

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## 2 VA regional directors plead the Fifth

By HEATH DRUZIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — It took nearly two weeks to get a pair of controversial Department of Veterans Affairs officials to Capitol Hill for questioning, but it was the congressmen in the committee room who did most of the talking Monday.

“Upon advice of counsel, I respectfully exercise my Fifth Amendment right and decline to answer that question,” Philadelphia VA Regional Office Director Diana Rubens said repeatedly under tough questioning from House Committee on Veterans Affairs Chairman Jeff Miller, R-Fla.

Rubens and St. Paul, Minn., VA Regional Director Kimberly Graves, both accused by the VA Office of Inspector General of serious malfeasance, were seated next to the regional directors they are said to have pushed out of their jobs for financial gain. The actions spurred a criminal complaint that the IG referred to the Department of Justice and the VA has recommended the directors be punished, though an official said the department won’t announce the punishments until the end of the week.

Rubens and Graves sat grimly through Miller’s questions about whether they had manipulated the VA hiring system and the testimony of Los Angeles VA Regional Director Robert McKenrick and Baltimore VA Regional Director Antione Waller, who said they had been pressured into leaving the posts that Rubens and Graves filled.

“If VA put half of the effort into pushing for true accountability or protecting their employees who come forth as whistleblowers as they have for the individuals investigated in this IG report, then I honestly think the department would be in a much better place,” Miller said. “VA

### Report: Paid leave for more than 2,000 at VA in 2014

The Washington Post

More than 2,500 employees at the Department of Veterans Affairs were placed on paid leave for at least a month last year, and the agency acknowledges it didn’t track the details and the reasons they were sent home, according to newly released information.

The tab in salary for these absences — ranging from 30 days to more than a year for 46 employees — came to \$23 million, according to a report provided to several congressional Republicans.

VA, responding earlier this year to requests from Congress to account for why so many federal workers linger on paid leave, often when they are accused of wrongdoing, said it was reviewing its policies on what is known as administrative leave.

Officials acknowledged that in the absence of governmentwide guidance on the issue, they do not have a consistent policy for recording

and tracking paid leave and why it occurs.

But a top Senate Republican who is examining the use of paid leave throughout the federal government last week called VA’s response “largely vague, incomplete, or incoherent” in a letter to Secretary Bob McDonald.

Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, writing of VA’s “troubled record with respect to the use of administrative leave,” suggested that many employees who are sent home have come under internal investigation for whistleblowing about long wait times for medical appointments and other problems with veteran care and benefits.

Grassley, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, asked McDonald to provide details by next week on every VA employee placed on administrative leave for more than one year, including why the incident mandated a lengthy leave period, and any policies on how leave is tracked.

exists for veterans, not for itself or the unjust enrichment of its senior employees.”

While Rubens and Graves, who also invoked her Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination, said little, Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits Danny Pummil said the two will face punishment. However, he said the decisions on their punishment are under appeal and VA will not release details until the appeals are resolved this week.

It’s the latest black eye for the VA. The department came under fire more than a year and a half ago with revelations of patients dying while lingering on secret wait lists at the Phoenix VA Medical Center. The scandal cost former VA Secretary Eric Shinseki his job, but many lawmakers have grown impatient with what they see as a slow pace of departmental reforms.

Rubens, Graves and three other employees appeared before the committee Monday

night after the VA refused to make staff available for a hearing on Oct. 21. VA Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson wrote in a letter to Miller that making the employees appear could endanger their right against self-incrimination and hamper ongoing criminal investigations.

That led the committee to vote to issue subpoenas, compelling the employees to appear or be held in contempt and face possible incarceration. The committee also recently subpoenaed VA documents.

The VA IG investigation found Rubens and Graves gamed the department’s hiring system to create vacancies in locations where they wanted to move and take jobs with fewer responsibilities while maintaining their salaries.

“I do believe I was pressured,” McKenrick said in response to a question from Miller on the circumstances surrounding his reassignment to Los Angeles.

Between them, Rubens and

Graves also received roughly \$400,000 in moving expense reimbursements as part of a VA program to entice candidates into hard-to-fill jobs, despite apparently seeking the positions. That bill earned the ire of lawmakers and rank-and-file VA employees, and the VA suspended the program in the face of the report.

Former VA Under Secretary for Benefits Allison Hickey, who was in charge of 20,000 employees, was also implicated in the scheme and originally subpoenaed but resigned under pressure before the hearing. The committee then withdrew her subpoena.

Despite the accusations against them, Rubens and Graves are still on the job. In an email on Wednesday obtained by Stars and Stripes, Rubens highlights what she claims are improvements in customer service at the Philadelphia and Wilmington (Del.) Regional Offices.

“I can’t say that I think we are ready to rest on our laurels,” she wrote. “... we will continue to look for ways to improve performance for our Veterans, family members and survivors, but we will also continue working to make the Philadelphia and Wilmington Regional Offices places we can all be proud to come to.”

Kristen Ruell, a Philadelphia VA Regional Office employee who has testified about malfeasance at the office, said Rubens is hurting morale for rank-and-file workers.

“People are depressed because employees have been fired for less and they don’t understand how she’s still making decisions,” Ruell said in a phone interview with Stripes.

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## Insurgents attack convoy

McClatchy Foreign Staff

ISTANBUL — The newest U.S.-backed offensive against the Islamic State in northern Syria suffered a devastating setback when the extremist group detonated an explosive-laden vehicle near a Kurdish-led column of armored vehicles, an Arab militia commander said Monday.

The Islamic State said the suicide bomber, with 5 tons of explosives, attacked a convoy of 70 vehicles Sunday, including tanks and armored personnel carriers, killing dozens of Arabs and members of the Kurdish People's Protection Units, or YPG.

Bandar al-Humaydi, commander of the al-Sanadid Arab militia, confirmed the incident in a phone conversation Monday. He said that his militia rescued some 70 YPG fighters, many of them seriously wounded, after the attack.

Al-Humaydi said the explosion came after his forces had captured the village of Al-Khatuniya and cut the roads to Al-Hawl, an oil-producing city outside of Hasaka. U.S.-led coalition aircraft began bombing Islamic State targets Saturday in Al-Hawl and continued Sunday and Monday.

### US, Russia test communications of jets over Syria

WASHINGTON — U.S. and Russian aircraft intentionally flew within close proximity to each other over Syria on Tuesday to test communications established between the two nations, a Pentagon spokeswoman said.

The pre-planned exercise ensured the communications guidelines established in a flight safety agreement announced Oct. 20 would work, said Navy Cmdr. Elissa Smith, a Pentagon spokeswoman.

"This test assured that the first time this mode of communication was used would not be during an unplanned encounter," Smith said. A U.S. fighter jet and a Russian fighter jet approached each other, tested their communications abilities, and flew away, Smith said.

From staff reports

## China vows it will defend sea territory

BY TARA COPP

Stars and Stripes

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — China warned the U.S. on Tuesday that it would defend its newly developed man-made islands in the South China Sea, senior U.S. officials said after a meeting of the countries' defense ministers.

Defense Secretary Ash Carter and Chinese Defense Minister Gen. Chang Wanquan had a "cordial" meeting, officials said, though both held strongly to opposing positions regarding rights to the waters surrounding controversial islands in the South China Sea.

Chang told Carter that China viewed last week's patrol by the destroyer USS Lassen within 12 miles of the Subi Reef as illegal, and warned it would do what it thought necessary to protect its sovereign territory.

Carter reiterated the U.S. position that its military would continue to conduct freedom-of-navigation operations and said the U.S. would "fly, sail

and operate" in the South China Sea and elsewhere to guarantee that international waters remain open for all, according to the officials, who had knowledge of the meeting.

The Navy is planning to conduct two sails through the South China Sea each quarter. Chang did not ask the U.S. to cease ship movements in the disputed waters, officials said.

Unlike earlier comments by a Chinese admiral that further sails by the U.S. could provoke a war, Chang "did not say anything about war," said one official who briefed reporters.

Chang mentioned there was "a bottom line" as to what freedom-of-navigation activities China will tolerate, officials said, but he did not elaborate.

Chang repeated the promise made by President Xi Jinping during his visit to the U.S. in September — that China would halt its militarization of the Spratly Islands. Carter repeated the U.S. position that it does not take sides in the territorial dispute.

## Despite forewarning, no end in sight to GOP nomination drama

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — After a devastating loss in the 2012 presidential election, the Republican Party entered a period of intense self-reflection and emerged with a firm promise to learn from its mistakes.

The GOP vowed to avoid a prolonged and vicious 2016 primary. It concluded it must embrace an overhaul of the nation's immigration laws and adopt a more welcoming tone to win over women and minorities.

Yet a year from Election Day 2016, the GOP primary is a rough and bumpy competition. More than a dozen candidates are fighting for the support of voters — and skirmishing

among themselves over the process of picking the nominee. There are few signs the candidates are committed to expanding the party's appeal beyond its conservative base.

Meanwhile, there's no such drama among Democrats. The party appears to be coalescing behind front-runner Hillary Rodham Clinton, who is building a campaign operation aimed at turning out the general election voters who catapulted Barack Obama to the White House.

The GOP's challenges were on display Monday, as bickering continued among campaigns about upcoming debates. That's an issue the GOP thought it had resolved, having spent years

retooling its primary process after officials said it left 2012 nominee Mitt Romney bloodied heading into the general election.

Members of both parties say the GOP's White House hopefuls have also ignored the recommendation from the RNC's self-study that insisted Republicans must improve the party's appeal among women and minorities.

"Devastatingly, we have lost the ability to be persuasive with, or welcoming to, those who do not agree with us on every issue," the report found. In addition to an improved tone, the RNC outlined a single policy imperative: "We must embrace and champion comprehensive

immigration reform. If we do not, our party's appeal will continue to shrink to its core constituencies only."

After a bipartisan group of senators failed to turn immigration legislation into law, Republicans on the campaign trail — including those involved with that effort — have moved sharply in the other direction. Almost the entire GOP field now calls first and foremost for increased security along the Mexican border.

Incoming House Speaker Paul Ryan said over the weekend there would be no immigration bill until 2017, at the earliest.



# Panthers hold off Colts in OT Titans fire Whisenhunt

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Luke Kuechly is the first to admit the Carolina Panthers don't always win pretty.

Seems the team's gritty star middle line-backer wouldn't have it any other way.

"That's not what we do," Kuechly said after Carolina's 29-26 overtime win Monday night over the Indianapolis Colts. "We just find a way to win at the end of the game, and that's what makes it fun here is we keep it exciting. You never know what to expect."

Kuechly had a chance to put away the Colts at the end of regulation, but he dropped Andrew Luck's pass in the end zone.

The 2013 NFL Defensive Player of the Year allowed a wet football to slide through his hands with 2 seconds left in regulation. Adam Vinatieri kicked a field goal from there to send it overtime.

Kuechly made the most of another opportunity, ultimately intercepting Luck on a tipped pass by teammate Roman Harper to set up Graham Gano's game-winning 52-yard field goal with 5:22 left in overtime.

"Roman made a great play and it really just popped right to me and all I had to do was catch it, and that time I was like, 'All right, just catch it this time,'" Kuechly said. "It was a great play by those guys up front; I was just in the right spot."

The Panthers forced four turnovers.

The win moved the Panthers to 7-0 for

the first time in franchise history and extended the team's regular-season winning streak to 11 games. It also left the Panthers as the only unbeaten team in the NFC with a big home game looming this Sunday against the Green Bay Packers.

"We just know that you've got to step up in big moments and we were able to do that today," Kuechly said.

Things we learned from Monday night's Colts-Panthers game:

**Luck's ribs a mystery:** Andrew Luck didn't discuss a report that he's been suffering from a rib injury in addition to a problematic shoulder.

"I'm not going to talk about that right now," Luck said after throwing for 231 yards with two touchdowns and three interceptions. Luck rallied the Colts from 17 points down in the fourth quarter, but his third interception proved decisive.

Luck has thrown a league-high 12 interceptions amid speculation that injuries are hurting his play.

"It's my problem, and it's hurting the team," Luck said of his interceptions. "I've got to fix it. It's tough to win like that, and I'm disappointed in myself. Mentally, I feel all right. It's tough to overcome in the game."

**Lean on Fleener:** Luck leaned hard on Coby Fleener, targeting the tight end 11 times. He came through with seven receptions for 43 yards and a score. If Fleener can give the Colts more production it might open up some things for the

team's other receivers.

Andre Johnson had a productive game — his second of the season — catching four passes for 81 yards and a score.

**Panthers on the run:** The Panthers recorded 140 yards rushing, marking the 18th consecutive 100-yard rushing game. The 18-game stretch is currently the second-longest active streak in the NFL, behind Seattle's streak of 19.

Carolina ranks first in the league in rushing.

The Panthers did have two fumbles — one by Jonathan Stewart and another by Cam Newton — but the wet field conditions played a role in those turnovers.

**Offensive line woes:** The bad news for Carolina is its offensive line is getting banged up. Center Ryan Kalil sat out with an ankle injury and Andrew Norwell left with a leg injury in the first quarter and did not return.

**Filing a protest:** Sometimes you never know what you're going to get in a Monday night game — and that doesn't necessarily mean on the field.

Two activists grabbed some attention after rappelling on ropes from the upper deck holding a protest sign for most of the second half as fans watched in awe. They finally descended. Altogether four people were arrested by Charlotte Mecklenburg Police. The biggest concern for the Panthers might be how rappelling ropes got through stadium security.

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Tennessee Titans fired Ken Whisenhunt on Tuesday after he struggled to a 3-20 start in his tenure with the organization, with his latest loss coming in Houston where the controlling owner's father founded the franchise.

It was apparently the last straw for the Titans, who announced the move Tuesday and named Mike Mularkey as the interim coach for the rest of the season.

"We have expected more progress on the field, and I felt it was time to move in a different direction," Titans controlling owner Amy Adams Strunk said in a statement. "I would like to thank Ken for his efforts with our team, as he worked very hard to try to move us forward."

The Titans, who scheduled a news conference for Tuesday afternoon, went 2-14 in Whisenhunt's debut season. It was their worst record since 1994, after going 7-9 in 2013 under Mike Munchak. Tennessee drafted Heisman Trophy winner Marcus Mariota with the No. 2 pick overall in the draft, then named him the starter.

They won their opener 42-14 in Tampa Bay, then lost six straight for the longest skid in the NFL. Three of the losses were by a combined six points, and Whisenhunt was just 1-11 at home.

The latest was a 20-6 loss at Houston on Sunday with Strunk and other family members watching in the town where the late Bud Adams founded this franchise. Strunk took over as controlling owner in March, replacing Tommy Smith, who hired Whisenhunt in January 2014.

# Niners bench QB Kaepernick

Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Quarterback Colin Kaepernick has been told he won't start Sunday for the San Francisco 49ers and is being replaced by backup Blaine Gabbert, a person with knowledge of the decision said Monday night.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity to The Associated Press because the decision wasn't to be discussed publicly. The team had not made a formal announcement, though coach Jim Tomsula offered a pretty good hint earlier in the day "we're evaluating everyone," on the heels of a 27-6 loss at St. Louis and a second straight game without a touchdown and third in five.

Kaepernick has been benched for his birthday, as he turns 28 on Tuesday. In a strange twist, it was three years ago in November 2012 when Kaepernick was promoted to replace Alex Smith and he wound up leading San Francisco back to the Super Bowl and a three-point loss to Baltimore. Kaepernick made his first career start on Nov. 19, 2012, for former coach Jim Harbaugh.

Former first-round pick Gabbert completed 23 of 28 passes in the preseason — for an 82.1 completion percentage — for 203 yards, one touchdown and no interceptions and a 108.8 passer rating. He has stood by locker mate and friend Kaepernick, and they have regularly eaten lunch together, especially last week when a report said Kaepernick was alone "on an island" in the locker room.

"This whole team sees Kap on an everyday basis, we see him 15 hours a day in meetings," Gabbert said. "Unless those stories are coming from in here they're false."

Bay Area Sports Guy first reported the change. The quarterback speaks each Wednesday, also the next scheduled availability for Tomsula.

Tomsula had always said Kaepernick was his quarterback and made that commitment almost weekly during San Francisco's struggles this season — until Monday.

The 49ers coach said every player is being evaluated and he didn't name his starting quarterback for a home game Sunday

against Atlanta.

"We're evaluating everything right now, we're in the middle of it right now. I don't have any comments on any position on our field right now," Tomsula said. "We're evaluating everyone. I'm not going to have any further comment, I'm just telling you we're evaluating everyone."

Later Monday, the 49ers traded tight end Vernon Davis to the Denver Broncos for a pair of late-round draft picks.

Broncos general manager John Elway called the 31-year-old veteran "a big weapon for us," one who'll add experience, speed and leadership to an offense that can use more big-play ability.

Davis gives the Broncos (7-0) some firepower over the middle that Peyton Manning has been missing since losing Julius Thomas and Jacob Tamme to free agency, and rookie Jeff Heuerman to a knee injury just a week after the draft.

The 10th-year pro has 55 career touchdown catches.

Kaepernick is taking a seat at least this week for a franchise searching for any possible spark after another dismal day on offense.

"It needs a jolt, and needs it from every position," fullback Bruce Miller said. "I know that we can play better at all 11 spots and until we do that and play together as a group, I think it's fair to say that every position is under review because we've got to play together as a group, not as individuals."

Kaepernick has passed for just 286 yards the last two games for the Niners (2-6), raising questions for weeks now whether a big change was needed. Perhaps more than just the quarterback, too.

Tomsula wouldn't say when a decision would be announced, only that, "We'll make those decisions when we've got those things done at every position, every position. ... Colin didn't play good enough, neither did the team, the San Francisco 49ers didn't play good enough."



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# James scores 25,000th point

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — LeBron James needed one simple slam to hit another major milestone.

James became the youngest player to reach 25,000 career points, leading the Cleveland Cavaliers past the winless Philadelphia 76ers 107-100 on Monday night.

"It just means I've played with a lot of great teammates, a lot of great coaches," James said. "I've been around some great groups and I've been able to reap the benefits. It's a cool thing. I've got more work to do but it's pretty cool to see where you're able to kind of stop and look at it."

James had 22 points, 11 assists and nine rebounds and rallied the Cavs in the second half against a scrappy Philly team that had built a 15-point lead. James, a two-time NBA champion with the Miami Heat, and the rest of the Eastern Conference champions had enough to push back the undermanned Sixers.

James scored the milestone basket on an alley-oop dunk with 8:07 left in the fourth quarter. He became the sixth active player with 25,000 points and the 20th overall, joining Dallas' Dirk Nowitzki, San Antonio's Tim Duncan, Minnesota's Kevin Garnett, Los Angeles' Kobe Bryant and Paul Pierce of the Clippers.

James reached 25,000 career points — the dunk gave him 25,001 — at 30 years, 307 days. Bryant held the mark at 31 years, 351 days.

**Warriors 119, Grizzlies 69:** Stephen

Curry scored 21 of his 30 points in an emphatic third-quarter stretch and the reigning NBA Most Valuable Player followed up his 53-point performance from three days earlier with another solid game to lead unbeaten Golden State past visiting Memphis.

Curry did not play in the fourth quarter with his team up big after shooting 10-for-16 and hitting four three-pointers to give him 21 through four games — even after Grizzlies coach David Joergel joked before the game, "We're going to put three guys on him tonight."

**Spurs 94, Knicks 84:** LaMarcus Aldridge scored 19 points, Kawhi Leonard had 18 points and 14 rebounds as San Antonio beat host New York to give Tim Duncan a milestone victory.

Duncan had 16 points, 10 rebounds and six assists in his NBA-record 954th victory with one team. He passed Hall of Fame point guard John Stockton, who went 953-551 with the Utah Jazz. Duncan, in his 19th season with the Spurs, is 954-381.

**Rockets 110, Thunder 105:** James Harden scored 37 points as host Houston beat Oklahoma City for its first win of the season.

It was the first loss for the Thunder, who won their first three games while the Rockets dropped their first three.

An 8-1 run by the Rockets made it 107-100 with about two minutes left. Harden capped that key stretch with a three, knocking it down with Russell Westbrook right in his face.

Westbrook made a three-pointer with

44 seconds left to cut the lead to 108-105, and Harden missed a three on the other end. But Westbrook and Kevin Durant both missed three-pointers on the next possession and Dwight Howard made a pair of free throws with 5.7 seconds left to secure the victory.

**Clippers 102, Suns 96:** Blake Griffin had 22 points and 10 rebounds and unbeaten host Los Angeles hung on down the stretch for a victory over Phoenix.

The Clippers are off to a 4-0 start for the fourth time in franchise history and the first time since winning the first five games of the 1985-86 season, their second in Los Angeles after relocating from San Diego.

**Trail Blazers 106, Timberwolves**

**101:** Damian Lillard had 34 points and seven assists and Portland won after host Minnesota honored fallen coach Flip Saunders with an emotional pregame tribute.

Lillard made 14 of 25 shots, C.J. McCollum scored 18 points and Al-Farouq Aminu had 17 points and nine rebounds for Portland, which trailed by 17 points in the first quarter after an inspired start by Minnesota.

**Bucks 103, Nets 96:** Jerryd Bayless scored 26 points, Greg Monroe had 23 points and 13 rebounds and visiting Milwaukee beat winless Brooklyn for its first victory of the season.

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 21 points and Khris Middleton had 17 for the Bucks.

# Pitchers hit the market

Associated Press

NEW YORK — With the World Series over, baseball quickly turned its attention to the opening of the free-agent market.

Pitchers David Price, Johnny Cueto, Jordan Zimmermann, Jeff Samardzija and Scott Kazmir were among 139 players who became free agents Monday. About three dozen more also may go on the market, including Zack Greinke, depending on decisions this week on 2016 options and opt-out clauses.

Price, Cueto and Kazmir may be especially attractive because teams that sign them won't lose amateur draft picks. Each was traded during the season, which means the clubs they landed with can't make \$15.8 million qualifying offers, which attach the draft-pick penalty.

Among the position players on the market are outfielders Yoenis Cespedes, Jason Heyward and Justin Upton; catcher Matt Wieters; first basemen Chris Davis and Mike Napoli; second basemen Daniel Murphy, Ben Zobrist and Howie Kendrick; and shortstop Ian Desmond.

Greinke can opt out of his contract with the Los Angeles Dodgers, which guarantees him \$71 million from 2016-18. Kansas City outfielder Alex Gordon could decline a player option and go free.

Decisions on options are due by Thursday and on qualifying offers the following day. Teams may start negotiating money terms on Saturday.

In moves announced Monday, St. Louis exercised its \$11.5 million option on left-hander Jaime Garcia and declined a \$9 million mutual option on right-handed reliever Jonathan Broxton, who gets a \$2 million buyout.

Washington turned down its \$6.5 million option on outfielder Nate McLouth, who gets a \$750,000 buyout, and its half of a \$7 million mutual option on right-hander Casey Janssen, who receives a \$1.5 million buyout.

Cincinnati declined a \$4 million mutual option on right-hander Burke Badenhop and a \$2.5 million club option on infielder-outfielder Skip Schumaker. Badenhop gets a \$1.5 million buyout and Schumaker \$500,000.

In other baseball news:  
■ The Kansas City Royals and their fans threw one of the biggest parties in the city's history to celebrate the team's first World Series championship in 30 years.

The Royals earned the crown Sunday with a 7-2 victory in 12 innings over the New York Mets. It was the first championship for the Royals since 1985, which was followed by decades of losing baseball that caused many in the city to abandon the team.

Fans took up spots along the 2.3-mile parade route Tuesday morning, hours before the start of the parade. Organizers set up food trucks and provided music to entertain the crowd as they waited for the parade to start.

Forty-eight-year-old Kansas City native Steve Spencer marveled at the crowd as he joined the masses walking toward the city's Union Station. Recalling the years of losing seasons, he says the "crazy" turnout is beyond anything he has ever seen.

City officials said they expected at least 200,000 people to pack into the route through downtown Kansas City to cheer as the players, coaches and team officials drive by in a motorcade before a rally at Union Station.

# Blackhawks snap Kings' winning streak

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Patrick Kane and Jonathan Toews came through big for the Chicago Blackhawks against one of their Western Conference rivals.

Kane and Toews each had a goal and an assist to lead the Blackhawks to a 4-2 victory over Los Angeles on Monday night, snapping the Kings' seven-game winning streak.

Kane scored to tie it at 2, then set up Teuvo Teravainen's tiebreaking goal in the third as Chicago scored three goals in the final period to earn its first come-from-behind win this season.

"Going into the third down a goal, I think that's a big confidence boost for us, knowing we can come back, we can score goals," Kane said. "We've been struggling to score 5-on-5 and we had three tonight."

"That's a big step in the right direction. Hopefully it gives us some confidence."

After taking Toews' pass, Artem Anisimov added a short-handed breakaway goal with 1:33 left to complete the scoring, and the Blackhawks ended a two-game slide. Toews got his fifth goal in five games after not scoring in the opening seven contests to help Chicago win its sixth straight at home.

The Blackhawks entered this one fresh from road losses in Winnipeg and Minnesota, and trailed 2-1 heading into the third period.

Kane and Toews changed the tone, and coach Joel Quenneville liked the finish.

"A great third period," Quenneville said. "We did some decent things, scored a couple of big goals. Kaner made a great shot and a great play to Teuvo."

"Johnny made a nifty play to Artie (Anisimov). We can't score on breakaways except for Artie. Nice to see him finish it."

Alec Martinez scored his first goal of the

season and Anze Kopitar got his fourth late in the first period to give the Kings a 2-1 lead it looked like they might hold.

"If we could have made it 3-1, it probably would have made a big difference," Los Angeles coach Darryl Sutter said. "We just couldn't get the third goal."

"It would have been nice to get an extra goal, but we've been playing in a lot of those tight games," added defenseman Christian Ehrhoff. "It just got away from us a little bit in the third, and they buried their chances."

Chicago's Corey Crawford made 33 saves and Los Angeles' Jonathan Quick stopped 22 shots.

Teravainen put Chicago ahead 3-2 at 9:02 of the third when he connected on a one-timer from the left edge of the crease. Kane fed him tape-to-tape with a behind-the-back, backhand pass from behind the net.

"(Kane) scores goals and makes plays almost out of nowhere," Teravainen said. "He makes something happen. He finds ways to get us momentum maybe when nothing's going on."

Earlier on Monday, Chicago sent slumping forward Bryan Bickell to Rockford of the AHL and recalled prospect Marko Dano.

The Blackhawks kept the Kings' hot line of Tyler Toffoli, Jeff Carter and Milan Lucic off the scoresheet. That trio had combined for 12 goals and nine assists in the previous five games.

Chicago played without veteran forward Marian Hossa, who sat out with an undisclosed injury, but coach Joel Quenneville said before the game he's "hopeful" Hossa will return on Wednesday against St. Louis.

Toews opened the scoring 6:01 in, completing a 2-on-1 break with a low, one-timed shot from the slot.

Martinez and Kopitar connected just

over four minutes apart late in the first to give Los Angeles a 2-1 lead after 20 minutes.

Kane tied it at 2 at 1:22 of the third with his seventh goal, on a nifty screened shot from the top of the left circle.

After weaving through center ice with the puck, Kane closed into the Los Angeles zone and fired a shot between Martinez's legs. The puck sailed in over Quick's glove.

Quick preserved the tie when he stopped rookie Artemi Panarin on a breakaway moments after Panarin had served a slashing call and left the penalty box.

**Maple Leafs 4, Stars 1:** Joffrey Lupul had two goals and an assist, James Reimer stopped 43 shots, and Toronto got its first home win of the season.

Brad Boyes and Morgan Rielly also scored for the Maple Leafs, who had lost their first four at home (0-3-1).

Jamie Benn got his 10th goal of the season and Antti Niemi finished with 22 saves as the Stars snapped a three-game winning streak.

Boyes thought he had his second of the night late in the first, but it was overturned when Dallas challenged that the Maple Leafs were offside.

**Canucks 4, Flyers 1:** Jake Virtanen scored his first NHL goal and Ryan Miller made 27 saves to lead host Vancouver.

Bo Horvat had a goal and an assist, and Jannik Hansen and Matt Bartkowski also scored for the Canucks.

Claude Giroux scored for Philadelphia, while Steve Mason stopped 30 shots as the Flyers dropped their fourth in a row.

The Canucks announced Sunday that Virtanen and fellow 19-year-old rookie forward Jared McCann would be sticking with the club beyond the nine-game mark rather than being returned to junior, triggering the first year of their entry-level contracts.