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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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DOD: al-Qaida, Taliban cooperating more

The Washington Post

What remains of al-Qaida in Afghanistan is now working more closely with the Taliban, a spokesman for the U.S. led-mission there told reporters Thursday. If true, the renewed cooperation between the two groups marks another chapter in a relationship that has ebbed and flowed since 2001.

According to U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Charles Cleveland, al-Qaida is providing more “capabilities and skills” to the 30,000 strong insurgent group than they have in the past.

Last year, Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of al-Qaida, announced his support for the Taliban’s new head, Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour.

“Since that time, we have seen more interaction. We have seen them working more together,” Cleveland said.

Mansour’s ascension to power was tumultuous, as the insurgent group was rocked when it was discovered that its senior leadership had been hiding the death

of Mullah Omar, the Taliban’s shadowy leader, for more than two years.

Cleveland did not specify what type of skills al-Qaida is providing to the Taliban; in the past, the terror group has provided bomb-makers and suicide bombers to its allies. According to Cleveland, there are roughly 300 al-Qaida fighters still in Afghanistan spread out across a number of provinces such as Kunar, Kandahar and Ghazni.

“Although [al-Qaida] have been significantly diminished, they do have the ability to regenerate very quickly, and they still do have the ability to pose a threat,” Cleveland said.

Al-Qaida in the months before 9/11 had roughly 3,000 fighters loyal to its then-leader, Osama bin Laden. In the 15 years since the terror attacks, the United States has systematically gone after the group and its various global offshoots, killing its leaders with drone strikes and special operations raids.

The United States has roughly 10,000 troops still in Afghanistan providing advice

and assistance to the embattled Afghan security forces. While the United States announced an official end to its combat role there in 2014, U.S. and allied special operations forces often accompany their Afghan counterparts on missions against the Taliban. In addition to the United States’ advisory role, known as Resolute Support, U.S. forces also run a counterterrorism campaign that specifically goes after al-Qaida as well as the Islamic State’s franchise based out of Nangarhar province in the east of the country.

According to Cleveland, there are roughly 1,500 Islamic State fighters in Afghanistan, a number, he believes, that has been whittled down because of U.S. airstrikes. Since January, the U.S. has conducted roughly 120 airstrikes against terrorist targets in Afghanistan, the majority of which were aimed at the Islamic State group. Under current rules of engagement, U.S. aircraft can only strike the Taliban in situations that involve the defense of U.S. forces or if both U.S. and Afghan troops are directly threatened.

Suspected Navy spy faces Article 32 hearing

BY TARA COPP

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Defense attorneys for Navy Lt. Cmdr. Edward Lin, who is accused of spying for China and Taiwan, challenged the case against him, saying the classified information in question is available on the Internet and the interrogation that led to most of the charges against him was unlawfully conducted.

Lin, 39, was arrested Sept. 11 in a Hawaii airport by Naval Criminal Investigative Service agents after a two-month investigation. According to the charges, an undercover Mandarin-speaking FBI informant met five times with Lin and received what federal prosecutors allege was classi-

fied information intended to aid a foreign government. Lin, who is married, also faced separate charges of adultery and soliciting sex from a prostitute.

An 80-minute audio recording of the unclassified portions of Lin’s Article 32 hearing, which took place April 8, was shared Thursday afternoon with reporters. The hearing was convened to determine whether the Navy would recommend some or all of the charges against Lin be referred to a full court-martial, a lesser administrative punishment or possibly dismissed.

Recommendations from the hearing were provided to the commander of U.S. Fleet Forces, Adm. Philip S. Davidson, on April 26, said Lt. Cmdr. Timothy Hawkins, a Navy spokes-

man. He did not say Thursday what the recommendations were.

Prosecutors presented two binders of information, one classified and one unclassified, containing 45 pieces of evidence, including transcripts of an 11-hour interrogation at the Honolulu airport that they said supported charges against Lin.

“Given the magnitude” of the charges against Lin, Navy Judge Advocate General Cmdr. Johnathan Stephens said the only appropriate recommendation “is general court-martial.”

Lin’s defense attorney said most of the evidence from the interrogation, during which Lin admitted to many of the charges brought against him in the Article 32 hearing, should not be allowed because the

NCIS agents did not read Lin his rights during the questioning at the airport.

The agents “never verbally informed [Lin] of his right to counsel,” said Larry Youngner, Lin’s defense attorney.

Youngner also said the information that Lin is charged with providing was available through open sources.

“Just what was classified, specifically?” he challenged during the hearing.

That the information is available on the Internet does not declassify it, Stephens countered. Declassifying the information would be based on “whether the U.S. government made it public — not whether anyone else made it public,” he said.

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Feds eyeing NC colleges' funding over LGBT law

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — North Carolina's prized public universities could be the biggest losers as state leaders defend a new law limiting the rights of LGBT people.

The 17-university system, which includes the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and North Carolina State University as well several historically black colleges, risks losing more than \$1.4 billion in federal funds if the Republicans who run the Legislature don't reverse the law. The U.S. Justice Department wants an answer by the end of business on Monday.

That deadline was set in letters this week to University of North Carolina leaders, Gov. Pat McCrory and the state's public safety agency, warning

that the law violates civil rights protections against sexual discrimination in education and employment.

If the DOJ follows through on its enforcement threat, tens of thousands of students also could lose about \$800 million in federally backed loans that cannot be borrowed to attend institutions that violate Title IX of the federal Civil Rights Act, UNC spokeswoman Joni Worthington said Thursday.

The North Carolina law requires transgender people to use bathrooms and locker rooms conforming with their birth certificates, rather than their gender identities, and leaves LGBT people out of a statewide anti-discrimination code that also bars local governments from providing additional protections.

Ruling-party congress begins in North Korea

BY KIM GAMEL

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea convened its first ruling-party congress in 36 years behind closed doors Friday while state-run media hailed leader Kim Jong Un for his nuclear achievements.

The 7th Workers' Party Congress, which is expected to last through the weekend, is a chance for Kim, the relatively young leader, to showcase his leadership and to bolster a personality cult that has kept his family dynasty in power for nearly seven decades.

Some 3,000 party officials and observers reportedly gathered in Pyongyang's April 25 House of Culture, which was draped with red party banners and portraits of the country's two previous leaders: Kim's father and grandfather.

But don't expect gavel-to-gavel live coverage. The Asso-

ciated Press reported that more than 100 foreign journalists who went to Pyongyang for the event were not allowed inside. Instead, they were bused to a convention center, where they waited outside for more than an hour before being taken back to their hotels.

The congress — the first since 1980, when Kim's grandfather and the country's founder, Kim Il Sung, was in charge — is happening against a backdrop of international tensions that have risen since the North staged its fourth nuclear test followed by a long-range-rocket launch that prompted a harsh new round of U.N. sanctions earlier this year.

Kim's regime has defiantly followed those with a steady drumbeat of attempted missile launches and threats, prompting speculation about another nuclear or missile test in conjunction with the congress.

More Marines sent to US Embassy in Iraq

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Another 25 Marines were dispatched to the American Embassy inside Baghdad's Green Zone on Friday as a precaution following recent protests in the city, a U.S. official said.

The State Department requested the additional Marines to bolster the defense of the embassy following recent protests in Baghdad, said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the issue.

The embassy "continues to operate normally," State Department Spokesman John Kirby said Friday, declining to discuss the security posture at the embassy.

Protestors loyal to Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr stormed the Green Zone last weekend, breaching the fortified area that includes Iraqi govern-

ment buildings and the U.S. Embassy. It was the first such breach of the zone since it was established shortly after U.S. forces took control of Baghdad in 2003.

Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman, said Friday that the U.S. embassy was never threatened by the protesters, who have demanded Iraq's political system be overhauled.

"The situation today is much more subdued than it was a week ago," Davis said Friday. "The Green Zone has been secured and reinforced, and there are not protesters inside the Green Zone, as there were before."

The 25 Marines belong to a forward-deployed Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force designed to respond quickly to protect U.S. embassies, the official said.

The group bolsters a unit of Marines permanently assigned to guard the embassy.

'Boaty McBoatface' passed over for UK vessel name

Associated Press

LONDON — Boaty McBoatface had captured the public's fancy but British officials said Friday the country's newest polar research vessel will be christened Sir David Attenborough, in honor of the prominent naturalist and broadcaster.

But all is not lost for Boaty McBoatface fans who had voted in favor of the unusual — and perhaps undignified — name by an overwhelming margin.

Science minister Jo Johnson said a submarine vessel that will support the crew and various research programs will be called Boaty McBoatface.

"The public provided some truly inspirational and creative names, and while it was a diffi-

cult decision I'm delighted that our state-of-the-art polar research ship will be named after one of the nation's most cherished broadcasters and natural scientists," he said.

Attenborough, who has produced a string of nature documentaries for the BBC and will celebrate his 90th birthday on Sunday, said he was "truly honored" by the choice of name.

The Natural Environment Research Council had asked for help finding a name reflecting the \$284 million ship's mission and celebrating British naval history.

The jokey suggestion Boaty McBoatface got 124,109 votes, more than three times its nearest rival.

Raptors win in OT, even series

Associated Press

TORONTO — This time, overtime went the way of the Toronto Raptors.

Jonas Valanciunas made sure of it. DeMarre Carroll scored 21 points, Valanciunas had 15 points and 12 rebounds, and the Raptors beat the Miami Heat 96-92 on Thursday night to even the Eastern Conference semifinals at one game apiece.

Virtually ignored through three quarters, scoring four points on three shots, Valanciunas came alive with 11 points and seven rebounds in the fourth quarter and overtime as the Raptors avoided losing consecutive games for the first time this postseason.

"He came through big," Raptors guard DeMar DeRozan said. "He's definitely the reason we won this game."

Toronto made just 42 percent of its shots compared to Miami's 49.4 percent, but the Raptors survived.

"There's a lot of different ways to win a game," Raptors coach Dwane Casey said. "Fortunately our guys found a way."

DeRozan scored 20 points, Kyle Lowry had 18 and Terrence Ross 10 for Toronto, which battled back late in the fourth quarter to force the second overtime of

the series, then shut the Heat down to start it.

That was the opposite of Game 1, in which Toronto couldn't score for the first 3:46 of OT.

"We were conscious of how the last overtime went," DeRozan said. "We told all the guys, 'We know what not to do and what we have to do this time around in overtime to get a win,' and that's what we did."

Goran Dragic scored 20, and Dwyane Wade and Joe Johnson each had 17 for the Heat. Hassan Whiteside had 13 points and 13 rebounds, while Luol Deng had 12 points.

Game 3 is Saturday in Miami.

The Heat led 77-70 midway through the fourth, but back-to-back baskets by Valanciunas shaved the gap to 80-78 with 3:18 remaining. Ross tied it with a jumper at 2:01.

DeRozan missed a pair of free throws with 1:22 remaining but Valanciunas grabbed the rebound on the second and tipped it home to give Toronto an 82-80 lead.

"That was big," Wade said. "If they get offensive rebounds, they're a tough team to beat."

After a missed shot by Wade, Lowry hit

a pull-up jumper with 45 seconds left, giving the Raptors a four-point cushion.

Wade cut it to one with a three but Lowry replied with another jumper with 14.9 seconds to go, putting Toronto up 86-83. After a Miami timeout, Dragic tied with a three with 10.5 seconds left.

Lowry, whose halfcourt shot sent Game 1 to overtime, got the last attempt for the Raptors but couldn't hit the rim with a long three-point attempt.

The Heat went cold in overtime, missing their first five field-goal attempts, including three misses by Johnson. DeRozan and Valanciunas connected and Carroll made a pair at the line before Miami's first basket of overtime, a driving dunk by Deng with 23 seconds left.

"I didn't think we did a good job at all executing (in overtime)," Wade said. "I thought our offense was poor. In a sense, we feel like we gave one up."

Miami matched a franchise postseason record with 11 turnovers in the first, leading to 14 Toronto points. Miami finished with 21 turnovers.

"If we don't turn the ball over 20-something times, we'll be fine," Wade said.

The Raptors led 48-41 at halftime.

Insurer says Paterno had knowledge of Sandusky dating to '76

Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. — A judge said that insurers in litigation with Penn State claim a boy told football coach Joe Paterno in 1976 that he had been molested by Jerry Sandusky, Pennlive.com reported Thursday.

The order by Philadelphia Judge Gary Glazer also cited reports by unnamed assistant coaches they witnessed inappropriate contact between Sandusky and children, Pennlive.com said.

Glazer wrote in a decision on insurance coverage for Sandusky-related claims there was "no evidence that reports of these incidents ever went further up the chain of command at PSU."

Sandusky is serving decades in prison for sexual abuse of 10 boys, the earliest incident in 1998. Concrete evidence of earlier allegations had not previously come to light, even though Sandusky was convicted of abusing children he met through the children's charity he founded in 1977.

Paterno went to university higher-ups with an assistant's 2001 report of Sandusky abusing a child in a team shower, and told a grand jury in 2011 he did not know of any other incidents involving Sandusky.

"I do not know of anything else that Jerry would be involved in of that nature, no. I do not know of it," Paterno testified 10 months before Sandusky was first charged, along with two university administrators accused of covering up complaints about him.

Paterno family attorney Wick Sollers told Pennlive.com there is no evidence to corroborate the new disclosure and that Paterno never covered up Sandusky's actions.

"Through all of this review there has never been any evidence of inappropriate conduct by coach Paterno," Sollers said. "To the contrary, the evidence clearly shows he shared information with his superiors as appropriate."

Paterno also told The Washington Post in 2011 he knew nothing about a 1998 police investigation into a mother's complaint about Sandusky showering with her son.

"You know it wasn't like it was something everybody in the building knew about," Paterno told the paper. "Nobody knew about it."

Penn State spokesman Lawrence Lokman told Pennlive.com that university officials involved in the Sandusky scandal's legal fallout knew broadly of the insurance case's allegations.

"Many, many people, potential victims and victims have come forward to the university as part of that (settlement) process," Lokman said. "We do not talk about their specific circumstances."

Green's passion drives Golden State

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Stephen Curry might be the face of the Warriors with the breathtaking long-range shots and ball-handling that makes Golden State so appealing to watch.

Draymond Green is the heart. The loud, sometimes brash and amazingly versatile Green was the driving force behind the team's commitment to chase a record 73 wins in the regular season, the key to the team's dominant small-ball lineup and perhaps Golden State's most indispensable player.

A knee injury to Curry has done little to slow down the Warriors' run to a second straight title because fellow "Splash Brother" Klay Thompson has picked up the scoring load to help Golden State take a 2-0 series lead in the second round against Portland.

Making up for what Green does on the court would be almost impossible. In the past four games, Green is averaging 18.3 points, 11 rebounds, eight assists and the Warriors have outscored the opponent by 109 points when he is on the court.

"Draymond is huge for us," center Andrew Bogut said. "His playmaking ability, his defensive ability, he's probably the best all-around player in the league at this point."

It's been quite a ride for a player so lightly regarded that he wasn't drafted until 35th overall when he came out of Michigan State in 2012. But Green has improved each year, increasing his average in points, rebounds, assists, field-goal percentage and three-point shooting in each of his four years capped by his stel-

lar performance this year.

Green averaged 14.0 points, 9.5 rebounds and 7.4 assists per game, becoming the first player to record at least 1,000 points, 500 rebounds, 500 assists, 100 steals and 100 blocks in a single season since steals and blocks started being officially recorded in 1973-74.

He set a team record with 13 triple-doubles, was the only player to appear in all 73 wins for the Warriors and had the highest plus-minus margin ever on record with Golden State outscoring the opposition by 1,072 points when he was on the floor.

While Green has played the majority of his time with the presumptive MVP in Curry, it is telling that Golden State has outscored opponents by 13.8 points per 48 minutes with Green on the court and Curry off compared to 1.0 point per 48 minutes with Curry playing and Green resting.

But more than numbers, it's Green's defensive versatility that makes the Warriors what they are. He's able to guard all five positions whether it's battling with post players who have a decided size advantage or chasing quicker guards on the perimeter and that allows Golden State to employ its so-called "Death Lineup" of five perimeter players that opponents have been unable to neutralize.

"I think there's a lot of great all-around players in the game," Green said. "You'll never hear me call myself that, but they are going to call me that, I'll take it. I'm not going to shy away from it."

Green is fueled by doubters and skeptics, using the snub of being a second-round pick or critics who called the

Warriors lucky for avoiding some top teams or players on the way to the championship last year as fuel for his raging fire.

That fire sometimes gets too hot and led to the 12 technical fouls Green got during the regular season and the locker room shouting match he had with coach Steve Kerr at halftime of a game in Oklahoma City in February.

"We yell at each other all the time," Kerr said.

"He's a guy that I know I can get on who won't shy away but will actually do the opposite. If I yell at him he's going to play better. Sometimes I yell at Draymond just to get the team to play better. Draymond understands that. When you have a relationship like that, every once in a while it's going to blow over, which it did in Oklahoma City as everybody knows about but that didn't mean anything."

Kerr calls Green one of his favorite players he's ever been around and credits his vocal desire to pursue 73 wins for the decision to go for the record.

Kerr is not the first coach to have run-ins with Green that did little to diminish his appreciation for his style of play. Michigan State coach Tom Izzo said he had plenty of yelling matches with Green in college but has only praise for Green.

"He had basketball IQ, it's off the charts," Izzo said. "It's as good as anybody. He can see the floor and do some things like no player I've had. He has incredible toughness. He'd fight Godzilla. It doesn't matter who it is, where it is or what it is. He has an incredible will to win. Everybody wants to win but he would sacrifice to win."



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Cubs top Nats in opener of 4-game series

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Ben Zobrist had a piece of confetti stuck to his back as he stood in front of his locker, and there were a few more in the hallway outside of the lavish home clubhouse.

Welcome to Wrigley Field, where maintaining the supplies for the celebration room is one of Chicago's biggest concerns these days.

Kyle Hendricks pitched six scoreless innings, Zobrist drove in four runs and the Cubs beat the Washington Nationals 5-2 on Thursday in the opener of a four-game series between two of baseball's hottest teams.

"This is a really good team, and we play good baseball," Zobrist said, "and tonight was another good example of that."

Hendricks (2-2) allowed two hits, struck out four and walked two as Chicago began a 10-game homestand with its fourth consecutive win and eighth in nine games. Zobrist hit a two-run single in the fourth and a two-run homer in the eighth, helping the Cubs improve their major league-best record to 21-6 for their best start since they were 23-4 in 1907.

"It's pretty fun, I can tell you that," Hendricks said.

Reigning NL MVP Bryce Harper singled and walked twice against Hendricks, but the right-hander shut down the rest of Washington's lineup. Michael Taylor was stranded at second after a two-out double in the third for the Nationals' first hit.

Jayson Werth hit a long two-run homer in the ninth for Washington, which had won five of six, including a 13-2 victory at World Series champion Kansas City on Wednesday. Even with the loss, the Nationals have baseball's second-best record at 19-9.

"The worst overall game we've played in a while, but we were still in the ballgame," manager Dusty Baker said.

Joe Ross (3-1) matched Hendricks for much of the chilly night, striking out nine in 6 2/3 innings. The 22-year-old right-hander allowed five hits and walked two.

One rough stretch was enough to send Ross to his first loss since Aug. 16 at San Francisco.

Padres 5, Mets 3: Colin Rea lost his no-hit bid with two outs in the seventh inning when Yoenis Cespedes singled the other way against a shift, and finished with eight-plus innings of three-hit ball as San Diego beat visiting New York.

The Padres remain the only team in baseball without a no-hitter, failing to achieve the milestone in 7,519 games since 1969.

Rea (3-1) had retired 19 straight batters until Cespedes grounded a single through the right side where the second baseman normally would have been. The no-hit bid was extended by the shift several times.

Fernando Rodney got the final two outs for seventh save.

Rea got enough support from the Padres' sometimes anemic offense, which jumped on Jacob deGrom (3-1).

Red Sox 7, White Sox 3: Dustin Pedroia, Hanley Ramirez and Jackie Bradley Jr. homered to lead Boston over host Chicago.

The Red Sox won for the ninth time in 11 games and took two of three in this series between AL division leaders, although this was anything but a thing of beauty.

The teams combined to strand 21 runners and draw 16 walks. But the East-leading Red Sox came up with enough big hits to prevail in a game that lasted 3 hours, 57 minutes.

Pedroia had three hits, starting with a solo homer in the first. Ramirez connected leading off a two-run third against Erik Johnson (0-1).

Reliever Matt Barnes (2-1) worked 12/3 scoreless innings for the win.

Mariners 6, Astros 3: Robinson Cano had three hits and his tiebreaking three-run double in the ninth inning lifted host Seattle to its fourth straight win.

The bases were loaded with one out in the ninth when Cano cleared them with his double off Luke Gregerson (0-1) that sailed just out of reach of center fielder Carlos Gomez.

Cano also drove in a run in the third inning to give him four RBIs and an American League-leading 30 this season.

Nick Vincent (2-1) pitched 1 2/3 scoreless innings for the win and Steve Cishek allowed one hit in the ninth for his ninth save.

Cardinals 4, Phillies 0: Jaime Garcia pitched seven sharp innings, Brandon Moss hit a long home run and St. Louis beat visiting Philadelphia.

Stephen Piscotty drove in two runs and also made an outstanding catch in right field to help preserve the shutout.

St. Louis won three of four in the series. Garcia (2-2) gave up two hits, didn't walk a batter and struck out five.

Moss launched a drive estimated at

462 feet to right field in the first off Jerad Eickhoff (1-4). It was the longest homer by a left-handed hitter in the history of the new Busch Stadium, which opened in 2006.

Orioles 1, Yankees 0 (10): Pedro Alvarez drove in the winning run with a sacrifice fly in the 10th inning and host Baltimore finally broke through, beating New York.

A day after getting shut out by the Yankees, the Orioles managed only five hits in eight innings against Masahiro Tanaka. Baltimore starter Kevin Gausman did even better, limiting New York to three hits through eight. Hyun Soo Kim began the Baltimore 10th with an infield hit off Johnny Barbatto (1-2). Kim took third on a single by Jonathan Schoop. Nolan Reimold pinch ran for Kim and Andrew Miller relieved Barbatto.

Alvarez hit a soft fly to center, and Reimold easily beat Jacoby Ellsbury's throw to the plate.

Zach Britton (2-1) gave up a leadoff walk in the 10th and then struck out the next three batters.

Blue Jays 12, Rangers 2: Edwin Encarnacion homered, doubled twice and drove in six runs as host Toronto powered past visiting Texas.

The Blue Jays set season highs for runs and hits (15).

Kevin Pillar doubled twice, singled and had two RBIs for Toronto.

J.A. Happ (4-0) gave up one run in seven innings.

Derek Holland (3-2) was tagged for five runs in the first and chased during a six-run third.

Indians 9, Tigers 4: Michael Brantley was 4-for-5 with three RBIs, and host Cleveland beat Detroit for the sixth straight time this season.

Brantley came into the game batting .167. He had an RBI single in the first and a two-run double in the eighth, raising his average to .276. Brantley also ended a potential Detroit rally in the sixth with a catch on the warning track after a long run.

Trevor Bauer (2-0) allowed three hits in 5 2/3 innings and overcame Nick Castellanos' three-run homer in the fourth.

Napoli's homer off rookie Michael Fulmer (1-1) capped a four-run first inning in which six straight hitters reached base.

Rockies 17, Giants 7: Nolan Arenado

and Trevor Story each homered and drove in three runs, and visiting Colorado set a franchise record with a 13-run fifth inning in a victory over San Francisco.

Gerardo Parra had two hits and three RBIs in the fifth, when Colorado sent 17 batters to the plate.

It's the most runs scored in an inning by any team since Arizona scored 13 in the fourth against Pittsburgh on April 11, 2010.

Every Rockies hitter either scored or drove in a run in the inning, including starting pitcher Chris Rusin, who singled home a pair of runs. Seven of the nine did both.

Matt Cain (0-4) lost his first four decisions in a season for the first time in his career. He allowed eight runs on 10 hits in four-plus innings.

Christian Bergman (1-3) threw 2 2/3 scoreless innings.

Reds 9, Brewers 5: Jay Bruce hit a three-run homer, and host Cincinnati beat Milwaukee even though its bullpen extended its historically bad streak of allowing runs.

Alfredo Simon (1-3) made it easy on the major leagues' worst bullpen, becoming only the second Reds starter to last seven innings. He allowed three runs in 7 2/3 innings, including Alex Presley's two-run homer.

The bullpen couldn't close it out smoothly. J.J. Hoover gave up Chris Carter's 10th homer leading off the ninth inning, extending the bullpen's major league record to 23 consecutive games allowing at least one run.

Bruce homered during a five-run first inning off Chase Anderson (1-4). His 34 career homers against the Brewers are by far his highest total against any team.

Marlins 4, Diamondbacks 0: Adam Conley pitched shutout ball for the second start in a row and Miami completed a three-game sweep of visiting Arizona.

Christian Yelich hit a two-run homer, and Derek Dietrich and Chris Johnson had two-out RBI hits. Conley (2-1) gave up two hits in 5 1/3 innings and departed after throwing 88 pitches. The left-hander allowed no hits in 7 2/3 shutout innings last Friday against Milwaukee.

A.J. Ramos completed the five-hitter by pitching the ninth, lowering his ERA to 0.73.

Robbie Ray (1-2) allowed two runs in 5 1/3 innings for Arizona.

Predators outlast Sharks in triple OT, even series

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Mike Fisher ended his own personal playoff drought with his first overtime goal in 12 years, giving the exhausted Nashville Predators plenty to celebrate.

Fisher scored his second goal at 11:12 of the third overtime, and the Predators beat the San Jose Sharks 4-3 early Friday morning in the longest game in franchise history.

"It took a long time, but thanks we have Fish," Nashville goaltender Pekka Rinne said.

With the victory, the Predators won their first overtime game on home ice. More importantly, they tied this second-round, best-of-seven series at 2-2. The Sharks needed only five games in beating Nashville in the first round in both 2006 and 2007. Nashville coach Peter Laviolette, in his second season, said teams have a lot invested in a game that

goes this deep.

"To win a game like that is big," Laviolette said. "To think about the other scenario, you're 3-1 the other way. This ties it up 2-2. It shortens the series. Our guys played like champs tonight."

James Neal scored with 4:21 left in the third period, tying it up at 3-3, and the teams went scoreless during the first two overtimes and headed to a third extra period — the first in the NHL playoffs this year.

The Predators killed off six penalties, including one shortly before Fisher's winning goal at 1:03 a.m. Rinne made 44 saves to give Fisher a chance at the second playoff overtime goal in his career and first since Game 6 with Ottawa in 2004.

"I don't care how these wins come if we have to play all night," Rinne said. "It's 2-2 right now."

This was the longest game for the Sharks since a four-overtime game in Dallas in 2008. Now the Sharks, the NHL's best road

team during the regular season, have lost two straight away from San Jose for the first time since Dec. 18 and 20.

Game 5 is Saturday night in San Jose — about 44 hours after this game ended.

Stars 3, Blues 2 (OT): Cody Eakin scored at 2:58 of overtime and the Dallas Stars beat the St. Louis Blues 3-2 on Thursday night, bouncing back from a blowout loss two days earlier to tie the second-round series at two games apiece.

Patrick Sharp set up the winner and also scored for the Stars, coming off a 6-1 loss in Game 3. Rookie Radek Faksa had the other goal.

Vladimir Tarasenko scored his sixth goal of the playoffs on a first-period breakaway and added an assist for St. Louis, giving him five points in the last two games. Paul Stastny also scored off a deflection from Tarasenko.

Game 5 is Saturday in Dallas. Eakin has a goal and seven assists in

the postseason. He beat Brian Elliott on a 3-on-2 break after the Blues pressured goalie Kari Lehtonen on the opposite end.

The Stars are 1-2 in overtime in the playoffs and the Blues are 2-2.

Lehtonen made 24 saves, and Elliott stopped 25 shots.

Tarasenko's goal was an exception to the rule in a tight-checking first period. Somehow he found the defense napping and scored his 16th career goal in 24 playoff games, beating Lehtonen between the pads.

The Stars looked worse on the play given they had six men on the ice, an infraction that went undetected.

Faksa, who had the deciding goal in the Stars' Game 1 victory, tied it on an unassisted goal off a giveaway by fellow rookie Joel Edmundson. Sharp had a tap-in for his first point of the series on a power play off an assist by Jamie Benn, giving the Stars two goals in 1:09 and the lead.