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DOD pay at stake as Obama weighs veto

By TRAVIS J. TRITTEN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Congress was poised Tuesday to send an annual defense policy bill to President Barack Obama, setting up a showdown that could leave the Department of Defense without a budget and hundreds of thousands of federal employees facing furloughs.

Obama will have until Halloween to decide whether to make good on his repeated threats to veto the National Defense Authorization Act, which lays out military pay and benefits. This year, the bill also includes a historic reform of the 20-year pension system, increases in Tricare fees, protections for the A-10 Thunderbolt II and a review of troops carrying personal guns on bases.

A veto could throw the whole defense budget into uncertainty, with Congress scrambling to come up with a new plan by Dec. 11 when the current temporary budget expires. The DOD said troops would not receive paychecks and about 400,000 civilians would be furloughed if

defense spending is not resolved by then.

Republicans rallied Tuesday in an effort to paint Obama and his veto threat as an obstacle to defense priorities despite increasingly threats around the world.

“If the president decides to veto this, then it seems to me he is placing a higher priority over his concern and opposition to funding budgetary mechanisms than he is over the defense of the country,” said Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., a lead architect of the legislation.

Republican leadership in the House and Senate, intent on pressuring Obama, planned an evening signing ceremony on Capitol Hill to underscore the importance of the NDAA, which comprises a \$515 billion base defense budget and an \$89 billion overseas war fund called Overseas Contingency Operations.

The president will have 10 days, not including Sundays, to sign or veto the bill.

The White House, which repeated the veto threat last week, wants Congress to lift mandatory spending limits on defense and nondefense programs that have hamstrung

lawmakers since 2011, when the Budget Control Act was passed as a way to force painful reductions in federal debt.

Obama and the Democrats say Republicans used a budgetary gimmick to skirt the cap on defense instead of working toward a larger compromise on all spending. About \$38 billion slated for the OCO fund — an emergency account created for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan — would actually be used for daily DOD expenses as a way to keep the base budget within the set caps.

In the event of a veto, McCain said the next step would be votes in the House and Senate aimed at overriding Obama’s decision. But Republicans are not likely to have enough support to save the NDAA — the recent vote to pass the bill in the House did not reach a so-called “veto-proof” majority.

A compromise still might be possible that would allow the NDAA funding levels to remain while providing more modest increases for nondefense programs, said Michael O’Hanlon, co-director of the Center for 21st Century Security and Intelligence at the Brookings Institution in Washington.

CNO says no new forces on horizon for US 6th Fleet

By STEVEN BEARDSLEY

Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — The U.S. fleet in Europe will likely remain at its current size despite growing Russian activity in the region, the Navy’s top officer said Tuesday.

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson told sailors at U.S. 6th Fleet headquarters here that bringing more people and ships to Europe is difficult when Navy resources are already stretched across the globe.

“I would say there is no plan to do that,” Richardson said when asked about fleet expansion. “But that doesn’t mean we’re not open to continuing to examine it.”

Richardson arrived in Naples after visiting two fleets with their own demands for ships and

people — the 5th Fleet in Bahrain, which operates in the Persian Gulf, and the 7th Fleet in Japan, which covers much of the Pacific. His trip comes less than a month after he replaced Adm. Jonathan Greenert as CNO.

The U.S. 6th Fleet, a major theater during the Cold War, has received new attention in recent years due to the Syrian civil war, the spread of militant groups in North Africa and, most recently, Russia’s growing assertiveness.

Naples is considered undermanned by some in the Navy, with a little more than 900 personnel split between the 6th Fleet and its parent command, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa. Chief of Naval Personnel Vice Adm. Bill Moran suggested during a visit last week that the Navy might try to boost numbers at the headquarters.

Others have wondered if more aircraft carriers or amphibious warships could be deployed long-term to the region.

Richardson cast doubt on both ideas Tuesday, saying the demands of other fleets leave few resources to spare.

“I would love to give you more forces. ... We just have to do that and balance with the rest of the demand around the world,” he said.

Richardson said he stays in close touch with U.S. 6th Fleet Commander Vice Adm. James Foggo, who controls theater assets such as ships and aircraft, and Foggo’s boss, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa Commander Adm. Mark Ferguson.

Both men have warned about the uptick in Russian operations in Europe and its military plans. Russia has built new bases in the Arctic and in the

Mediterranean port of Latakia, Syria. Its navy is gradually replacing older ships in the Black Sea, adding new submarines and installing new missile systems on many of its warships.

Ferguson recently said Russia is building toward a “sea denial strategy” aimed at raising the risks of U.S. or NATO operations in regions such as the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea.

Encounters with Russian ships and aircraft are already frequent in both bodies of water, many considered provocative and some considered dangerous by U.S. Navy officials.

Richardson was headed next to Venice for the biennial Regional Seapower Symposium, at which discussion is expected to focus on European Union efforts to stop human smugglers in the Mediterranean and Russia’s naval buildup.

Gen. Dunford looking over Iraq war zone

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — The new top U.S. military officer said Tuesday he sees no prospect right now for Russia to expand its airstrike campaign into Iraq, speaking after briefings to update him on the battle against Islamic State militants.

Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, made his first trip to the war zone since taking the top post on Oct. 1. He told reporters traveling with him that U.S. officials spoke with Iraqi leaders and were told no Russian airstrikes had been requested, despite earlier reports that Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi wanted Russia's help against Islamic State militants.

Dunford planned to talk with his commanders to get updates on battles in Beiji and Ramadi, where Iraqi forces have made some recent gains.

Dunford's flight into Iraq was suddenly delayed when Iraqis on the ground in Baghdad refused to allow his C-17 aircraft to land in Irbil. Just before 9:30 a.m. local time, as Dunford's plane was nearing Baghdad en route to Irbil, the crew was directed to land instead in Baghdad. The change set off a flurry of activity on the plane as military staff quickly made urgent phone calls to officials on the ground. After about a half-hour, the aircraft got permission to land in Irbil. It was unclear what triggered the mix-up.

US, Russia agree to terms for air safety when in Syria

By TARA COPP
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The United States and Russia have agreed to aircraft safety guidelines to help avoid incidents as the two countries conduct air campaigns in the skies over Syria.

The memorandum of understanding lays out the terms of "professional airmanship" between the two air campaigns over Syria, Pentagon press secretary Peter Cook said Tuesday. While the Pentagon did not provide specifics, Cook said the agreement outlines what radio frequencies to use in the air and a communication line on the ground between the two air operations.

Cook said the memorandum "does not establish zones of cooperation, intelligence sharing or any sharing of target information in Syria." He also said the agreement does not constitute U.S. cooperation with or support for Russia's policy and actions in Syria.

The document is the product of three videoconferences between high-level U.S. and Russian defense officials during the last three weeks. The meetings were held as Russia rapidly built up Hmeymim air base at Latakia. Russia announced its first airstrikes in Syria on Sept. 30, and reported hitting targets in areas surrounding Aleppo,

Iranian general leading move to retake Aleppo

The Washington Post

BEIRUT — In a striking sign of Iran's growing regional influence, a major assault on Syria's most populous city is being coordinated by an Iranian military commander using Shiite forces from three countries to back President Bashar Assad's beleaguered troops, militia officials said.

Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani, the leader of Iran's elite Quds Force, has ordered thousands of Iraqi Shiite militia allies into Syria for the operation to recapture Aleppo, according to officials from three of the militias. The militiamen are to join

Iranian troops and forces from Hezbollah, the Iranian-backed Lebanese militia.

Soleimani has been a frequent sight on the battlefields in neighboring Iraq, where he has been advising Iraqi forces fighting Islamic State militants. But the war there has stagnated, and the shift of the commander along with Iraqi militiamen and Quds Force members to Syria appears to signal a change in Iranian priorities.

Russia is also involved in the fight for Sunni-majority Aleppo, launching airstrikes in the vicinity to support Assad's forces.

Hama and Idlib, according to the Russian Defense Ministry's website.

Since Sept. 30, U.S. and coalition aircraft have reported conducting 89 airstrikes against Islamic State targets in Syria.

With so many aircraft operating over Syria, there have been several close calls between coalition and Russian

aircraft since Russia began its air campaign.

"I think people were surprised at how many (helicopters and jets) they sent in," said Larry Korb, a former assistant secretary of defense under President Ronald Reagan who is now a senior defense fellow for the Center for American Progress.

Aircraft carrier, strike group in Latin America for UNITAS

Stars and Stripes

The aircraft carrier USS George Washington and Carrier Strike Group 9 will be in Latin American waters through December for UNITAS 2015, the Navy's longest-running annual multinational maritime exercise.

The first phase of UNITAS — hosted by Chile and now underway in the Pacific — runs through Saturday and involves 11 nations: the U.S., Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, New Zealand, Panama, South Africa and Australia, a Navy state-

ment said.

The second phase, to be hosted by Brazil in November, will take place in the Atlantic with nine participating countries: the U.S., Brazil, Cameroon, Chile, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Peru and Senegal.

"The purpose of the annual

UNITAS exercise is to develop and sustain relationships that improve the capacity of both U.S. forces and partner nation maritime forces," Rear Adm. George Ballance, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet, said in the statement.

Toronto gets back in ALCS

Associated Press

TORONTO — Back in the homer dome with their rowdy fans, Troy Tulowitzki, Josh Donaldson and the Toronto Blue Jays quickly got into the swing of the AL Championship Series.

Tulowitzki and Donaldson both connected in a six-run third inning Monday night, and the Blue Jays roughed up Johnny Cueto for an 11-8 victory over the Royals that cut Kansas City's series lead to 2-1.

"I feel like we've played better at home and I felt like the entire night we had great at-bats," Donaldson said. "Not just good at-bats, great at-bats."

Ryan Goins also homered and had a two-run single, one game after his misplayed pop fly set off Kansas City's winning rally Sunday.

The resilient Royals tried to come back this time, too. Kendrys Morales capped a four-run surge with a two-run homer in the ninth before Roberto Osuna closed it out.

"We're just going to keep fighting," Kansas City outfielder Alex Gordon said. "We've got a lot of competitors on this team and that's what you see."

Even with a big lead, Tulowitzki lost his cool. He was given a rare playoff ejection for arguing balls and strikes before the top of the eighth.

Tulowitzki, who struck out looking in the seventh, was restrained by teammates as he argued with plate umpire John Hirschbeck when the Blue Jays took the field. Toronto manager John Gibbons and bench coach DeMarlo Hale also came out to break it up.

Despite being outthit 15-11 by the pesky Royals, Toronto pounced on Kansas City pitching in the first ALCS game at Toronto since 1993. The Blue Jays scored their most runs ever at home in the postseason — after mustering just three in two games at Kansas City.

"You could not tell in the clubhouse if we're down 0-2 or up 2-0," winning pitcher Marcus Stroman said. "What we have is extremely special. The confidence that everybody has with everybody is amazing."

Seemingly not distracted by the contentious federal elections being held in Canada on Monday, 49,751 fans serenaded Cueto with a sing-song "Cueto-Cueto!" chant from the game's first pitch and never quieted down.

The Royals took a quick lead when Alcides Escobar opened the game with a triple and scored on Ben Zobrist's grounder. But that was the only advantage Kansas City held in having its nine-game ALCS winning streak snapped. The string dated to the 1985 series against Toronto.

Blue Jays center fielder Kevin Pillar quashed the early rally with a fantastic, over-the-shoulder catch that sent him crashing into the wall.

After an easy first, Cueto appeared flustered by the crowd. Eleven of his remaining 13 batters reached and at one point in the third inning he threw his hands up in frustration after gesturing for a new cycle of signs from catcher Salvador Perez.

Goins singled in two runs in the second after Tulowitzki singled with one out and Russell Martin was hit by a pitch that knocked off his left elbow guard. Goins pulled into second on the throw home and shouted and pumped his arms.

"There's no need to put any extra pressure on yourself," Goins said when asked if he was looking for redemption. "Just come out and do what I've been doing all season — whatever I can do to help this team win is what I'm going to do."

David Price, the losing pitcher in Game 2, led the cheering from the top step of the dugout.

When Goins scored on Donaldson's hit, he was greeted first by the enthusiastic Stroman.

"He's been carrying that load around a little bit," Gibbons said of Goins. "But he stepped up, really got us on the board with that great at-bat, picking up those two runs, base hit to left and then, of course, the home run."

Nursing a sore shoulder that sidelined him in September, Tulowitzki entered in a 4-for-29 postseason slump. But he connected for the Blue Jays' first ALCS homer after Edwin Encarnacion singled and Chris Colabello walked to start the third.

"Battling with the shoulder at times, but trying to gut it out," Tulowitzki said.

Cueto was coming off a dominant, eight-inning performance in Game 5 of the ALDS, retiring his last 19 batters. But after giving up Pillar's RBI double in the third, he was done.

The dreadlocked Dominican gave up six hits and eight runs in two-plus innings. He walked four and hit a batter with a pitch.

As fans sang Cueto off the field, he smiled and tossed his gum near the Royals dugout.

"That's just part of my DNA. That's what comes out, but there wasn't any laughing about it," he said through a translator.

Donaldson connected for a 9-2 lead two batters after Kris Medlen entered. Goins homered off Medlen in the fifth as Toronto matched its postseason best with three homers in a game. The Blue Jays also hit three against Texas in Game 4 of the ALDS.

Stroman gave up four runs and 11 hits in 6 1-3 innings. The 24-year-old returned from a torn knee ligament in March to go 4-0 down the stretch and get the win in Game 5 of the ALDS.

Blue Jays fans were confident enough with a 10-4 lead to sing "Happy Birthday" to Jose Bautista when he came to bat in the sixth. Bautista drove in a run in the eighth.

Logano won't be bullied

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — There was a time not so long ago when it was easy to pick on Joey Logano.

He was tongue-lashed by Tony Stewart, Kevin Harvick and Ryan Newman. He feuded for weeks with former teammate Denny Hamlin and was cast as the bad guy when hard racing between the two ended in a hard crash that broke Hamlin's back.

Logano was ridiculed when his father once angrily ordered his son to confront Harvick after a 2010 incident. Already viewed by many as a rich kid who used his daddy's money to crack NASCAR's top series as soon as he turned 18, his father's constant presence did Logano no favors.

So it was no surprise last November when Harvick, ever the pot-stirrer, poked and prodded at Logano in the leadup to the championship-deciding season finale. Harvick may have rattled Logano a little bit, but with a square jaw and an awe-shucks smile, Logano did his best to tune out the eventual Sprint Cup champion.

Now here we are, nearly a year later, and Logano doesn't appear willing to be picked on by anyone anymore. He's shrugged off any Harvick comments, downplayed any notion that all the title contenders are chasing the reigning champion, and he's raced as if he won't back down from anything.

His aggression was on display Sunday at Kansas Speedway when he chased down Matt Kenseth in the closing laps for the win. Kenseth was in a dire situation, badly needing the win to guarantee his Chase doesn't end with this week's elimination race at Talladega. Logano, on the other hand, had nothing to lose: A win at Charlotte last week earned him an automatic berth into the third round and a victory at Kansas was worth nothing but the trophy.

So Kenseth threw a block on Logano's attempt to pass him for the win. That move, many believe, meant all bets were off when it comes to a gentleman's code. When Logano tried again to get past Kenseth, he made contact with the leader and caused Kenseth to spin.

The move earned Logano the victory — his second of the Chase, fifth of the season — and likely cost Kenseth his shot at the Sprint Cup title. Barring a win at Talladega or serious mishaps to several drivers ahead of him in the standings, Kenseth will be eliminated from the Chase on Sunday.

Logano was unapologetic. "We both went for the same piece of real estate," Logano said. "We ran each other hard. He ran me hard, and I ran him hard back."

It isn't that Logano spun Kenseth that shows something about Logano's mettle, rather it's the shoulder-shrug position he took after the fact. It's the kind of attitude that could win him a championship because he no longer will be bullied. But, it could also cost him a title if his driving leads to retribution.

Meyer isn't ready to name Buckeyes starter

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Ohio State coach Urban Meyer isn't ready to publicly name a starting quarterback for the top-ranked Buckeyes' game at Rutgers on Saturday.

"I have an idea, but I want to make sure I visit with everybody and make sure we're doing the right thing," he said Monday.

Meyer must choose between Cardale Jones, who has started all seven games this season, and J.T. Barrett, the starter in 2014 before breaking his ankle in the final regular-season game against Michigan.

Meyer was to meet with the two players Monday afternoon and announce his decision to them.

"If there's a change, it's always delicate," said Meyer, noting the human element of dealing with players and their emotions.

Barrett has been coming on strong the past two weeks since Meyer began inserting him when the Buckeyes (7-0, 3-0) reach near the opponent's goal line.

Meyer expanded Barrett's role in last Saturday's 38-10 win against Penn State by replacing Jones late in the third quarter and going with Barrett the rest of the way regardless of field position.

Barrett then led OSU to two touchdowns in the fourth quarter. For the game he rushed for 102 yards on 11 carries and two TDs and was 4-for-4 passing for 30 yards and two more touchdowns. Jones was 9-for-15 for 84 yards.

"Whoever that person might be, it's all about efficiency and making sure that we utilize and score in the red zone (and) don't turn it over," left guard Billy Price said.

In its first five games, Ohio State scored six touchdowns and had six field goals in 16 tries in the red zone.

In the past two games the Buckeyes are 12-for-12 with 11 touchdowns and a field goal, with Barrett completing the drives on all but one when Jones threw a 19-yard TD pass to Braxton Miller against Maryland.

The Buckeyes also haven't committed a

turnover in the past two games after doing so 13 times through five games.

Each quarterback has his strengths. For Jones it's the ability to throw deep, as he did in his first start last season in the Big Ten title game against Wisconsin when he connected with Devin Smith on touchdown passes of 39, 44 and 42 yards.

But Smith graduated and Meyer has not found a suitable long-ball replacement, neutralizing, for the most part, one of Jones' weapons.

Meanwhile, Barrett is a bigger threat to carry the ball, such as his 86-yard TD run on the frozen turf at Minnesota last season.

"He comes in and does a really good job of running that read option," left tackle Taylor Decker said.

The possibility of Barrett taking off with the ball makes it harder to key on running back Ezekiel Elliott, who gained 153 yards against Penn State for his 12th straight game of 100-plus yards.



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Defense lifts Eagles into first

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — A tenacious defense bailed out Sam Bradford and made Eli Manning miserable.

DeMarco Murray ran for 109 yards and a touchdown, Nolan Carroll returned one of Manning's two interceptions for a score and the Philadelphia Eagles beat the New York Giants 27-7 Monday night.

The Eagles had three takeaways, sacked Manning three times and forced two intentional grounding penalties.

"All the credit goes to them," Bradford said of Philadelphia's defense. "It seemed like every time we needed a stop or a big play, they created a lot of turnovers tonight. That always gives us a lot of momentum and always gives us juice."

Bradford threw for 280 yards with a 32-yard TD pass to Riley Cooper, but had three interceptions to keep New York in the game.

The Giants got zero points off the turnovers.

"We were stagnant," Giants coach Tom Coughlin said. "They did more with their opportunities than we did."

The Eagles (3-3) have won two straight to move from last place in the NFC East

into a tie for first with the Giants (3-3). The teams meet again in Week 17.

Neither team looked sharp in front of a prime-time audience. They combined for seven turnovers and 21 penalties.

"That's bad football," Coughlin said.

The Giants gave the Eagles first downs on a roughing-the-passer penalty and a running-into-the-kicker penalty to keep both of their TD drives going.

Wearing all-black uniforms for the third time in franchise history, the Eagles got off to another slow start.

Manning completed his first 10 passes, including a 13-yard TD pass to Odell Beckham Jr. for a 7-0 lead.

But things went downhill for Manning from there.

The Eagles took a 14-7 lead in the second quarter when Carroll jumped in front of a pass intended for Dwayne Harris and ran it back untouched for his first career TD.

"Terrible read by me, bad decision to make that throw," Manning said. "I should have gone to my next guys in my progression."

After Nikita Whitlock ran into punter Donnie Jones to give Philadelphia a first down at its 28, Murray took over. He had two runs of 11 yards each and finished

off the drive with a 12-yard TD run to give Philadelphia a 24-7 lead in the third quarter.

Murray had his best game since joining the Eagles after a record-breaking season in Dallas. The All-Pro led the NFL in rushing last year but has struggled in Philadelphia. He entered the game with 130 yards this season.

"It was good to get him going," Eagles coach Chip Kelly said.

The Eagles were 1-3 before a 39-17 win over the New Orleans Saints at home last week. They'll travel to play unbeaten Carolina (5-0) Sunday night.

The Giants had won three in a row. They'll host Dallas (2-3) next week.

Bradford had a pair of third-quarter interceptions on poor throws, including one that Landon Collins picked in the end zone.

But Philadelphia's defense bailed him out.

"We need to improve on offense," coach Chip Kelly said.

Caleb Sturgis hit a 37-yard field goal to give the Eagles a 17-7 lead at halftime. He nailed one from 39 in the fourth quarter.

Jets focus on the job in facing Patriots

Associated Press

FLORHAM PARK, N.J. — This is the week you could count on, at least twice an NFL season, to hear some pretty good trash talk all the way from New York to Boston. Yep, it's Jets-Patriots.

Bad blood, memorable moments and players and coaches switching sides mark this AFC East rivalry.

So, with the latest showdown set for Sunday at New England with first place in the division on the line, the hype should be starting right about now, right?

"We're not trying to catch up on anybody," guard Willie Colon said Monday. "We're not trying to make any statements. We just want to win, and everything will take care of itself."

Wait. What about the shots at Tom Brady? Or, that stuff about not kissing Bill Belichick's rings? And, the talk of knocking the Patriots off their throne atop the AFC East?

"You know the answer to that," Colon said. "You know why. New regime."

Rex Ryan certainly drove the narrative during his six years with the Jets, firmly establishing an us-against-them approach. Ryan always spoke of his respect for Brady and Belichick, but also made it clear that he wanted to beat them, and in a big way.

Well, under coach Todd Bowles, the buzz is gone.

"Winning this game is not going to make us," Bowles said. "Losing this game is not going to break us."

Whoa. But, Ryan used to say division games were worth 1½ games because of their potential effect on the standings. "No," Bowles said. "It's one game for us."

These are certainly new — and boring? — times in the Jets-Patriots rivalry, with New York taking on the even-keeled and low-key approach of its head coach.

In Brady & Co., the Jets will face the league's No. 2 overall offense, which also ranks second in passing.

"It's Week 6 and we just happen to be playing the New England Patriots," Colon said. "That's our mindset. We know it's going to be a tough team to go against. But for us, it's another chance for us to prove ourselves. The only thing we need to prove to ourselves is that we can win."

Will Super Bowl 50 be clash of 18-0 teams?

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Super Bowl 50 will be the Battle of the Unbeatens.

Five teams are undefeated after six weeks so we just might see a team in each conference go 16-0, win two playoff games and face off for the NFL championship in February with history on the line.

You guessed it, it's overreaction time.

The Patriots (5-0), Bengals (6-0) and Broncos (6-0) are the AFC's unbeaten teams and the Packers (6-0) and Panthers (5-0) are the NFC's undefeated clubs.

Can one of them run the table? Perhaps. Is it realistic? No.

The Patriots and Packers would be the favorites among the group. Tom Brady and his teammates are on a mission after the "Deflategate" saga put a damper on their fourth Super Bowl celebration. Aaron Rodgers gives Green Bay a chance to win every game it plays. Still, it's a tough road for either team.

Let's take a look at the other unbeaten clubs.

Denver is more likely to go one-and-done in the playoffs than win out. Peyton Manning looks like an average quarterback and the Broncos are winning on defense.

The Bengals are playing well, but they

haven't beaten a team that currently has a winning record. Their six opponents are 11-24 combined and Andy Dalton — an MVP candidate through mid-October — is still 0-4 in the playoffs.

Carolina would've lost at Seattle on Sunday if the "Legion of Boom" had covered Greg Olsen in the final minute. The Panthers play the Eagles, Packers and Colts their next three games so 6-2 or 5-3 is far more realistic than 16-0.

Here are other overreactions from Week 6:

Overreaction: All the Dolphins needed was a new coach. Miami (2-3) routed Tennessee 38-10 in Dan Campbell's debut after Joe Philbin was fired.

Realistic reaction: They beat the Titans (1-4) and beat up on rookie Marcus Mariota. It's not like a win over the Patriots.

Overreaction: OK, the Seahawks are done — for real this time. A 27-23 loss to Carolina at home dropped Seattle to 2-4.

Realistic reaction: They've led in the fourth quarter of all four losses and still have two games left against Arizona (4-2). It's a tough road, but they control their chances.

Overreaction: Andy Reid is on the hot seat. The Chiefs have lost five in a row and are way out of it in the AFC West.

Realistic reaction: Three of their losses are by seven points or less, Jamaal Charles was lost for the season and Reid has two years and \$15 million left on his contract.

Overreaction: The Colts can't beat any team outside the AFC South. They're 3-0 against the division and 0-3 against everyone else following a 34-27 loss to New England.

Realistic reaction: They've lost three games against AFC East teams who are 12-4 combined. They'll be favorites over the Saints (2-4) next week.

Overreaction: Landry Jones should be Pittsburgh's starter. He was 8-for-12 for 168 yards and two TDs in relief of Michael Vick in a 25-13 win over Arizona.

Realistic reaction: Jones played well, but his stats were inflated by Martavis Bryant's 88-yard spectacular catch-and-run TD. If Ben Roethlisberger isn't ready to return next week, Vick deserves another start if he's healthy.

Overreaction: Nobody deserves to win the NFC East. The Eagles (3-3) beat the Giants (3-3) 27-7 in a sloppy game Monday night to move into a tie for first place.

Realistic reaction: One of these teams will finish with a winning record. And don't count out the Cowboys (2-3), who could get a boost from Matt Cassel.

Raanta blanks Sharks in first start with Rangers

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Antti Raanta was just looking to get a win in his New York Rangers debut.

He did much more than that.

Raanta stopped all 22 shots he faced to become the fourth goalie in franchise history to get a shutout in his first start with the team, leading the Rangers to a 4-0 victory over the San Jose Sharks on Monday night.

Getting his fourth career shutout, Raanta joined Hal Winkler (1926), John Ross Roach (1928) and Marcel Paille (1957)

as the only goaltenders to blank an opponent in his first start with the Rangers.

"The only thing I was thinking was to win," said Raanta, who was playing for the first time since being acquired from Chicago in a draft-day trade in June. "Our guys defended so well."

Marc Staal, Mats Zuccarello, Jesper Fast and Viktor Stalberg scored for New York, which snapped a three game winless streak (0-2-1) after opening the season with three wins.

"Everyone in the room knows that the level we were playing at isn't acceptable," Staal said.

"It's something we wanted to take care of."

Martin Jones finished with 24 saves in his first loss of the season as the Sharks lost their second straight after opening the season with four wins.

Rangers coach Alain Vigneault opted to keep the same forward lines and defense pairings that could only score once in the 2-1 overtime loss to the New Jersey Devils on Sunday.

Vigneault's gambit paid immediate dividends as Staal scored his first of the season 10:36 into the game. Staal's point shot appeared to ricochet off of San Jose's Joel

Ward.

"I just tried to get to the net as fast as I can and I think it hit someone — one of their guys — and goes in," said Staal, who later recorded his 100th career assist on Stalberg's goal.

While Raanta did not have to work especially hard, his toughest stop occurred early in the second period as New York was killing a 5-on-3 Sharks power play.

San Jose center Joe Thornton attempted a quick shot from along the goal line as Patrick Marleau drove the net, but Raanta kicked the puck away.