

STARS AND STRIPES®

Friday, September 4, 2015

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Marine dies during rope training

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — The U.S. Marine who died during a helicopter accident at Camp Lejeune was part of a Virginia-based anti-terrorism and security team training on how to use ropes to access difficult terrain, officials said Friday.

Military officials identified the dead Marine as Staff Sgt. Jonathan Lewis, 31, from Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team, Company B, based in Yorktown, Va. He was a native of Warrenton, Va.

Two Marines remained hospitalized in stable condition Friday, while nine have been treated and released.

About 20 Marines from Virginia and North Carolina were participating Wednesday night in training that requires them to exit through the back of a helicopter using suspended ropes. The rappelling and fast-rope

techniques allow Marines to enter terrain where helicopter landings would be difficult.

"The training requires the highest-caliber Marine," said Col. Jeffrey Kenney, officer in charge of the Expeditionary Operations Training Group. He described the training as "high-risk" but also "invaluable" because it allows Marines to deploy anywhere.

Marine officials said at a news conference that Lewis was inside the CH-53E Super Stallion when it landed harder and faster than normal at about 9 p.m. in a Camp Lejeune training area. They declined to elaborate on how the accident happened or discuss the maintenance history of the helicopter.

Col. Sean Salene, commanding officer of Marine Aircraft Group 29, said the aircraft is damaged and that officials haven't determined whether

it will return to service.

A 2003 edition of the Marines' manual for Helicopter Rope Suspension Techniques warns of the potential for injury or death in the training. It also discusses how nighttime operations can be a challenge, lays out safety procedures and primes Marines on how wind from the helicopter's rotors can affect them.

It's not clear if those factors played a role; the Marines said a full investigation will take some time.

The helicopter was assigned to Heavy Helicopter Squadron-464, Marine Aircraft group-29, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing.

"The loss of a Marine or sailor affects us all. My heartfelt condolences go out to the families and friends of our deceased Marine," said Maj. Gen. William Beydler, commanding general of II Marine Expeditionary Force.

General provides Iraq battle updates

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Kurdish fighters backed by U.S.-led coalition airstrikes have made "significant" advances against the Islamic State group near Tuz Khormato in northern Iraq as the effort to reclaim the western city of Ramadi is moving slowly, a U.S. general said Friday.

Kurdish peshmerga fighters in the Tuz Khormato area have been pushing back Islamic State fighters, "denying them terrain and causing them to make some hard operational decisions," Marine Brig. Gen. Kevin J. Killea, chief of staff of the Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve said during a video press conference at the Pentagon.

"Their actions demonstrate once again that territory can be retaken from ISIL," he said, using one of several acronyms for the Islamic State. "Reducing their ability to control seized areas for significant portions of time, and thereby degrading establishment of any level of governance."

In Ramadi, the capital of Anbar, Iraqi Security Forces remain in the "isolation phase," Killea said, meaning trying to surround the city and isolate it from the rest of Anbar.

The Washington Post quoted the Iraqi head of the Anbar Operations Command, Maj. Gen. Qasim al-Mohammadi, as saying the operation was moving slowly because "there are not enough airstrikes from the coalition to clear targets on the ground."

5th Fleet sees change in command

BY CHRIS CHURCH

Stars and Stripes

MANAMA, Bahrain — Vice Adm. Kevin M. Donegan assumed command on Thursday of the U.S. 5th Fleet, relieving Vice Adm. John W. Miller, who oversaw the Navy's contribution to the fight against the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria.

Donegan is familiar with the region because he previously served as the director of operations for U.S. Central Command, which oversees operations in the Middle East. Fifth Fleet is formally known as U.S. Naval Forces Central Command.

Donegan said assuming command here was like a homecoming after serving three years in the Pentagon, including as the acting deputy chief of naval

operations for operations plans and strategy.

"I'm back in the operational fleet here getting to work side by side with our forward-deployed sailors and Marines," Donegan said. "I can't tell you how excited I am to be here."

In July, Miller received the Navy Unit Commendation Medal on behalf of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command from the Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Jonathan Greenert. Under Miller's three-year watch, 5th Fleet supported airstrikes against the Islamic State group, as well as antipiracy operations and countermine measures.

"To all of you here tonight that have been a part of these efforts, you should be proud of what you've accomplished," Miller said.

During the ceremony, Miller, who is retiring, received the Distinguished Service Medal for his accomplishments while leading 5th Fleet. Last week, he received the Bahrain Medal of the First Class from the King of Bahrain, Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, for his efforts in maintaining stability in the region.

The 5th Fleet's area of responsibility covers some 2.5 million square miles, including the strategically important and conflict-prone Persian Gulf. Naval operations in the 5th Fleet aim to ensure the free movement of ships throughout the region.

The area also serves as the central hub for aircraft carriers conducting airstrikes against the Islamic State group.

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Army orders immediate safety review at DOD labs

By TARA COPP
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Army has ordered an “immediate safety review” of all Defense Department laboratories involved in handling biological agents after investigators found evidence of anthrax contamination at its Dugway Proving Ground in Utah “outside the primary containment area.”

Army Secretary John McHugh announced the review late Thursday in an “abundance of caution,” according to a statement.

“The review follows the discovery of evidence of anthrax contamination in secure areas located outside the primary containment area but still contained within the special enclosed lab for holding these materials” at Dugway, the statement said.

Investigators from both the Pentagon and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have been at the Dugway facility over the last few months to determine how that facility ended up shipping live samples of anthrax across the U.S. and to nine foreign countries.

The Pentagon statement said the review will involve all nine DOD labs and facilities “involved in the production, ship-

ment, and handling of live and inactivated select agents and toxins.” The labs must confirm within 10 days that they are now following appropriate protocols, it said.

In the meantime, all shipments of anthrax or other biological agents have been suspended “until the Army determines it is appropriate to resume operations,” the statement added.

The Pentagon confirmed this week that shipments of live anthrax were sent to 194 labs in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam and nine countries. No illnesses have been reported as a result of the shipments.

Pentagon press secretary Peter Cook told reporters Thursday that he could not say whether the final report, due in October, would specify who within Dugway’s leadership was accountable for the shipments and what actions would be taken as a result.

The Army, which has the lead on the investigation, is “continuing to assess the situation at Dugway and these other facilities for safety and for exactly how these substances get handled going forward, and the question of accountability,” Cook said.

New F-35 fighters arrive at Utah’s Hill Air Force Base

Associated Press

HILL AIR FORCE BASE, Utah — A new squadron of fighter jets started arriving Wednesday at northern Utah’s Hill Air Force Base, which will serve as an operational base for the new F-35.

Two F-35 jets touched down Wednesday afternoon at the base, about 20 miles north of Salt Lake City, after departing from a manufacturing facility in Fort Worth, Texas.

The F-35 is a new fighter jet that the Air Force, the Navy

and the Marine Corps will be using. The Air Force version costs about \$130 million each.

The F-35, also called the Joint Strike Fighter, is replacing the F-16 with greater speed and combat range and lower maintenance costs because of a computerized self-test system, according to the Air Force.

A total of 72 of the fighter jets and their pilots will be permanently based in Utah.

One to two additional jets are expected to arrive every month until the full fleet is in place sometime in 2019.

US Pacific sub force gets new commander

Associated Press

PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii — The U.S. Navy on Thursday installed a new commander to lead its submarine force in the Pacific at a time when growing Chinese operations in places like the South China Sea are boosting U.S. demand for the eavesdropping capabilities of the underwater vessels.

Rear Adm. Frederick Roegge, who most recently served in the Pentagon, took over the job of Rear Adm. Phillip Sawyer during a ceremony at Pearl Harbor.

Sawyer is becoming deputy and chief of staff for the U.S. Pacific Fleet, which has its headquarters just across the road, and he will stay in Hawaii.

The ceremony’s guest speak-

er, Adm. Cecil Haney, a former submarine commander himself and currently the commander of U.S. Strategic Command, said significant disagreements and disputes challenge peace and stability in the Pacific.

“For example, we see China’s efforts to assert regional dominance in the East and South China Seas while at the same time they’re operating a new ballistic missile submarine force, modernizing its mobile and fixed intercontinental ballistic missiles and conducting persistent cyberactivities and counterspace demonstrations,” Haney said.

The submarine force, which is often called the “silent service,” plays an important role in keeping track of China’s increased activity.

Wis. VA center known as ‘Candy Land’ fires chief

La Crosse (Wis.) Tribune

The director of the Tomah Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Wisconsin was fired Wednesday, becoming the second top official to be axed in the wake of reports of overmedication practices blamed for the death of at least one veteran.

Acting director John Rohrer sent an email to employees Wednesday morning stating only that Mario DeSanctis “is no longer employed” by the VA.

The VA did not immediately say whether DeSanctis was fired or quit, but a spokesperson for U.S. Rep. Ron Kind said the congressman was informed that DeSanctis had been “let go.”

DeSanctis, an Air Force veteran who took over leadership of the center in 2012, is the second VA official to depart since the nonprofit Center for Investigative Reporting

published a report in January detailing high levels of opioid prescription at the Tomah VA — patients dubbed the hospital “Candy Land” because physicians there dispensed prescription painkillers so freely — and a pervasive culture of intimidation and retaliation against employees who spoke out.

Last month, the VA’s Inspector General ruled that deficiencies in care led to the death last year of patient Jason Simcakoski. The investigation found that psychiatrists did not discuss the hazards of a synthetic opiate prescribed to the 35-year-old Marine Corps veteran and did not have anti-overdose medicine on hand.

In the wake of the Inspector General report, Rohrer announced that one of the physicians who attended to Simcakoski had been fired.

Golson's FSU view different this time

Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Everett Golson was standing near one of the sidelines at Doak Campbell Stadium on Florida State's campus on a sunny morning this summer, quietly taking a long look toward the empty bleachers.

His mind wondered: What if?

What if the offensive pass interference flag — one he still thinks wasn't exactly warranted — hadn't come out at the end of the game and denied the Notre Dame team that he was leading what would have been a huge win at Florida State a year ago? Would he have left the Fighting Irish after the season? Would the Seminoles have accepted him into their locker room? Would they even have wanted him as a transfer?

These are questions that will never be answered, nor will never need answering.

Reveled at Doak Campbell last season, Golson will likely be revered there starting Saturday — his debut as Florida State's starting quarterback when the 10th-ranked Seminoles open against Texas State. Golson earned the starting nod this week, replacing 2013 Heisman Trophy winner, national champion and now No. 1 overall NFL Draft pick Jameis Winston under center in Florida State's offense.

"Right now, I'm just looking forward," Golson said. "I can't affect the past. The past is what it is. I'm just looking forward to being on that other side where you have all those fans screaming for you and just kind of being part of that culture."

Golson appeared in 25 games for Notre Dame, starting for the Irish in their BCS championship game loss to Alabama at the end of the 2012 season. He was suspended for the fall 2013 semester for using, as he put it, "poor judgment on a test." The Irish were 6-0 when they went to Florida State for a showdown on Oct. 18, Golson was dazzling at times but the Seminoles survived 31-27 thanks in part to that call at the end.

That started a stretch of five losses in six games for Notre Dame, the downfall of the season and downfall of his off-troubled career in South Bend. Golson didn't even start the bowl game against LSU and after graduating in the spring he was gone, eventually settling on Florida State.

It all seems like a lifetime ago.

"Long time. Long time," Golson said. "But that just speaks to everything that I've been through. ... I've been at every end of that spectrum. That's the stuff I can take now and say I've learned and I've matured."

A year ago, he was trying to beat the Irish.

Now, he's about to try to lead them.

"I set expectations very high," Golson said. "This program does as well."

SEC hungry for national title

Associated Press

ATLANTA — The Southeastern Conference has gone two whole years without winning a national title.

In this part of the college football world, that seems like an eternity.

Whether the drought ends this season will likely depend largely on the influx of new quarterbacks. For some, an off-season of uncertainty is still playing out with the opener just days away.

"We're trying to make a decision on what's best for our team," Alabama coach Nick Saban said Wednesday, again holding off on picking a starter for the third-ranked Crimson Tide's game against No. 20 Wisconsin in Arlington, Texas.

Saban's foot-dragging on deciding between senior Jake Coker, junior Alec Morris and sophomore Cooper Bateman seems to be a prevailing theme throughout the SEC.

No. 9 Georgia finally got around this week to choosing Greyson Lambert as its starter, but he hardly got a rousing endorsement from coach Mark Richt. No. 14 LSU is going with Brandon Harris, but former starter Anthony Jennings is lurking not too far behind. Florida, led by new coach Jim McElwain, will begin the season with two guys (Will Grier and Treon

Harris) still competing for the job.

McElwain on Wednesday did name Harris the starter for Saturday's opener against New Mexico State but it remains a fluid situation as the coach cautioned "not to read that much into" the decision.

In addition, No. 6 Auburn, No. 17 Mississippi, South Carolina and Vanderbilt will all be breaking in new starters at the most visible position on the field.

"Sometimes the biggest battle on the team is at right guard," McElwain said. "Of course, that doesn't get as many hits on the Internet."

Given the turnover, many SEC teams might play things a bit closer to the vest, at least early in the season. Star running backs such as Georgia's Nick Chubb, Alabama's Derrick Henry and LSU's Leonard Fournette could get even more carries. The onus will also be on the defenses to keep the score down.

"I think the more important thing is not to ask players to do what they're not ready to do or what they can't do," Saban said. "It's important that the rest of the team plays well around the new quarterback, too."

The SEC's turnover is especially glaring compared to defending national champion Ohio State, which has an embarrassment of riches at quarterback with J.T.

Barrett and Cardale Jones — not to mention former starter Braxton Miller, who switched to receiver over the summer.

Here's a look at the SEC heading into the opening weekend:

All set: Mississippi State has the SEC's top incumbent quarterback in Heisman Trophy contender Dak Prescott but only three other returning starters on offense. Prescott could be in for a big drop-off; certainly, the Bulldogs will be hard-pressed to duplicate a season that ended with a trip to the Orange Bowl.

Questionable: Georgia has more than enough talent to compete for a national championship — until you get to quarterback. Lambert transferred to Athens after losing his starting job at Virginia during spring practice in a competition that Cavaliers coach Mike London said "wasn't close." Virginia is hardly a powerhouse program, so it's only natural to wonder if Lambert is good enough to lead a top 10 team.

To be announced: All eyes are on Alabama, which started out with five guys competing for the job before reducing the list to a more manageable number. Then again, given the talent the Crimson Tide has at every other position, it may not really matter who takes the snaps.

Utah spoils Harbaugh's debut

The Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Jim Harbaugh was swarmed by cameramen from the moment he stepped off the bus at Rice-Eccles Stadium. College football's newest rock star had finally arrived to play a game after eight months of hype.

And Utah was sick of hearing about it.

The Utes felt disrespected despite being favored and spoiled Harbaugh's Michigan coaching debut with a smothering defense, beating the Wolverines 24-17 on Thursday night in the opener for both teams.

"We beat Michigan for third time in a row," Utah coach Kyle Whittingham said. "That's a heck of an accolade for our program."

Harbaugh came as advertised — blue long-sleeved shirt, blue cap with the block "M," khakis and lanyard with whistle attached. Unfortunately for Michigan fans, the team didn't look drastically different than the 2014 version. The quarterback struggled and the running game was nonexistent. That spelled trouble for the offense.

"I thought we were playing a little bit tentative in the first half and not coming off the ball like we need to," Harbaugh said. "We did miss some holes, backs missed some holes. All things to grow and improve on and I thought we did that as the game went on."

No. 2 TCU 23, Minnesota 17: Trevone Boykin threw for 246 yards and a touchdown and ran for 92 yards and

another score to help the Horned Frogs outlast the host Golden Gophers.

Boykin started his Heisman push by completing 26 of 42 passes. But he also threw an interception and the Horned Frogs had a difficult time getting their frenetic offense rolling against Minnesota's determined defense. Their 23 points were their fewest scored since Nov. 9, 2013.

Mitch Leidner threw for 197 yards for Minnesota. His touchdown pass to K.J. Maye with 1:32 left pulled the Golden Gophers within a touchdown, but TCU recovered the onside kick to hang on.

No. 22 Arizona 42, UTSA 32: Anu Solomon threw four touchdown passes to help the host Wildcats beat the Roadrunners, but the victors suffered a big blow when All-America linebacker Scooby Wright went out early with a left knee injury.

Wright, the junior who swept the major defensive player of the year awards last season, went down in the first quarter and spent the second half in street clothes, walking with a cane.

Arizona sputtered on offense most of the night and allowed UTSA, a team returning two offensive starters, to rack up 525 total yards.

No. 16 Georgia Tech 69, Alcorn State 6: At Atlanta, Freshman Marcus Marshall ran for 184 yards and two long touchdowns in his college debut, Patrick Skov scored three TDs in his first game with the Yellow Jackets.

Georgia Tech scored on its first seven possessions in the opener for both

teams, barely breaking a sweat against the Football Championship Subdivision school from Mississippi.

The Yellow Jackets led 34-0 at the end of the first quarter, their most points in an opening quarter since at least 1950. The officials were already letting the clock run in the second quarter, looking to make things a little easier on the Braves. Georgia Tech led 48-0 at halftime and never let up.

Quarterback Justin Thomas played only the first quarter, running for one score and passing for another.

South Carolina 17, North Carolina 13: At Charlotte, N.C., Shon Carson ran for 75 yards and a touchdown, linebacker Skai Moore intercepted two passes in the end zone and the Gamecocks defeated the rival Tar Heels.

Carson, the Gamecocks' third-string running back, made an immediate impact on his first carry early in the fourth quarter, breaking free around right tackle and racing 48 yards for the go-ahead touchdown.

The Gamecocks intercepted Tar Heels quarterback Marquise Williams three times. Moore helped seal the game when he stepped in front of Williams' pass on a fourth-and-goal at the South Carolina 8 with 3:40 remaining.

South Carolina quarterback Connor Mitch was 9-for-22 for 122 yards and a touchdown in his first career start before leaving with a hip injury in the fourth quarter.



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Murray survives 5-set match

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Before they stepped on court, there was nothing to suggest Andy Murray would have any trouble against Adrian Panatta in the U.S. Open's second round.

Murray, after all, is seeded No. 3, owns two major championships including at Flushing Meadows in 2012, and had reached at least the quarterfinals at the last 18 Grand Slam tournaments he'd entered. Panatta, meanwhile, is ranked 35th, has never won a tour-level title, and only three times in his career has even managed to win more than one match at a major.

So it certainly came as a surprise when, in Thursday's opening game, Panatta broke Murray. About an hour later, Panatta grabbed the opening set. And 45 minutes after that, the Frenchman took the second set, too.

"I just had to kind of tell myself that I would get there eventually," Murray said. "I had time to get back into it."

Yet despite a stuffy nose and scratchy throat, and generally looking as if he might be ready to wilt on another steamy day at Flushing Meadows — two more mid-match retirements, including by 28th-seeded Jack Sock of the United States, raised the total to 12 in the men's draw so far — Murray put together his eighth career comeback from a two-set deficit and beat Panatta 5-7, 4-6, 6-1, 6-3, 6-1.

"He was looking for his rhythm," Panatta said. "I think that finally he found it."

Roger Federer had his rhythm from the

start, compiling a 46-8 edge in winners while beating Steve Darcis of Belgium 6-1, 6-2, 6-1 at night, before 2014 runner-up Caroline Wozniacki was stunned by 149th-ranked Petra Cetkovska of the Czech Republic 6-4, 5-7, 7-6 (1) in the day's last match, which ended after midnight. Wozniacki held four match points but each was erased by Cetkovska.

Against Murray, Panatta, a lefty, delivered 12 of the match's first 14 forehand winners and repeatedly found success with drop shots.

But his play eventually dipped, while Murray really cleaned up his own act after the rough start: He went from making 21 unforced errors in the first two sets to only 14 the rest of the way.

"He has such an unorthodox game, I didn't really feel that comfortable at many points," Murray said. "But I was happy, very happy, with the way I fought through that, finished the match stronger than him."

Early in the fourth set, Murray doubled over and rested his hands on his knees after a couple of points, the sort of thing the Brit has been known to do during matches — appearing weary or injured yet able to still play well.

"Who knows? Maybe he (is) — not faking — but sometimes (feeling) tired, even if he's not," Panatta said.

Murray's explanation? "That's, I think, what a lot of people do when they're out of breath or tired," he said.

Sock took the opening two sets against 107th-ranked Ruben Bemelmans and was three games away from winning in the third, but his body seized up because of

cramps, unable to deal with the heat that topped 90 degrees.

In a scary scene early in the fourth set, less than two hours in, Sock froze in place, his legs locked. A trainer helped the 22-year-old American sit down near the baseline, and Sock appeared to have trouble even extending his arm when Bemelmans walked around the net and leaned over for a handshake.

"I didn't have too much difficulty," said Bemelmans, who will face French Open champion Stan Wawrinka next.

Sock didn't hold a news conference, instead releasing a statement that called his retirement "extremely disappointing."

There are only two American men remaining of the 16 who were in the draw: No. 13 John Isner and unseeded Donald Young.

"It's tough to see," Isner said about Sock's cramping. "It's not a fitness thing. I think that's a big, big misconception. He's in very good shape. He can play 50-ball rallies if he wants to. But he sweats a lot. ... His body was at a deficit of whatever it is — sodium, magnesium, potassium."

Denis Istomin of Uzbekistan stopped playing against 20th-seeded Dominic Thiem of Austria, citing an injured right leg.

Including two retirements by women, 14 players have stopped playing during matches because of injury or illness, tying the 2011 U.S. Open for the most through the first two rounds at a Grand Slam tournament.

"Maybe it's the end of the year — players are not as fit ... as in the beginning of the year," Bemelmans said. "It's the humidity, the heat — it's all these combinations."

Brady case may bring big changes

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Tom Brady is free and Ramon Foster can't help but laugh. Sorry, the irony is just a little too delicious.

The Pittsburgh Steelers' guard remembers joining the rest of his teammates in declining to ratify the new collective bargaining agreement between the owners and the NFL Players Association in the summer of 2011 because of concerns it gave Commissioner Roger Goodell too much authority.

Now Foster was sitting in his locker Thursday night praising the New England Patriots' quarterback for making a stand against Goodell, a stand the Steelers felt obligated to make four years ago while the other 31 teams — the Patriots included — rushed to get back on the field and get paid following a four-month lockout.

U.S. District Judge Richard M. Berman's decision to lift the four-game ban levied against Brady by the NFL for the four-time Super Bowl winner's perceived role in "Deflategate" struck a serious blow to Goodell's credibility. It also shed light on an issue the Steelers homed in on long ago: Goodell's process of serving as judge, jury and executioner when it comes to issuing discipline is misguided.

"That's just Roger Goodell abusing his power again, I guess," Foster said. "We've known it for a while and it's been going on for a while, too. We don't know what's going to happen or change from that, but it shows that he's been abusing power."

Berman took Goodell to task for developing his "own brand of industrial justice" when it came to penalizing Brady on what Berman concluded were shaky legal grounds. The NFL is appealing the decision "to uphold the collectively bargained responsibility to protect the integrity of the game."

Either way, the players hope Brady's victory will serve as a wake-up call to Goodell that maybe it is time to recalibrate the way the commissioner's office polices those who wear "The Shield."

Berman chastised Goodell for being overzealous while hitting Brady with a lengthy suspension for what was basically an equipment violation. That forced Brady to take the unusual step of going to federal court in an attempt to clear his name after running out of recourse within the NFL's limited appeals process.

"The league is probably going to have to re-examine some of the ways they go about doing these things," St. Louis defensive end Chris Long said. "That's not necessarily a bad thing if it helps players in the future with the punishments."

The near future may be a little too optimistic. The NFL's decision to fight Berman's decision means the issue could drag on for several more months.

Not that Brady will care next Thursday when he and the Patriots raise another Super Bowl championship banner and welcome the Steelers, the guys who saw this coming long ago. It sounds weird, but Foster wouldn't have it any other way.

"Often times the union gets talked down about, that we're not doing the right thing," Foster said. "For the most part Tom used the union lawyers to fight this case and it worked in our favor."

Harper's four walks key to rout of Braves

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Bryce Harper walked all four times he came to the plate and scored each time as Washington sent Atlanta to its ninth straight loss, 15-1 Thursday night.

Ryan Zimmerman kept up his torrid stretch with three hits and four RBIs and Jordan Zimmermann (12-8) pitched six solid innings.

The Nationals moved within six games of the first-place Mets in the NL East. The Braves have lost 16 of 17.

Harper joined Larry Doby (1951), Joe Morgan (1973) and Rickey Henderson (1989) as the only players to score four runs without an official at-bat since 1914, according to STATS.

Rookie Matt Wisler (5-6) is 0-5 with a 9.49 ERA in his last seven starts.

Brewers 5, Pirates 3: Taylor Jungmann pitched six strong innings as host Milwaukee completed a sweep and beat Pittsburgh for the sixth straight time overall.

The three losses at Miller Park dropped the Pirates 6½ games behind the NL Central-leading Cardinals. Pittsburgh opens a three-game series at St. Louis on Friday night.

Jungmann (9-5) gave up one run and three hits. Francisco Rodriguez closed for his 33rd save in 34 chances.

Francisco Liriano (9-7) took the loss.

White Sox 6, Twins 4: J.B. Shuck's two-run, pinch-hit triple in the seventh inning lifted visiting Chicago over Minnesota.

Eddie Rosario hit a grand slam for the Twins, who fell 1½ games behind idle Texas for the second AL wild-card spot. Minnesota now starts a nine-game trip to division leaders Houston and Kansas City and wraps up at the White Sox.

Shuck's liner off reliever Casey Fien (4-6)

made it 5-4 and helped Chicago win for just the second time in 10 games at Target Field this season.

Jeff Samardzija (9-11) ended his six-game losing streak. David Robertson got his 28th save in 34 chances.

Royals 15, Tigers 7: Lorenzo Cain hit a three-run homer, Paulo Orlando added a two-run shot and Kendrys Morales drove in four runs as host Kansas City wrapped up another series win.

Ben Zobrist drove in two runs for the Royals, whose 15 runs and 20 hits were their most since piling up 21 hits in a 16-8 victory at Colorado on July 3, 2011.

Chris Young (10-6) earned the win with two scoreless innings in relief of Edinson Volquez, who yielded six runs, eight hits and a walk in three innings.

Tigers starter Matt Boyd was hammered for six runs before getting the hook four batters into the second inning.

Reliever Kyle Ryan (1-3) was tagged with the loss as Detroit pitchers allowed 61 runs during a 1-5 trip through Toronto and Kansas City.

Nick Castellanos drove in three runs for the Tigers.

After dropping the series opener, the Royals managed 34 hits and 27 runs in taking the next two games. That allowed the AL Central leaders to extend their unbeaten streak to eight straight series.

Rockies 11, Giants 3: Carlos Gonzalez homered twice for the second straight night and Chris Rusin pitched a complete game for host Colorado.

Gonzalez hit two two-run homers to take the NL lead with a career-high 35. He finished with four hits and drove in four runs to lead Colorado's season-high 19-hit effort.

Nolan Arenado of the Rockies homered

for the fourth consecutive game.

Gonzalez's big night helped extend San Francisco's losing streak to six games.

Gonzalez, who hit a grand slam and a two-run homer in his last two at-bats against Arizona on Wednesday, went deep off Ryan Vogelsong in Colorado's four-run first. He greeted reliever George Kontos with a shot down the right-field line in the fourth to give Colorado a 9-2 lead. He has 11 RBIs in his last two games.

Gonzalez has 16 career multi-homer games in his career, including six this season which have all come since July 24. He doubled in the second and singled in the ninth ahead of Arenado's 34th homer.

Vogelsong (9-11) allowed eight runs — seven earned — on 11 hits in three-plus innings.

Rusin (5-7) allowed three runs and six hits and struck out five.

Padres 10, Dodgers 7: Jedd Gyorko hit a two-run homer and Yangervis Solarte had four hits to lead host San Diego.

With San Diego trailing 7-6 entering the eighth inning, Jim Johnson (2-6) walked leadoff hitter Justin Upton before Gyorko followed with 11th homer.

Kevin Quackenbush (3-2) pitched two scoreless innings to earn the victory.

Joaquin Benoit retired the side in the ninth for his second save.

San Diego scored two runs in each of the first two innings against Dodgers starter Mat Latos, who allowed four runs in four innings and has not won a game since being acquired by Los Angeles on July 30.

Odrisamer Despaigne and Marc Rzepczynski allowed five runs in the sixth as the Dodgers built a 7-4 lead. Solarte hit a solo home run to pull San Diego within 7-6. Solarte had two doubles and a single.