 are being excluded from the VA at a higher rate than any other generation of veterans," said Dana Montalto, the study's author and a Liman Fellow with the Harvard Law School's Veterans Legal Clinic. "They're being denied very

basic services."

There has long been confusion over the status of so-called "bad paper" veterans — servicemembers who received less than honorable discharges. The vast majority have discharge characterizations less severe than "dishonorable" or "bad conduct," both of which can be issued only through court-martial. There also has been recent concern among advocates and lawmakers that troops with mental health disorders are being kicked out of the military with bad paper.

According to the report, congressionally passed rules stipulate that only those veterans whose conduct would have led to a dishonorable discharge in a court-martial should be denied VA services. But the VA's own internal rules contradict that and lead it to deny services to the vast majority of post-9/11 veterans with other than honorable discharges, including disabled veterans.

The report was commissioned by the National Veterans Legal Services Program and Swords to Plowshares.

# Ex-airman sentenced to 25 years for child porn

BY KENT HARRIS

Stars and Stripes

AVIANO AIR BASE, Italy — A former Aviano-based airman is serving a 25-year sentence for viewing, possessing and producing child pornography after more than 70,000 digital images and videos were found in his home in Italy.

Christopher W. Cluff, a former master sergeant who was reduced in rank to E-1 as part of his sentence and given a bad-conduct discharge, pleaded guilty to four specifications of viewing and possessing child pornography in a February court-martial. He pleaded not guilty to one specification of

producing child pornography, but the military judge, Col. Shelly Schools, found him guilty on all charges. He also had to forfeit all pay and allowances. He is serving his sentence in Leavenworth, Kan.

"This is the worst child pornography case I have ever encountered," James Parsons, a defense computer forensic laboratory examiner, said in an Air Force news release.

Capt. Brian Hanley, one of the prosecutors, said Wednesday that the conviction came as a result of "hundreds of hours" of work by members of the 31st Fighter Wing's legal team and contributions from various

American and Italian agencies.

Cluff's case started with a tip from the FBI and Europol to the Italian postal police that pointed to an IP address in Italy associated with child pornography.

Italian authorities matched the address to Cluff's home in Sacile, searched the residence and arrested him on April 16, 2015.

The U.S. requested and was granted jurisdiction on July 15. Cluff spent most of his time until the court-martial at the U.S. military's holding facility in Sembach, Germany.

Among the digital images and videos discovered in Cluff's

home were stored videos that came from chat rooms or other online sites featuring minors engaged in "sexually explicit conduct" Cluff was found to have fostered.

There was no evidence introduced that he was physically present at locations where the acts took place or that he had engaged in similar activity before he arrived at Aviano. The charges date to Cluff's arrival in Italy in December 2013.

During the trial, prosecutors offered 3,781 images and 138 video files of child pornography for the military judge's consideration, according to the news release.

# Korean transitioning to Twins

Associated Press

FORT MYERS, Fla. — Byung Ho Park sat at his locker in the Minnesota Twins' spring training clubhouse, sipping a cup of iced coffee, oiling a first baseman's glove and interacting with teammates.

He's relaxed. There's no hint of anxiety, which would be natural considering the challenge he faces.

Instead, the Korean slugger is excited about making the transition from his native homeland to the major leagues. His goal is to make noise with his bat while quietly going about his business off the field and getting acclimated to life more than 7,500 miles from Seoul. He likes the warm Florida weather that greeted him at his first big league camp this spring. He hasn't given much thought to how cold it can get in Minnesota in the middle of winter, though that reality is coming.

The Twins hired a full-time translator to help the two-time Korean Baseball Organization MVP deal with a language barrier that Park is diligently working to overcome. The 29-year-old's English is far from perfect — but he is making strides communicating with teammates, coaches and manager Paul Molitor and felt comfortable enough to conduct his first interview in English without translator J.D. Kim. Hand gestures had to be used at times to communicate with Park, who sometimes had to be paraphrased but was able to express himself well with short responses.

"I'm very excited," Park told The Associated Press, a smile spread-

ing across his face. "Everybody's nice. Teammates, coaches make time to help me."

The infielder/designated hitter is not a typical rookie.

Park turns 30 on July 10 and comes to the majors after spending nine seasons in the KBO, most of the past five with the Nexen Heroes.

He hit 105 home runs in his final two years, including a career-best 53 with a league-record 146 RBIs in 2015. He also posted personal highs in games (140), at bats (528), runs (129), hits (181), doubles (35), batting average (.343) and slugging percentage (.714).

Minnesota, hoping to add some power to the middle of the lineup, envisions Park as a DH and backup first baseman behind Joe Mauer. The Twins paid Nexen \$12.83 million for negotiating rights and signed the slugger to a four-year, \$12 million contract in December.

"He's fit in really well. He's had a good camp," Molitor said. "We're seeing a guy who's been around. He's played a lot of baseball, and the confidence he had as a Korean player, we've seen it begin to transfer over here. Every day is kind of a learning experience for him right now."

On and off the field.

Park's wife, Ji Yoon Yi, and son, Seung Ri Park, will move to the U.S. after the regular season begins. But outside of acknowledging those plans, the slugger — a national hero and instantly recognizable back home in South Korea — is reluctant to talk much about what he likes to do when he leaves the ball park.

"My family will come to Minnesota,"

Park began before politely cutting the answer short. "I want privacy. Understand? ... Sorry."

Park is joining the majors a year after former Nexen teammate Jung Ho Kang made his big league debut for the Pittsburgh Pirates, hitting .287 with 15 homers and 58 RBIs. While the two of them remain close, Park said he hasn't relied on Kang — still recovering from a knee injury suffered while turning a double play against the Chicago Cubs last September — to be a mentor.

His friend did offer one piece of advice that the rookie is taking to heart.

"He said to me: 'Hey, baseball is baseball,'" Park said. "He said just try your best, you will be fine."

So far, so good.

Park hit a grand slam against the Tampa Bay Rays for his first spring training homer and through Monday was batting .283 with three home runs and 13 RBIs — second on the team behind Trevor Plouffe's four homers and 14 RBIs.

"I think he's one of those thinkers in terms of he likes to sit on pitches. I think he tries to look for patterns and things he can try to capitalize on," Molitor said. "But he's handled himself, and his at-bats, really well."

The Twins also like what they've seen of Park as a first baseman. Although, he won three Gold Gloves at the position in the KBO, Molitor said he's been receptive to coaching that could help him become an even better fielder.

"Most things that have been said have been put into practice rather quickly, which is a good sign."

# American men miss out on Rio

Associated Press

FRISCO, Texas — The United States failed to qualify for consecutive Olympic men's soccer tournaments for the first time in a half century, a collapse players found hard to address or analyze.

Roger Martinez scored twice, Americans Luis Gil and Matt Miazga were ejected and Colombia's under-23 team defeated the U.S. 2-1 Tuesday night to earn the last berth in the Rio de Janeiro Games with a 3-2 aggregate win in the two-leg, total-goals series.

Following a nightmare in Nashville four years ago, when the Americans were eliminated by El Salvador, they had a fit in Frisco.

"You dream about it since you were a little kid," forward Jordan Morris said, "so, it's a tough one to swallow."

Coach Andi Herzog said it wasn't the right time for him to dissect the Americans' poor performance.

"I'm real emotional, and I don't want to say anything without coming down a bit," Herzog said. "I'm really disappointed."

Martinez redirected Andres Roa's off-target shot past goalkeeper Ethan Horvath in the 30th minute. An own goal by Delver Machado tied the score in the 59th, with the defender heading the ball over his own keeper while trying to clear Morris' pass from Emerson Hyndman.

Martinez put the Colombians back ahead in the 64th minute, eluding Tim Parker at the 6-yard box and beating Horvath. At that point, because the first tiebreaker is away goals, the Americans needed to score twice.

"We give up such a simple, stupid goal," Herzog said.

The U.S. then showed its frustration. Gil, who scored in the first leg, entered in the 67th minute and was given a yellow card by Uzbek referee Ravshan Irmatov in the 77th for fouling Wilmer Barrios near midfield. Gil dissented and was shown a red.

Miazga received a red in the 90th minute for fouling Christian Borga just outside the penalty area on a clear goal-scoring opportunity.

The U.S. had last failed to qualify for consecutive Olympics from 1960-68. Colombia will make its first appearance since 1992.

U.S. national team coach Jurgen Klinsmann said the 2012 group of under-23 players was set back by its failure to play at the London Olympics and he made qualifying for Brazil a priority, installing top assistant Herzog as under-23 coach.

But the Americans were forced into the playoff by losing to Honduras 2-0 last October in the semifinal round of the regional qualifying in North and Central America and the Caribbean.

Before a crowd of 7,998, the Americans were outshot 11-5, including 6-0 in shots on target, increasing Colombia's advantage to 29-10 and 12-1 over the two legs.

Herzog made two changes to his starting lineup, inserting midfielder Paul Arriola in place of Gil and for Desevio Payne started instead of Eric Miller.

# US back on track in World Cup qualifying

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — American soccer fans fretted for four days: If the United States lost to Guatemala once again, the U.S. would have little chance to qualify for the 2018 World Cup.

Their worries quickly vanished Tuesday night.

Clint Dempsey scored 12 minutes in, Geoff Cameron, Graham Zusi and Jozy Altidore added goals and the U.S. routed Guatemala 4-0 to get back on track.

"I thought we showed a lot of heart," Dempsey said. "We showed a lot of character by dealing with a pressure situation."

Following a dismal 2-0 loss at Guatemala City on Friday night in which Jurgen Klinsmann deployed several players out of their most comfortable positions, the U.S. coach made five lineup changes and shifted two others into their more usual spots. The Americans responded and improved to 27-0-2 at home in qualifying since 2001, including 7-0-2 at Mapfre Stadium.

"Columbus has bailed us out on several occasions," U.S. captain Michael Bradley said.

Cameron doubled the lead in the 35th and Zusi, added to the roster on Sunday,

made it 3-0 just 18 seconds into the second half. Jozy Altidore capped the scoring in the 89th.

"The attitude tonight was outstanding," Klinsmann said. "We were in sync with the wonderful crowd that pushed them from the first second. There was wonderful energy."

Trinidad and Tobago (3-0-1) won 6-0 at home against St. Vincent and the Grenadines and leads Group C with 10 points, three ahead of the U.S. (2-1-1). Guatemala (2-2) has six points, and St. Vincent (0-4) has been eliminated.

Seeking its eighth straight World Cup berth, the U.S. travels to St. Vincent on Sept. 2, then finishes the round four days later against Trinidad at Jacksonville, Fla.

"We showed our pride," Dempsey said. "You've got to do that if you want to make it to the World Cup. You've got to show that you want it, and we showed that we wanted it."

Dempsey scored his 49th international goal, eight behind Landon Donovan's American record, after Cameron looped a pass just inside the center circle to just inside the penalty area. A streaking Gyasi Zardes, flanked by Moises Hernandez and Rafael Morales, used the side of his head to knock the ball down. Dempsey ran onto the ball after two bounces and first-timed a 14-yard right-footed shot

past goalkeeper Paulo Motta.

Dempsey has six goals in 10 games against Guatemala and a U.S.-record 14 in World Cup qualifying, one more than Donovan.

Cameron doubled the lead after Bobby Wood was fouled by Cristian Jimenez, Bradley took the free kick, and Cameron got in front of Carlos Castrillo for an 8-yard header, his fourth international goal.

At the start of the second half, Yedlin played the ball to Zardes, who allowed it to bounce off him. Zusi ran in and got off a quick shot for his fourth U.S. goal, his first since October 2013 in a qualifier at Panama. A giveaway by Rodrigo Saravia of the hometown Columbus Crew led to Dempsey feeding Altidore for his 34th U.S. goal.

Midfielder Christian Pulisic, also added to the roster Sunday, made his national team debut in the 81st minute. At 17 years, 193 days, Pulisic became the youngest American in a qualifier. By appearing in the game, Pulisic became ineligible to play for Croatia, the nation of his grandfather.

"It's exactly what I expected; very, very physical," he said. "It was a good game. It gives me confidence. I'm going to try and stay grounded and keep doing what I'm doing and become the best player I can."



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# Warriors drop Wizards

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Steve Kerr and his do-everything superstar, Stephen Curry, expected Golden State to build on its championship run of last season.

This record, though? No way. And 60 games over .500 at this stage? Yeah, right.

Curry knocked down six more three-pointers to increase his record total on the way to 26 points, and the Warriors beat the Washington Wizards 102-94 on Tuesday night to stay on track for the all-time wins record.

Klay Thompson followed back-to-back 40-point games with 16 as Golden State (67-7) stayed a game ahead of the 1995-96 Chicago Bulls' pace during their 72-10 season. The Warriors matched their win total of last season and must go 6-2 over the final eight games to have the record all to themselves.

Kerr thought "maybe our record would get a little worse" as defending champs.

"I was under the same impression that our record might not be indicative of the progress we might have made over the course of the season. And not to get discouraged if we couldn't match what we did last year knowing that the ultimate goal is to win a championship," Curry said.

"As you go through the season and kind of get lost in the journey, we should be able to accomplish both: be a better team and better our record, which we're on our way to doing. For us to be playing at such a high level for two straight years and have our eyes set on the ultimate goal, it's fun."

Draymond Green had 15 points, 16 rebounds and nine assists to just miss back-

to-back triple-doubles in the Warriors' 54th straight regular-season home win and 36th consecutive this season.

Bradley Beal scored 17 for the Wizards, who lost their fourth straight to Golden State.

Curry, who scored 51 points with a career-high and franchise record-tying 11 threes in the first meeting Feb. 3, shot 9-for-20 overall and 6-for-8 from long range. He added seven rebounds, seven assists and five steals.

**Rockets 106, Cavaliers 100:** James Harden scored 27 points and Houston rallied from a 20-point deficit to beat host Cleveland, which rested LeBron James.

Harden scored 18 points in the fourth quarter and Houston outscored Cleveland 35-16 in the period.

Dwight Howard's free throw with 2:13 left put Houston ahead 95-94. Harden's three-pointer made it 98-94 before Kyrie Irving hit a three-pointer with 1:30 left, making it a one-point game.

Both teams missed shots on their next possession, but Trevor Ariza's three-pointer from the corner with 17 seconds left gave Houston a 101-97 lead.

**Bulls 98, Pacers 96:** Jimmy Butler made a tiebreaking jumper with 3.7 seconds left, and visiting Chicago beat Indiana to snap a four-game losing streak.

Nikola Mirotic scored 28 points as Chicago (37-37) got back to .500 and pulled within two games of Indiana for the eighth and final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference. Mirotic made seven three-pointers, his final one tying it at 96 with 2:19 remaining.

The Pacers missed five shots in the final 2 minutes that would have given them the lead before the Bulls rebounded Pau

Gasol's miss with 20 seconds remaining and got the ball to Butler for his 17-footer from the right wing.

**Pistons 88, Thunder 82:** Marcus Morris scored 24 points, and Detroit took advantage of Kevin Durant's absence in a victory over visiting Oklahoma City.

The Thunder rested Durant and Serge Ibaka, and Oklahoma City was held to only nine points in the third period en route to its lowest-scoring game of the season. The Thunder rallied from a 15-point deficit, closing the gap to just one in the fourth, but Detroit was able to hold on late for another victory in its push for a playoff spot.

**Hornets 100, 76ers 85:** Nicolas Batum had 19 points, 12 rebounds and 12 assists for his second triple-double of the season, leading visiting Charlotte over Philadelphia.

Cody Zeller added 18 points and 11 boards for Charlotte, which set a franchise record for wins in a month with its 13th victory in March.

The Hornets, who entered the game in sixth place in the Eastern Conference, also inched closer to clinching their first playoff spot in two years and just second postseason berth in the last 13 years. Charlotte hasn't won a playoff series, though, since 2002.

**Magic 139, Nets 105:** Aaron Gordon had 20 points and Elfrid Payton had 11 points and 12 assists as the host Magic scored a season high in defeating Brooklyn.

Victor Oladipo and Evan Fournier had their moments and backup center Dewayne Dedmon, playing in place of injured Nikola Vucevic, scored 15 points.

# Valentine, Hield top AP team list

Associated Press

Whenever talk of the best college basketball player this season came up, so did two names: Denzel Valentine of Michigan State and Buddy Hield of Oklahoma.

They were unanimous selections Tuesday to The Associated Press' 2015-16 All-America Team.

Both led their teams to successful seasons and their numbers lifted them above all others.

Valentine, the Big Ten player of the year, averaged 19.4 points, 7.6 rebounds and 7.6 assists, while Hield, the player of the year in the Big 12, averaged 25 points, 5.6 rebounds and 3.0 assists.

"I don't know many guys that have improved in every aspect of the game like he has," Spartans coach Tom Izzo said of the 6-foot-5 Valentine, the school's first All-American since Draymond Green in 2012. His importance to Michigan State showed when he missed four games during the season with a knee injury.

Hield, Oklahoma's first All-American since Blake Griffin in 2009, became a high-light reel staple with his ability to shoot the ball from long range and with defenders right on him. The 6-foot-4 Hield shot 46.4 percent from three-point range.

"He has had a fantastic year and has been very consistent," Sooners coach Lon Kruger said of the Bahamas native who was a third-team selection last season. "He worked hard and has that passion and focus that makes him what he is."

In the age when one-and-dones usually dominate the college basketball landscape, Valentine and Hield were joined on the All-America team by fellow seniors Brice Johnson of North Carolina and Malcolm Brogdon of Virginia. Sophomore Tyler Ulis of Kentucky rounded out the team. The 2013-14 team had four seniors and a freshman.

# Stars skate past Predators

Associated Press

DALLAS — Radek Faksa's first NHL goal at home was a memorable one. It was pretty much business as usual for Jason Spezza.

Faksa and Spezza scored 46 seconds apart in the second period, and the Dallas Stars beat the Nashville Predators 5-2 on Tuesday night.

Dallas won for the fifth time in six games to keep pace with St. Louis for the Western Conference lead. Each team has a 46-22-9 record and 101 points with five games to play. The tiebreaker currently belongs to the Stars, who have 44 regulation and overtime wins compared to 41 for the Blues.

Faksa converted a rebound at 11:03 of the second. It was the rookie's third of the season.

"It's my first home-game goal," Faksa said. "I was patient, and I knew they would come."

Spezza skated in 2 on 1 with another young player, Valeri Nichushkin, kept the puck and beat Pekka Rinne for his 30th goal.

Nashville lost for the second straight night, hurting its chances of catching Chicago for third in the loaded Central Division.

"We made a couple mistakes," Predators coach Peter Laviolette said, "but our effort was for the circumstances or traveling, back-to-back, I thought our guys played real hard."

Jamie Benn scored two goals for Dallas, and Kari Lehtonen made 27 saves. Patrick Sharp and Benn scored into an empty net during the final two minutes.

"Kari made some real good saves for us," coach Lindy Ruff said. "We didn't give up the high quality chances. We stayed pretty tight in our own end. He had to make a couple good saves for us, but we kept the quality of those saves down."

**Blues 3, Avalanche 1:** Brian Elliott made 20 saves and Vladimir Tarasenko scored his 36th goal to power host St. Louis to its fifth straight victory.

Colorado has lost three of four and trails Minnesota by five points in the battle for the last wild card in the Western Conference. Both teams have five games left.

**Wild 4, Blackhawks 1:** Jared Spurgeon, Erik Haula and Nino Niederreiter scored in the third period, and host Minnesota stretched its season-long winning streak to six straight games.

Marian Hossa had the goal for Chicago, the 499th of his career. The Blackhawks played without their two top defensemen, because of an illness for Brent Seabrook and then an ugly first-period match penalty on Duncan Keith for swinging his stick at Charlie Coyle, a potentially costly mistake that could draw a multigame suspension from the NHL.

**Canadiens 4, Red Wings 3:** Max Pacioretty's second goal of the night lifted host Montreal to the victory.

The Canadiens played the spoiler, with the Red Wings remaining just out of the second Eastern Conference wild card and one point back of Boston for third in the Atlantic Division.

**Sharks 4, Canucks 1:** Logan Couture scored three goals for his first career hat trick, and visiting San Jose handed Vancouver its ninth straight loss.

The Sharks, who host the Canucks on Thursday, sit third in the Pacific Division, two points back of Anaheim and three behind Los Angeles.

**Devils 2, Bruins 1:** Reid Boucher scored a tiebreaking power-play goal early in the third period, Keith Kinkaid made 39 saves and host New Jersey kept its faint playoff hopes alive.

**Penguins 5, Sabres 4 (SO):** Sidney Crosby and Phil Kessel beat Chad Johnson in a shootout, and host Pittsburgh inched closer to a 10th straight playoff berth.

The Penguins remained three points clear of the Islanders for third in the Metropolitan Division.

**Islanders 2, Hurricanes 1 (SO):** Kyle Okposo scored the only goal of the shootout and host New York rallied for the win.

**Maple Leafs 5, Panthers 2:** Nazem Kadri scored two of his three goals during second-period power plays, leading Toronto to the road victory.

Michael Grabner and Pierre-Alexandre Parenteau also scored for Toronto, and Jonathan Bernier made 32 saves.

# Valpo, GW roll into NIT final

Associated Press

NEW YORK — George Washington looked right at home in Madison Square Garden, even though the arena was unfamiliar territory.

Tyler Cavanaugh had 20 points and 11 rebounds, and the Colonials advanced to the championship game of the National Invitation Tournament by throttling San Diego State in a 65-46 victory Tuesday night.

Patricio Garino added 13 points for the fourth-seeded Colonials (27-10), who committed only six turnovers. They matched the school record for wins in a season and won in their first visit to the Garden since 2001.

**Valparaiso 72, BYU 70:** At New York, David Skara sank the tiebreaking three-pointer with 20 seconds left and the Crusaders held off the Cougars to reach the championship game.

Skara came off the bench to score a season-high 15 points, none bigger than his jumper that gave the top-seeded Crusaders (30-6) a 71-68 advantage after they had squandered a 16-point cushion.

Alec Peters also had 15 points for the Crusaders.

Kyle Collinworth paced the Cougars (26-11) with 20 points, five rebounds and five assists in his final college game.