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US quietly makes a statement about China's claim on international waters

BY ERIK SLAVIN
AND WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — The United States made a long-awaited statement about its commitment to freedom of navigation by sailing the Navy destroyer USS Lassen through international waters claimed by China. But then the U.S. didn't talk about it.

The situation with China's aggressive expansionism in the South China Sea — along with a dispute with Japan over the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea — has been festering for years. It has prompted allies like Japan and the Philippines to draw closer to the U.S., as demonstrated by a cooperation deal signed by Manila and Washington last year, and has helped encourage Vietnam, which President Barack Obama will visit next month, to also cozy up.

But China's refusal to back down on its "indisputable sovereignty" claim, and its continued construction efforts to legitimize it by turning rocks and reefs into islands with military-capable runways and fortifications, left countries around Asia wondering when the U.S. would finally do something other than talk about freedom of navigation.

It appears that Subi Reef was carefully chosen for a close cruise-by from the Lassen on Tuesday because it's at the extreme end of what China has done. It's coral that analysts say wasn't above water at high tide until China brought in construction equipment and started building it up; maritime law says it doesn't qualify as an island with a 12-mile exclusion zone.

So it was ideal for drawing a fine-line-in-the-sand scenario: something that would make clear to China that Washington has limits without too much risk of a miscalculation that could set off something bigger.

State Department spokesman John Kirby said Tuesday the U.S. has a right to freedom of navigation in international waters and such maneuvers "should not be construed as a threat by anybody." He said the U.S. wants relations with China — which have been improving and have included military-to-military exchanges — to continue to deepen.

The Lassen's cruise demonstrated a theme that Obama, Defense Secretary Ash Carter and Navy leaders have talked repeatedly about all year: that the U.S. will operate in international waters whenever it wants, regardless of territorial claims made by China that most nations reject under their interpretations of international law.

Calling attention to the conflict

For much of the year, the military had been increasing publicity about its actions in the South China Sea as it reassured its allies that the foreign policy "rebalance" to the Asia-Pacific region wouldn't take a backseat to the Middle East.

In May, the Navy published photos of the USS Blue Ridge, the 7th Fleet's flagship, transiting near Scarborough Shoal with two Chinese navy ships nearby. Scarborough Shoal is also claimed by the Philippines and was the site of a standoff between it and China in 2012.

Days later, the Navy released photos of the littoral combat ship

USS Fort Worth with a Chinese missile frigate tailing it.

The same month, a Navy P-8 surveillance aircraft with a CNN crew onboard captured audio of a Chinese dispatcher warning the aircraft away as it flew over international airspace near Fiery Cross Reef, an artificial island where China has built another airstrip and fielded military improvements.

When the U.S. finally did what it said it would do and sailed within the 12 nautical-mile limit surrounding China's artificial island Tuesday, it appeared that Washington didn't want to rile China any more than it already had. Pentagon officials would not publicly comment on or acknowledge the move, with Carter under heat from Congress to discuss it and only confirming that "what you read in the newspaper is accurate."

Chinese officials had already confirmed and denounced the operation.

"The actions of the American ship threaten Chinese sovereignty and safety, as well as the people who live on the island and their facilities, and damage the area's peace and stability," a statement from the Chinese Foreign Ministry on Tuesday read.

The legal view of China's actions

China's claim on the Spratly Islands is disputed by Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan and Malaysia. Brunei and Indonesia have had conflict over sea boundaries as well.

Instead of seeking arbitration, China has added thousands of acres of landfill to its claims and built three additional military-

grade airstrips in the past year.

"While other claimants have done small bits of reclamation over the last 40 years, China has done 17 times as much in the last 20 months," said Patrick Cronin, senior director of the Asia-Pacific Security Program at the Center for a New American Security, a Washington-based think tank. "When the [Chinese military] declares, as it did today, that their claims are not excessive, that's a lie."

China's artificial island construction includes 976 acres of landfill dumped on Subi Reef, where the Lassen sailed Tuesday.

If Subi Reef is entirely submerged at high tide — which most analysts believe — then under international law it cannot claim the sea around it as belonging to its territorial waters.

Even if Subi were an above-water rock with a territorial sea, the U.S. could sail through those waters, with some restrictions, under right of "innocent passage."

The U.S. last sailed past the disputed South China Sea islands in 2012, years before China began building artificial islands. While the Navy regularly patrols the sea, it avoided close-in, "freedom of navigation" operations until Tuesday.

Several analysts said Tuesday it was well past time the Navy got back to them.

"I regret it took us so long to do it, but I'm happy to see that the operations were finally accomplished," said Peter Dutton, director of the China Maritime Studies Institute at the U.S. Naval War College.

One of the biggest remaining questions is whether the U.S. will continue sailing within China's purported territorial seas.

Lawmakers' budget deal could head off pay freezes, furloughs

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A budget deal struck late Monday by Congress could avert a government shutdown this winter and protect troops and Defense Department civilians from pay freezes and furloughs.

Republicans and Democrats agreed to raise caps on federal spending for two years, though the new defense spending limit of \$607 billion is \$5 billion less than was requested for the coming year.

The agreement ends a fight with President Barack Obama that led to his veto last week of the 2016 National Defense Authorization Act, a bill that includes military pay and benefits as well as a historic overhaul of the 20-year retirement

system.

"This is a good deal for our troops, for taxpayers and for the American people," outgoing House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, said.

If Congress votes to pass the budget deal this week, lawmakers could retool the NDAA and send it back to Obama before the defense budget expires Dec. 11 and DOD paychecks are frozen as part of a shutdown.

The deal appeared likely to pass Congress but was still hitting some opposition from conservative House Republicans in the Freedom Caucus, a voting block of tea party lawmakers who oppose spending increases. Members recently forced Boehner into resigning at the end of this month and on Tuesday were pressuring his heir

apparent, Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wis., to reject the agreement.

Ryan slammed the process that led to the deal but stopped short of siding with the fiscal conservatives.

Also, it was not immediately clear how lawmakers would reconcile the \$5 billion cut to defense that is part of the deal.

The bill also would increase Tricare copay amounts for certain prescription medicines, protect the A-10 Thunderbolt II from a planned Air Force retirement, and review the possession of personal firearms on military bases.

Obama vetoed the NDAA to force Republicans into raising spending caps called sequestration that were passed by Congress in 2011 as a way to reduce debt.

Army reviews Europe force posture

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

WIESBADEN, Germany — The U.S. Army is reviewing its force structure in Europe, measuring everything from crisis-response capabilities to its mix of armor and infantrymen, as the service adapts to counter a revanchist Russia, the Army chief of staff said.

Gen. Mark Milley, who was at U.S. Army Europe headquarters in Wiesbaden this week to confer with more than 30 European army generals, signaled that an era of steadily drawing down in Europe should be halted.

"We don't need Cold War-levels of forward-deployed forces or anything like that," Milley said in an interview Tuesday. "But at the same time, you want to make sure you have sufficient capabilities to deter further aggression by Russia."

The Army review has no set deadline for completion, but recommendations will eventually be submitted to the Pentagon and subject to approval by the White House.

Since Russia's intervention in Ukraine last year, the U.S. military has worked to transform its presence in Europe — moving more ships, aircraft and troops into the region — even as it faces budget constraints. In the case of the Army, more than two decades of drawing down have left the service with 28,000 soldiers in Europe, a sharp decline from Cold War numbers that neared 300,000. That has forced USAREUR to come up with novel ways to demonstrate force, such as high-profile road marches to show the Army's ability to move large numbers of forces around the Baltics and Poland. To bolster its presence in eastern Europe, USAREUR has relied on a steady stream of rotational forces from the States.

The force-structure review will touch numerous other areas.

Army captain to receive medal of honor

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Army Capt. Florent Groberg left Afghanistan in 2012 with a mangled left leg that required more than 30 surgeries and confined him to a hospital bed for three months. It was the most difficult time of his life.

"All you can do is sit there with your own thoughts for hours and hours and hours and hours," he told Stars and Stripes on Monday. "You don't sleep, you're on drugs for the pain and things like that."

"All I could think was just, 'How?'"

In Afghanistan, Groberg was charged with protecting a formation of senior leaders on Aug. 8, 2012. When an insurgent armed with a suicide vest attacked the group, Groberg tackled him and the vest exploded. The Army said his

actions that day saved many lives.

For his heroics, Groberg will receive the Medal of Honor on Nov. 12 from President Barack Obama.

But receiving the military's highest honor for battlefield valor was far from Groberg's mind during his early days at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md.

He spent much of the time grappling with questions about his future: Could he stay in the Army? Would he ever run again? Why did he survive?

"What is the positive?" the 32-year-old would ask himself.

During the tedious hours of recovery, Groberg discovered the answer: He was alive. And he realized he could dedicate his life to honor the four people who did not survive the attack in Abadabad — Army Command Sgt. Maj. Kevin Griffin,

Air Force Maj. Walter David Gray, Army Maj. Thomas Kennedy and Ragaei Abdelfattah, a USAID foreign-service officer.

"There was no reason for me to try to piece it back together," Groberg said Monday. "For one, I'll never have the answer — it just happened. So what do I do now? I live my life to the best of my ability for four individuals who, unfortunately, did not have the same luck — if you want to call it luck."

In the years since the attack, Groberg has become close with Griffin's family and with family members of the other two American servicemembers who died in the attack.

"This medal honestly, truly belongs to them," he said of their families. "And on Nov. 12, I will give them all a hug and a handshake and let them know that this is for them."

Royals win World Series opener in 14th

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — An inside-the-park home run. A power failure that blacked out the TV audience. Crazy bounces, great plays and key errors.

The longest World Series opener ever had a little bit of everything. And more than five hours after they began, Alcides Escobar and the Kansas City Royals also had just enough energy to outlast the New York Mets.

Saved by Alex Gordon's tying home run in the ninth inning off Mets closer Jeury's Familia, the Royals won in the 14th when Escobar dashed home on Eric Hosmer's sacrifice fly for a 5-4 win late Tuesday night.

"It was a great night," Royals manager Ned Yost said. "Two things you don't want in Game 1 of the World Series: One is to go 14 innings and the other is to lose."

This tied for longest Series game ever and ended at 12:18 a.m. From the get-go, it was wild and weird.

Escobar hit an inside-the-parker on the very first pitch from Matt Harvey. Later, that power problem caused fans and the team's replay rooms at Kauffman Stadium to go dark.

The nearer it got to midnight — and beyond — the more oddly the ball bounced.

In the 11th, Salvador Perez grounded a single that hit the third-base bag and caromed high in the air. In the 12th, Daniel Murphy struck out on a pitch that got

past Perez — it ricocheted off the backstop to the Royals catcher, who threw out Murphy at first.

About the only thing missing? A home run by Murphy, who had connected in a record six straight postseason games. The MVP of the NL Championship Series did contribute a pair of singles.

"Yeah, there was a lot of baseball out there," Murphy said.

In the 14th, Escobar reached on an error by third baseman David Wright. Ben Zobrist's single put runners at the corners and an intentional walk to Lorenzo Cain loaded the bases with no outs.

Hosmer atoned for a key error by lifting a flyball measured at 300 feet, and Escobar barely beat right fielder Curtis Granderson's throw home.

"I wanted to redeem myself for what happened earlier," Hosmer said. "That's the beauty of this game."

Chris Young pitched three hitless innings for the win. Bartolo Colon gave up an unearned run and took the loss.

"Their team, one of the things we know about them is they're never down and out," Mets manager Terry Collins. "We've got to put them away. We've got to do a better job."

Anyone who's ever seen the Royals play — especially in October — knows they're called resilient for a reason. Once again, they reinforced their reputation.

Gordon shook the ballpark when he tagged Familia, hitting a solo drive with

one out over the center field wall. The star closer hadn't blown a save since July 30 and had been nearly perfect this postseason.

Known more for his glove than his bat, Gordon connected when he said Familia tried to quick pitch him, and got a huge hug in the dugout from Hosmer. A two-time Gold Glove first baseman, Hosmer's error gave the Mets a 4-3 lead in the eighth.

"I was the happiest person in the stadium when Gordon homered," Hosmer said. "I told him, 'I just want to hug you right now.' I think a lot of people in Kansas City want to hug him."

Escobar provided the early excitement. He loves to swing at first pitches, and this time the MVP of AL Championship Series produced his best result yet.

A mix-up by Mets outfielders Yoenis Cespedes and rookie Michael Conforto helped Escobar wind up with just the second inside-the-parker to lead off a Series game. O'Patsy Dougherty of the Boston Americans did it in 1903 — his came in the second game ever of what became known as the Fall Classic.

"As I ran after the ball, I looked at Conforto and by the time I looked back up I had lost the ball," Cespedes said through a translator.

Cespedes never put his mitt up and the ball glanced off his leg, darted along the warning track and let Escobar score standing up.

Harvey brushed aside the misplay and quickly settled in. The Mets, meanwhile, soon caught up with Royals starter Edinson Volquez, who did his best on the day his father died in the Dominican Republic.

Volquez left the stadium before the game ended and headed home. Most of the Royals didn't know about his dad.

"I found out in, I think it was the 14th inning, right before we won the game," Gordon said. "I was standing next to Ned and he told me. He said, 'Let's win this game for Volquez.'"

For both teams, this began as a lucky day.

Exactly 30 years earlier, on the same field, Bret Saberhagen and the Royals routed St. Louis in Game 7 for their most recent crown. The next year, also on Oct. 27, Darryl Strawberry homered to help the Mets beat Boston in Game 7 for their latest title.

By the time the Royals won early Wednesday, they'd already made Oct. 28 a day to remember, too.

Tough start

This is the Mets' fifth time in the World Series, and they've lost Game 1 all five times. They wound up winning the title in 1969 and 1986, and lost in 1973 and 2000. The Mets have gone to extra innings at least once every year they've reached the Series.

Father of KC's Volquez dies hours before game

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Edinson Volquez strode purposefully to the mound for Game 1 of the World Series on Tuesday night, just hours after his father died of heart failure in the Dominican Republic.

Whether he knew of his father's death is unclear — the team says club officials didn't tell him at his wife's request, but a family source told The Associated Press that Volquez was told on his way to the ballpark.

The right-hander with the easy smile proceeded to hold the New York Mets at bay for six gritty innings, departing with the game tied. Kansas City went on to a 5-4 victory in 14 innings, matching the longest game in World Series history.

The Royals said that when Volquez left the game, team officials and his family told him that his 63-year-old father had died.

"It was just, you know, it was sad, a sad situation," Yost told a few reporters gathered in the clubhouse. "You find out an hour before the game that your starting pitcher's father passed away, and it was hard. But again, you wanted to honor the family's wishes, and they requested, 'Don't tell Eddie. Let him go out and pitch Game 1 of the World Series.'"

The source said a family member called Volquez on his way to the stadium to tell him of the death.

The 11-year veteran warmed up as if nothing was amiss on a misty evening in Kansas City, then marched to the mound for his World Series debut as the crowd roared.

"Volquez has always been a warrior. It affects him, but he did it for the team and he poured his heart out for us," Royals pitcher Yordano Ventura said. "He never showed it, you have to have a huge heart to not show something like that out there."

Volquez had left the clubhouse with his family by the time reporters were allowed in after the game. Royals pitcher Jeremy Guthrie spoke to him briefly.

"I could tell he was devastated," Guthrie said. "I had never seen him like that before. He was very subdued, very quiet. I could tell he was in a lot of emotional pain."

"Your heart goes out to Volquez and his whole, entire family," Royals first baseman Eric Hosmer said. "The way he went out there and battled for us, you hate to hear news like that. But it's another angel above watching us, behind us the whole way."

The elder Volquez, a mechanic in the Dominican Republic, introduced his son to the game when he was about 10 years old. Edinson Volquez often returned home to visit his parents, and said not long ago that they were his biggest supporters while trying to make it in the big leagues.

"Most guys didn't know. I found out,

I think, in the 14th inning," Royals outfielder Alex Gordon said. "I was standing next to Ned and he told me, he said, 'Let's win this game for Volquez,' and explained what happened. I don't think he knew. I don't think most guys knew."

His first pitch to Mets leadoff hitter Curtis Granderson went for a called strike, and the right-hander went on to retire the side in the first inning. He fanned Daniel Murphy, the hottest hitter this postseason, as the crowd inside Kauffman Stadium chanted, "Eddie! Eddie!"

"It's almost superhuman," Guthrie said, "to do that when someone so important to you and someone you care about so much passes away like that."

Volquez's father became the third parent of player on the Royals' World Series roster to die in the past three months.

Connie Moustakas, the mother of third baseman Mike Moustakas, passed away on Aug. 9 after a battle with cancer. Moustakas honors her every time he steps into the batter's box by scribbling her initials in the dirt with the end of his bat.

Charles Young, the father of Chris Young, also died of cancer on Sept. 26 — the day before his son made his first start for Kansas City in two months. Young proceeded to throw five no-hit innings, honoring his father with the performance, before leaving to be with his family.

Young was scheduled to start Game 4 of the World Series in New York, but he

wound up earning the win in the opener Tuesday night with three shutout innings of relief.

Escobar's homer: It's hard to know whether Alcides Escobar was more delighted with the way he started the game, or how he ended it, as Kansas City took the World Series opener on Tuesday.

The Venezuelan shortstop hit the first inside-the-park home run leading off a World Series game since 1903, an adrenaline-charged beginning for Kansas City.

Five hours later, Escobar scored the winning run on Eric Hosmer's 14th-inning sacrifice fly, lifting the Royals over the New York Mets 5-4.

Leading off the bottom of the first, Escobar sent Matt Harvey's first pitch soaring through the rain to left-center field. Mets rookie Michael Conforto ran over from left, and Yoenis Cespedes sprinted over from center, both converging on the ball.

Conforto stopped, and Cespedes never lifted his glove in an attempt for a catch.

The ball hit Cespedes' right leg and rolled along the warning track toward left field.

By the time Conforto retrieved it and threw to Wilmer Flores, there was no need for New York's shortstop to even bother with a throw to home. Escobar ran so hard, he turned his right ankle slightly rounding third.



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Panthers look to keep drive going against Indianapolis

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The Panthers have their running game operating in high gear.

Carolina ran for 204 yards in Sunday night's 27-16 win over the Philadelphia Eagles, marking the 17th straight game they've eclipsed 100 yards rushing — the second-longest active streak in the NFL behind only the Seattle Seahawks with 18.

The Panthers are 6-0 for the first time ever behind the league's No. 1-ranked rushing attack, averaging 144.7 yards per game on the ground.

They'll look to carry that momentum into Monday night's game against the Indianapolis Colts. The struggling Colts surrendered 183 yards rushing and three TDs rushing in a 27-23 loss to the New Orleans Saints on Sunday.

The Panthers racked up big numbers against the Eagles even though Cam Newton only ran four times. He had been averaging 10 carries per game through the first five weeks of the season.

"I'm fine with that," coach Ron Rivera said. "The less exposure (to getting hit)

out there, the better."

The reality is the Panthers didn't need Newton's legs all that much against Philadelphia (3-4).

The threat of having him run seemed enough to keep the Eagles off-balanced. Newton gained 20 yards and scored a touchdown, but the Panthers relied heavily on the play of their backs to win their 10th straight regular season game.

Running back Jonathan Stewart ran for 125 yards, fullback Mike Tolbert scored twice and wide receiver Ted Ginn Jr. chipped in with a 43-yard run on a reverse.

Rivera said the biggest help the Panthers can give Newton is establishing the running game early — something they accomplished against the Eagles with Stewart gaining 45 yards on Carolina's first two plays.

"Nothing sets a tone more than watching Jonathan Stewart or Michael Tolbert or Cam Newton slice through a defense and pick up a first down," Rivera said. "It gets everybody oohing and ahing and sets the tone."

Rivera credits the finding stability on the offensive line midway through last season for his team's streak of 100-yard

rushing games. The Panthers have filled in nicely around Pro Bowl center Ryan Kalil after lacking proven blockers up front early last season.

"It's one of those things where if we can run the ball effectively it will take pressure off the quarterback," Rivera said. "Secondly, it gives your offensive linemen a chance to tee off. And third, it does wear people down a little."

Said Newton: "Those guys might not necessarily get the recognition on that play but they are just doing their job."

Despite releasing the team's all-time leading rusher, DeAngelo Williams, this offseason, the Panthers haven't missed a beat in the running game.

Stewart has developed a reputation for being one of the toughest running backs to bring down on first contact. Tolbert has been the power back, showing his toughness by running through four Eagles defenders to get the end zone on a 2-yard reception to put Carolina up 21-6.

"He's amazing," Stewart said. "He's a bruising, punishing running back. Just to see him doing the things he's doing, dragging four or five people, it's definitely fun to watch."

Curry's 40 leads Warriors

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Stephen Curry threw his arm in the air in delight and body bumped teammates after knocking down shots from all over the floor, and it all looked so familiar to what happened here only four months ago.

The NBA MVP showed in a hurry he hasn't lost a step or his swagger, scoring 40 points to lead the Golden State Warriors to a 111-95 victory over the New Orleans Pelicans on Tuesday night to open their title defense.

Curry put on a shooting clinic, hitting seven of his first nine shots with four three-pointers for 24 first-quarter points. He finished 14-for-26 with seven assists and six rebounds in a rematch of the first round of the playoffs that Golden State swept 4-0. It was his 10th career 40-point game.

Curry and the Warriors raised the championship banner and received their rings in an elaborate pregame ceremony featuring glitz, glow sticks and fire. Coach Steve Kerr attended, then left for the locker room to rest his surgically repaired back as interim Luke Walton coached the team and received some advice from Kerr beforehand.

"Even just Game 1 of the Finals it was just a different feeling," Curry said. "All that really prepared us to be able to stay in the moment, enjoy the celebration and the ceremony, have fun, joke, dance, all that stuff, but then lock in and focus on the game. It would be disappointing to leave out of here 0-1 with a ring as opposed to 1-0. The mood is a lot better and we want to keep that vibe going."

First-year New Orleans coach Alvin Gentry took part in the festivities and received a rousing ovation, as he was Golden State's associate head coach before departing for the Big Easy.

Kerr said beforehand he isn't sure when he will be back on the bench but plans to go on the team's weekend road trip to Houston and New Orleans.

Bulls 97, Cavaliers 95: For all the talk about their fast-paced offense, defense once again lifted host Chicago in their season pener.

Pau Gasol's block of LeBron James and a deflection in the final seconds helped preserve the win for new coach Fred Hoiberg. And that had to please the president.

Nikola Mirotic scored 19 points and Derrick Rose added 18 to lead the Bulls over Cleveland with President Barack Obama watching.

After Gasol blocked James' potential tying layup in the closing seconds, Jimmy Butler then broke up an inbounds pass intended for James as time expired.

Pistons 106, Hawks 94: Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored 21 points to lead all his team's starters in double figures, carrying visiting Detroit to a victory over Atlanta and ruining the opener of the team with the best record in the Eastern Conference last season.

The Pistons, who haven't had a winning season since 2008 and finished 28 games behind the Hawks a year ago, began to pull away just before halftime. They led by double figures through most of the final two quarters and held on despite missing 20 of their last 22 shots from the field.

Andre Drummond had 19 rebounds and 18 points for the Pistons. Marcus Morris also had a double-double with 18 points and 10 rebounds.

Canucks hand Habs their 1st loss

Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — It took only minutes into Tuesday's game against the Vancouver Canucks for the Montreal Canadiens season-opening, nine-game winning streak to feel in jeopardy.

Moments after Daniel Sedin rang a shot off the post, Canucks rookie Jared McCann scored 2:30 into the game to put Vancouver ahead.

It was the first time Montreal gave up a first-period goal all season and a preview of bad things to come in a 5-1 loss at Rogers Arena.

The Canadiens (9-1-0) came into the game red-hot and with a chance to match a league record with 10 consecutive wins to start the season. Only the Toronto Maple Leafs (1993-94) and Buffalo Sabres (2006-07) have opened a season with 10 straight victories.

But whether all the talk of Montreal's win streak was weighing on the Canadiens, captain Max Pacioretty wasn't about to admit it.

"Other people talked about it, we didn't," he said after the game. "We've gotten off to a great start this year, 9-and-1. But we're not happy. You're only as good as your last game and we weren't very good tonight."

Vancouver, which was looking for its first home win of the season, came out looking like the team which wanted to stop Montreal's winning ways. After McCann's goal, a Luca Sbisa blast was tipped in accidentally by Montreal's Nathan Beaulieu midway through the first.

Carey Price, the reigning Hart and Vezina Trophy winner, looked beatable for the first time this season. He came into the game with only nine goals against in seven starts this season. On Tuesday, he gave up five goals on 28 shots.

"We left Price looking stranded

and there's no excuse for that," said Pacioretty. "We have to be better."

"That's not the game we wanted to play and not the start we wanted," added Canadiens defenseman Jeff Petry. "We weren't on top of our game to start. We gave them the puck and they were able to make plays. To give them a 3-goal lead wasn't the ideal start."

Stars 4, Ducks 3: Antoine Roussel scored with 1:28 to play, completing host Dallas' comeback from a three-goal deficit.

Patrick Sharp, Cody Eakin and John Klingberg scored in the second period for Dallas, which trailed 3-0 after one. Antti Niemi had 17 saves to help the Stars improve to 7-2.

Blues 2, Lightning 0: Jake Allen stopped 26 shots for his sixth career shutout, leading host St. Louis to the win.

Scott Gomez and Troy Brouwer scored as the Blues beat the Lightning for the fourth straight time, and sixth in the last seven meetings.

Ben Bishop, who was teammates with Allen on Peoria of the AHL for two seasons, had 22 saves for the Lightning.

Kings 4, Jets 1: Milan Lucic snapped a tie with his second goal of the season at 15:19 of the third, and visiting Los Angeles earned its sixth straight victory.

Tyler Toffoli looked as if he was going to shoot before sending the puck across the front of the net and Lucic was credited with redirecting it past Ondrej Pavelec. Toffoli added an empty-net goal at 19:06, and Trevor Lewis scored with 27 seconds left.

Jonathan Quick, who has won his last five games, made 24 saves for the Kings.

Blue Jackets 3, Devils 1: Boone Jenner and Cam Atkinson scored 35 seconds apart in the third period, and visiting Columbus stopped New Jersey's four-game winning streak.

The Blue Jackets won their second straight game under new coach John Tortorella despite having only 14 shots. Sergei Bobrovsky made 23 saves.

Wild 4, Oilers 3: Charlie Coyle scored for host Minnesota midway through the third period, 43 seconds after Ryan Suter's second goal of the game thwarted Edmonton's rally.

Darnell Nurse scored his first NHL goal soon after the second intermission, giving the Oilers the lead following a 2-0 deficit in the first period, but the Wild roared back against goalie Cam Talbot.

Panthers 4, Avalanche 1: Vincent Trocheck had two goals and an assist for host Florida, and Roberto Luongo passed Grant Fuhr for sole possession of ninth on the wins list with No. 404 for his career.

Brian Campbell added a goal and two assists and Reilly Smith also had a goal and an assist. Luongo made 31 saves in the Panthers' second straight victory.

Sabres 4, Flyers 3 (OT): Zemgus Girgensons scored on a breakaway with 2:31 left in overtime, lifting visiting Buffalo to the victory.

After the Flyers turned it over in their end, Carlo Colaiacovo sent a long pass to a wide-open Girgensons, who beat Steve Mason.

Hurricanes 3, Red Wings 1: Victor Rask and Ron Hainsey scored to lead visiting Carolina to the victory.

Eric Staal added an empty-net goal with 30 seconds left and Cam Ward stopped 24 shots for the Hurricanes.

Bruins 6, Coyotes 0: Tuukka Rask made 24 saves for his 27th career shutout, David Krejci scored two goals and Boston got its first home win of the season.

Jimmy Hayes, Joe Morrow, Brett Connolly and Brad Marchand also scored for the Bruins, who had lost their first four home games (0-3-1).