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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Report urges shift in US Pacific strategy

Think tank: More subs, fewer carriers needed to combat China's military growth

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

Faced with China's growing anti-surface-ship capacity, the United States should decrease its emphasis on large aircraft carriers in the Pacific and spend more on submarines, space capabilities and ways to make air bases and aircraft less vulnerable, according to a report released this month by the Rand Corp.

In the 430-page report, the Santa Monica, Calif.-based think tank analyzed the relative military capabilities of the U.S. and China in certain scenarios based on open-source documents. The analysis makes comparisons using 10 "scorecards" covering air, maritime, space, cyberspace and nuclear domains.

Capabilities were examined at seven-year intervals, beginning in 1996 and projecting to 2017, considering two "plausible" scenarios of conflict between the two countries: a Chinese invasion of Taiwan and its forcible occupation of the Spratly Islands. China claims sovereignty over both.

This past year, China expanded a number of the tiny Spratly atolls through dredging and has built several runways — even as the U.S. has denounced those moves as militarizing the archipelago.

"Over the next five to 15 years, if U.S. and [People's Liberation Army] forces remain on roughly current trajectories, Asia will witness a progressively receding frontier of U.S. dominance," the report said.

Although China is not close to catching up to the U.S. in terms of overall military power, that's not necessary for it to control the region at its doorstep, the report said.

"No one wants war; nobody expects war," said Eric Heginbotham, lead author and political scientist at Rand, when explaining the analysis' purpose. "But I think the balance of power affects calculations on both sides. Balance of power has a major impact on the probability of war."

Military dominance by the U.S., however, does not necessarily equate to deterrence in moments of instability when the two nations could potentially consider the

incentives for a first strike, he said.

"If you have a highly offensive force or set of weapons that are very forward-deployed — sort of on the periphery of China — but not resilient to attack, then [have] a crisis, both sides could have incentives to strike first," Heginbotham said. Attempting to restore U.S. dominance without thinking about the impact on crisis stability could inadvertently undermine the value of that supremacy, he said.

Complicating factors

Several broad factors complicate U.S. efforts to maintain military capabilities relative to China.

Since 1996, China's ability to threaten the U.S. Navy surface fleet "at significant ranges from the mainland" has burgeoned, the report said.

'Chinese submarines would present a credible threat to U.S. surface ships in a conflict over Taiwan or the South China Sea.'

Rand Corp. report

with long ranges; and the use of larger, quieter submarines armed with cruise missiles.

"The impact of Chinese threats to carriers will likely be greatest during the first stages of conflict," the report said.

The U.S. has the means to mitigate those anti-surface capabilities, such as anti-missile systems and air patrols from aircraft carriers; however, some of those measures diminish the U.S. military's ability to project power, the report said.

"Holding carriers farther from the scene of the main battle area would entail longer

transit times for combat aircraft, fewer aircraft on station and an increased demand for U.S. Air Force tanker support," the report said.

In the event of a Taiwan conflict in 2017, U.S. carriers would be at significant risk, and in a Spratly Islands conflict, they would also be at risk, but to a lesser degree, the analysis concluded.

The "growing threat to U.S. surface ships" — as well as the vulnerability of U.S. air bases to Chinese missiles — "is arguably the most serious challenge facing U.S. forces in any potential China scenario," the report said.

China's ongoing modernization of air and submarine capabilities pose a more "certain" threat to carrier strike groups, the report said. China's modern diesel sub numbers rose from two in 1996 to 37 this year, and all but four are armed with cruise missiles and torpedoes.

Rand modeling found that "the effectiveness of the Chinese submarine fleet (as measured by the number of attack opportunities it might achieve against carriers) rose by roughly an order of magnitude between 1996 and 2010, and ... it will continue to improve through 2017."

"Chinese submarines would present a credible threat to U.S. surface ships in a conflict over Taiwan or the South China Sea," the report said.

Meanwhile, the growing size and sophistication of Chinese ballistic and cruise missile forces puts all U.S. regional air bases at risk, Heginbotham said. And China's force of modern fighters and other attack aircraft could deploy quickly and en masse to a geographically close conflict involving Taiwan, he said.

There are options for the U.S. to improve resiliency, such as finding new basing options farther from China, making the force more survivable, emphasizing area-denial capacity and ensuring counterattack capability, Heginbotham said.

"All of that could contribute to deterrence and defense and not result in greater crisis instability," he said.

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Defectors: Islamic State brutal, corrupt

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — A survey of defectors from the Islamic State group has found many quit the organization because they felt it was too brutal or corrupt, or because it made war too frequently against other Sunni Muslims.

The survey, issued Monday by a London-based research center, relied on the public statements of 58 people known to have left the Islamic State group since last year.

Peter Neumann, director of the International Center for the Study of Radicalization

and Political Violence and the report's author, told Associated Press its findings shatter the image of unity and determination that the Islamic State group seeks to portray.

The defectors surveyed, Neumann said, constitute just a "small fraction" of the growing number of fighters who have turned against the Islamic State group. If given wide circulation, he said, the defectors' complaints could deter future recruits from joining the militant group, which has seized large swaths of territory in

Syria and Iraq and has become notorious for mass killings, beheadings and abductions.

The survey found common narratives among defectors, including disappointment that life under the Islamic State group is excessively harsh and that it commits atrocities against other Sunni Muslims.

And, though the organization in June 2014 formally proclaimed the establishment of a caliphate, or a state governed in accordance with Islamic law, some defectors accused it of being corrupt or un-Islamic.

Defectors also complained that the Islamic State group is more interested in fighting fellow Sunnis than the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Some of the former fighters complained of being victims of racism, or that their experiences with Islamic State failed to meet their expectations of action and heroism. Some complained they didn't get the cars or luxury goods they were promised, or that as foreign fighters, they were exploited as cannon fodder.

Pope visits Fidel Castro after warning on ideology

HAVANA — Pope Francis met with Fidel Castro on Sunday after urging tens of thousands of Cubans to serve one another and not an ideology, delivering a subtle jab at the communist system during a Mass celebrated under the gaze of an image of Che Guevara in Havana's iconic Plaza of the Revolution.

The Vatican described the 40-minute meeting at Castro's residence as informal and familial, with an exchange of books and discussion about big issues facing humanity, including Francis' recent encyclical on the environment and the global economic system.

From The Associated Press

GOP chiefs work to stifle shutdown talk

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Congress' Republican leaders face stark tests as they fight to keep the government open past month's end amid fears a shutdown could imperil their party's White House ambitions.

For House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, any wrong move could throw his very future into question, exposing him to a threatened showdown vote on the floor of the House over whether he can remain in his job. If that happens, there is no certain outcome.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., must contend with the ambitions of several GOP presidential candidates. One of them, Sen. Ted

Cruz of Texas, has made it his business to oppose the Kentuckian at every turn, even taking to the Senate floor to accuse him of lying.

Now Cruz is once again goading a group of House tea partyers who have wreaked havoc with the leadership in the past.

Together they are demanding that must-pass spending legislation cut off all federal money for Planned Parenthood. The efforts follows the disclosure of secretly recorded and edited videos in which Planned Parenthood officials are shown discussing how they acquire fetal parts for medical research.

Such a bill could not pass the Senate and would face a certain veto from President Barack

Obama, raising the prospect of a partial government shutdown like the one two years ago in a similar struggle over the health care law.

With less than two weeks to the Oct. 1 deadline, there remains no endgame — unless it's divine intervention in the form of a historic address from Pope Francis to a joint meeting of Congress on Thursday.

For the majority of congressional Republicans, who have little interest in palace intrigue or shutdown talk, the infighting and disarray serve only as a depressing reminder of the GOP's repeated failures to capitalize on historic congressional majorities to advance a governing agenda that could help their party retake the presidency.

1 in 4 US female undergrads report sexual misconduct

Los Angeles Times

More than one in four female undergraduate students reported they were victimized by nonconsensual sexual contact in a national survey of 27 universities released Monday.

But the survey for the Association of American Universities, one of the most comprehensive

conducted on college sexual misconduct, found wide variation in the cases depending on campus, gender, age and type of offense.

Among undergraduate females, for instance, between 13 percent and 30 percent had been victimized by the most serious types of misconduct — sexual penetration or touch-

ing involving force, threats of force or incapacitation by alcohol or drugs. The risk was highest for freshman women, whose rate was 16.9 percent, compared with 11.1 percent for seniors in 2014-15. Over the course of their college lives, 26.1 percent of senior females reported being victimized.

The online survey of 150,000

students also found low rates of reporting sexual misconduct and a mixed response over whether respondents believed their universities would conduct fair investigations. But the vast majority of those who reported their cases gave high marks to officials for showing them respect and helping them understand their options.

Cowboys win, but lose Romo

The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Now the Dallas Cowboys have to defend their NFC East title without Tony Romo, Dez Bryant and DeMarco Murray.

Romo joined Bryant on the injured list with a broken left collarbone, but the Cowboys shut down Murray and beat the Philadelphia Eagles 20-10 on Sunday.

Romo, who missed 10 games with a similar injury in 2010, will be evaluated Monday. Bryant will miss at least six weeks after having foot surgery. Murray plays for Philadelphia, though he probably wishes he never left Dallas.

"The NFL really is about adversity," Romo said. "It's about how you handle it, how you approach it individually and collectively as a team."

The Cowboys (2-0) passed a tough test. Kyle Wilber returned a blocked punt 26 yards for touchdown, Brandon Weeden threw a 42-yard touchdown pass to Terrance Williams and the Cowboys overcame a franchise-record 18 penalties in their 10th consecutive road win.

"Whenever you have a coaching staff that doesn't panic, the players see it's not as bad as things seem," Williams said.

The Eagles (0-2) were favorites to take the division title away from Dallas, but they look more like a team that will contend for the top pick in the draft than the playoffs.

Murray, the reigning NFL rushing champion, had 2 yards rushing on 13 carries in his first game against his former team. Sam Bradford had three turnovers, including an interception in the end zone. Philadelphia had 21 total yards in the first half and finished with 226.

"All I'm worried about is winning," Murray said. "I'm not worried about rushing yards or touchdowns. We have to find a way to get it done. It's as simple as that."

Romo was knocked out of the game in the third quarter when Jordan Hicks sacked him. Fletcher Cox recovered Romo's fumble and Bradford drove the offense to the Cowboys 3 before Sean Lee intercepted his pass in the end zone.

"I'll be back," Romo said. "It's going to take a little bit of time. It's a broken bone. It is what it is."

Some observations after the Cowboys beat the Eagles for the fourth straight time in Philadelphia:

Bradford finished 23-for-37 for 224 yards and one TD along with two interceptions. He lost a fumble when center Jason Kelce snapped the ball early in a shotgun formation. "We're all really frustrated," Bradford said. "We have to establish our rhythm."

Weeden, who finished 7-for-7 for 73 yards, started 15 games for Cleveland in 2012 as a 29-year-old rookie. He threw two interceptions in a 28-17 loss to Arizona last year in his only start for Dallas. Overall, he's 5-16 as a starter.

"I know how to prepare, having Tony around will and you just don't put added pressure on yourself," Weeden said.

Browns 28, Titans 14: Johnny Manziel threw a 60-yard touchdown pass to Travis Benjamin on Cleveland's second play and connected with his wide receiver again for a clutch 50-yarder with 2:52 left, lifting

the host Browns over Tennessee.

Benjamin also returned a punt 78 yards for a TD in the first half as the Browns got just their third home-opening win since 1999.

Starting in place of injured Josh McCown, Manziel finished 8-for-15 for 172 yards. His last completion was vintage Johnny Football as Manziel spun to his left to avoid pressure and threw deep to Benjamin.

Manziel won his Heisman Trophy matchup with Marcus Mariota, who threw two TD passes in the second half for the Titans, but took a pounding in his second game. The No. 2 overall draft pick was sacked seven times.

Buccaneers 29, Saints 19: Jameis Winston passed for a touchdown and ran for another and Tampa Bay held on against mistake-prone host New Orleans.

Winston, who was intercepted twice and sacked four times in a losing NFL debut at home a week earlier, remained largely composed in the hostile Superdome. He completed 14 of 21 passes for 207 yards and was not intercepted. He lost one fumble, but the Saints couldn't cash in.

Raiders 37, Ravens 33: Derek Carr threw a 12-yard touchdown pass to Seth Roberts with 26 seconds left to cap the most productive day of his young career and lead host Oakland.

Carr threw for a career-high 351 yards and three touchdowns and overcame a late interception that put the Raiders in a hole in the closing minutes.

But Carr went 7-for-9 for 65 yards on the winning drive, aided by a personal foul on Timmy Jernigan and a hold on Will Hill III that negated an interception.

Joe Flacco threw for 384 yards and two scores for the Ravens.

Vikings 26, Lions 16: Adrian Peterson had 192 total yards and Minnesota rebounded from a rough season opener.

Peterson, playing in front of a pro-Vikings crowd for the first time in 658 days, rushed 29 times for 134 yards after receiving a pregame standing ovation out of the tunnel and a couple of "AP! AP! AP!" chants from the fans on a sun-soaked afternoon.

Teddy Bridgewater played a smart, sharp game for host Minnesota. He threw for one touchdown and ran for another. Matthew Stafford was erratic for the Lions, who fell behind 14-0 early in the second quarter.

Jaguars 23, Dolphins 20: Rookie Jason Myers kicked a 28-yard field goal with 40 seconds remaining for host Jacksonville.

The Jaguars took over with 1:48 left, and Blake Bortles put them in field-goal range with pass plays of 18, 19 and 9 yards. The Dolphins provided some help, too, with a 15-yard personal foul penalty called on Olivier Vernon. The defensive end was flagged for hitting tight end Clay Harbor after the whistle, making it a chip shot for Myers.

Cardinals 48, Bears 23: Carson Palmer threw for four touchdowns to lead Arizona in a game that saw host Chicago lose Jay Cutler to a hamstring injury.

Palmer connected with Larry Fitzgerald for three TDs, David Johnson returned the opening kickoff a club-record 108 yards

and added a rushing TD. And coach Bruce Arians gained a measure of revenge after the Bears hired Marc Trestman over him in January 2013.

Steelers 43, 49ers 18: Ben Roethlisberger passed for 369 yards and three touchdowns, and DeAngelo Williams tied a team record with three rushing scores for host Pittsburgh.

The Steelers converted a pair of 2-point attempts in the first half to seize momentum and had little trouble with San Francisco. Antonio Brown caught nine passes for 195 yards and a touchdown for Pittsburgh, which rolled up 453 total yards despite having the ball for only 23 minutes.

Colin Kaepernick threw for 335 yards and two scores.

Bengals 24, Chargers 19: Andy Dalton threw three touchdown passes, and host Cincinnati quickly ended Philip Rivers' streak of perfect passing.

Dalton's 9-yard throw to Tyler Eifert put the Bengals in control midway through the fourth quarter. San Diego set up Cincinnati's first touchdown with a fumble.

Giovani Bernard took over as the running back after Jeremy Hill lost two fumbles. He finished with 123 yards.

Rivers' streak of consecutive completions ended at 22, a Chargers record. The streak was two shy of Donovan McNabb's NFL record of 24.

Falcons 24, Giants 20: Julio Jones caught a perfect 37-yard pass from Matt Ryan, setting up Devonta Freeman's 2-yard touchdown run with 1:14 remaining, lifting visiting Atlanta over New York.

Jones was unstoppable in the Falcons' second straight victory, tying the club record with 13 receptions, good for 135 yards. His biggest catch was down the left sideline behind Prince Amukamara in the final moments.

The Giants blew a 20-10 fourth-quarter lead. Leonard Hankerson caught a 10-yard TD pass to bring Atlanta within three. Then Ryan guided the Falcons 70 yards to the winning score.

Redskins 24, Rams 10: Rookie Matt Jones ran for 123 yards and two touchdowns, an efficient Kirk Cousins avoided turnovers, and Washington held on for the win. Jones, a third-round draft pick, scored from 39 yards in the first quarter, and from 3 with about 2½ minutes left in the fourth.

The host Redskins led 17-0 at halftime, the first time they shut out an opponent in the first half since Oct. 2, 2011, also against the Rams.

Panthers 24, Texans 17: Cam Newton threw two touchdown passes and somersaulted into the end zone for another score for host Carolina.

Newton was 18-for-37 for 195 yards and ran for 77 yards on nine carries.

The fifth-year quarterback provided the highlight of the day when he raced up the middle on a draw play and tumbled over defensive back Rahim Moore — nearly sticking the landing — for a 3-yard TD that put Carolina ahead 17-10 late in the third quarter.

Ryan Mallett started in place of Brian Hoyer and threw for 244 yards and a TD and ran for a 6-yard score for the Texans.

Pack wins rematch

The Associated Press

GREEN BAY, Wis. — All week long, the Green Bay Packers did their best to disregard the noise about their recent, disheartening history with the Seattle Seahawks.

A 27-17 win on Sunday night in a rematch of last January's NFC championship game snapped a three-game losing streak to Seattle and left the Packers with a reason to smile.

"It doesn't count for anything more than a win, but it is probably one of the more satisfying regular-season wins that we've had, just to get that monkey off our back of not being able to beat these guys," guard T.J. Lang said.

The previous three games were on the road. On Sunday night, the Packers had a raucous crowd on their side and they held on after giving up a 13-3 halftime lead.

Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers was characteristically calm under pressure. With Green Bay down 17-16, he orchestrated a 10-play, 80-yard scoring drive, capped by a 5-yard pass to Richard Rodgers. A 2-point conversion made it 24-17 with 9:28 left.

"We're 2-0. It was a great night here at Lambeau Field," coach Mike McCarthy said. "You sleep better when you win."

The Seahawks dropped to 0-2 for the first time since 2011.

"But you have to move forward and realize there's a lot of season left," said Seattle QB Russell Wilson, who threw an interception in the fourth quarter.

Patriots top Bills again

Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — New-look Buffalo Bills. Same old result.

Add Rex Ryan to the ever-growing list of Bills coaches who have come up short against Tom Brady and the New England Patriots.

In silencing a raucous crowd and exposing Ryan's brash talk for bluster, Brady threw three touchdowns and 466 yards passing — the second-most of his career and most by any player against Buffalo — in a 40-32 win Sunday.

Brady improved his record to 24-3 against Buffalo. It's a string of dominance that began in 2001, when Gregg Williams was coaching the Bills. And Brady has managed to beat all six Bills coaches since — including Perry Fewell, who took over on an interim basis after Dick Jauron was fired during the 2009 season.

"First off, this loss is squarely on one man's shoulders. It's on my shoulders," Ryan said. "Hell yeah, I'm taking it personal."

So much for this year being different in Buffalo when it comes to the Patriots, who have now won 27 of the past 30 meetings against their AFC East rivals.



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Morales sets KC bases record

Associated Press

DETROIT — The Kansas City Royals signed Kendrys Morales last offseason to add some power to what had been a fairly punchless offense in 2014.

"We expected him to have a great year," manager Ned Yost said.

Morales has indeed been productive, and on Sunday he enjoyed what might have been the best offensive game of his big league career, hitting three home runs in a 10-3 win over the Detroit Tigers. Morales also hit a triple and set a team record with 15 total bases.

The Royals lowered their magic number to three to clinch the AL Central, which would be their first division title in 30 years. Christian Colon had a career-high four hits, and Paulo Orlando also homered for Kansas City.

Morales homered in the third, fourth and eighth innings, becoming the first Kansas City player to go deep three times in a game since Danny Tartabull against Oakland on July 6, 1991. Morales ended up scoring five times on the day, but he was on deck when Eric Hosmer flied out and ended the top of the ninth.

The Royals won the American League pennant last year, but they finished

last in the majors in home runs. They've shown more pop in 2015, thanks in part to Morales, who took over the team lead in homers Sunday with 21. Mike Moustakas and Salvador Perez have 20 each.

"It's not about competition, it's just about putting up good ABs and everybody doing their part," Morales said through a translator.

Kris Medlen (5-1) allowed three unearned runs and five hits in five innings for Kansas City, which leads second-place Minnesota by 11 games in the division.

Detroit's Alfredo Simon (13-10) allowed eight runs and 13 hits in 4¹/₃ innings.

Danny Duffy pitched four innings for his first career save.

Morales became the second player with 15 total bases in a game this season. Yoenis Cespedes of the New York Mets did it at Colorado on Aug. 21.

George Brett held the previous Royals record of 14 total bases. He did it in a 16-inning game in 1979.

The Royals scored two runs in the first, and Morales homered to lead off the third. Orlando's two-run homer later that inning made it 5-0.

Detroit scored three runs in the third, but Morales answered that with a solo homer the following inning. His third

home run of the day was also a solo shot, easily clearing the wall in right off reliever Jeff Ferrell.

"They had 19 hits, so it wasn't just him, but yeah, that was obviously a pretty good show," Tigers manager Brad Ausmus said. "He's a switch-hitter who can hit the ball over 400 feet from both sides of the plate and he's a run producer."

The Royals might have scored even more if not for baserunning mistakes in each of the first three innings. With men on first and third in the first, Lorenzo Cain got caught in a rundown between first and second when Simon made a pickoff throw to first.

During the rundown, a throw hit Cain, but Detroit 2B Andrew Romine was able to grab the ball out of the air and make the tag.

With men on first and second in the second, Hosmer hit a single to right. Ben Zobrist tried to go from first to third, but Colon — the runner in front of him — stopped at third. The Tigers trapped Zobrist between second and third, and when Colon broke for home, they threw him out at the plate.

Colon was also picked off first in the third.

Hamlin rallies to win Chase opener

Associated Press

JOLIET, Ill. — Denny Hamlin vowed to make it to the championship round of NASCAR's playoffs, and nothing so far is getting in his way.

Not a torn anterior cruciate ligament suffered playing basketball just days before the regular-season finale.

Not a horrible day of practice that resulted in an awful starting position for the opening round of the Chase for the Sprint Cup championship.

Not a spin Sunday two laps into the race that dropped him to last in the field at Chicagoland Speedway and one lap down from the leaders.

Hamlin stepped up and once again showed his resilience by rallying for a surprise victory in the first race of the 10-race Chase. The win for Joe Gibbs Racing — a heavy favorite to win the championship — earned Hamlin an automatic berth into the second round of the playoffs.

"Go have some fun the next two weeks, that's for sure. Takes some pressure off of us," Hamlin said about his strategy for the next two weeks.

It was a decidedly different mood for reigning champion Kevin Harvick, who vowed four days ago not to be intimidated by JGR's recent muscle.

Instead, contact with Jimmie Johnson on a restart caused a tire rub on Harvick's car. He thought the issue had fixed itself, but his left rear tire blew two laps later and he was in the wall.

Johnson went to Harvick's motorhome after the race to speak to Harvick, but Harvick walked out of the bus and shoved Johnson in the chest with a closed fist.

Harvick was separated from the six-time champion, and Johnson pointed at Harvick as he was restrained from getting at Johnson a second time. Harvick's wife, DeLana, exited a waiting car to walk over to the bickering drivers and Harvick eventually retreated to the backseat of the car as Johnson walked away.

Harvick is last in the 16-driver field, and four drivers will be cut from the Chase in two weeks.

The trouble for Harvick was as surprising as the victory for Hamlin.

His rough day Friday in practice meant he had to start 29th in the race when qualifying was rained out. Hamlin said his toughest task was going to be showing patience in the early laps of the race as he tried to move a fast Toyota through traffic, but he spun trying to pick his way toward the front on the second lap.

Now last and a lap down, it seemed he had no shot at the win.

But his JGR team didn't panic, and crew chief Dave Rogers used a gutsy call not to pit during the final caution to give Hamlin a shot at the victory.

Hamlin slid to the bottom of the track to make it three-wide as he jumped from third to first on the restart with five laps remaining. Once past Jeff Gordon and Kurt Busch, he easily cruised to JGR's ninth win in the last 12 races.

Carl Edwards rallied from a speeding penalty to finish second and give JGR and Toyota a 1-2 finish.

Kurt Busch was third, Ryan Newman was fourth and Kenseth was fifth to give JGR three drivers in the top-five.

Headed into New Hampshire, the four drivers needing to make a big move off the elimination bubble are Jamie McMurray, Paul Menard, Clint Bowyer and Harvick.

Yankees crush sloppy Mets

Associated Press

NEW YORK — There's certainly one New York team elated about the limit on Matt Harvey's innings — and it's not the first-place Mets.

Carlos Beltran, CC Sabathia and the Yankees took advantage of Harvey's early exit Sunday night, beating the sloppy Mets 11-2 to tighten the AL East race just in time for a critical trip to Toronto.

Dustin Ackley hit a three-run homer after Beltran's go-ahead double, and Sabathia (5-9) won for the first time since July 8 as the Yankees took two of three at Citi Field to win both Subway Series this season. The Yankees, who lead the wild-card standings, moved within 2½ games of the first-place Blue Jays heading into their three-game set beginning Monday night.

"I think you want a chance. That's all you can ask for in this game," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said.

The only bad news for the Bronx Bombers: Masahiro Tanaka won't make his scheduled start in the series because of a strained right hamstring.

Harvey looks fully healthy, but was pulled after five scoreless innings. The Mets are curbing his workload down the stretch even as they try to close out an NL East championship — and attending to both details became difficult Sunday.

"The last thing I ever want to do, especially in a close game like that, is come out," said Harvey, scheduled for two more (probably abbreviated) starts during the regular season. "I'm going to be ready for my next start, whenever it is."

The loss reduced the Mets' lead to six games over Washington with 13 to play.

Harvey's previous turn was skipped after he got tagged by the Nationals on Sept. 8. Pitching for the first time in 12 days, the right-hander yielded only an infield single and struck out seven.

Six relievers followed Harvey to the mound, and none were particularly effective.

"It was extremely hard to take him out there," Mets manager Terry Collins said. "Couldn't have set it up any worse than it was."

Once the Mets went to the soft part of their bullpen, the Yankees quickly erased a 1-0 deficit. Two of the Mets' four errors helped the Yankees score five runs — four unearned — off Hansel Robles (4-3) in the sixth.

Greg Bird added a three-run homer in a five-run eighth, long after Girardi was ejected by third base umpire John Hirschbeck for arguing a checked-swing strike.

Girardi went nose-to-nose with Hirschbeck on the field, but didn't realize he'd been tossed until Hirschbeck asked Girardi what he was still doing in the dug-out an inning later.

Cardinals 4, Cubs 3: Cardinals star catcher Yadier Molina exited after spraining his left thumb on a tag and playoff-bound St. Louis ended host Chicago's five-game winning streak.

Molina said he would get an MRI on Monday.

Mariners 9, Rangers 2: Felix Hernandez became the American League's first 18-game winner, Robinson Cano drove in four runs and visiting Seattle beat AL West-leading Texas.

Texas' division lead was trimmed to 1½ games over second-place Houston. The Rangers finished a 7-3 homestand that included a four-game sweep of the Astros.

Astros 5, Athletics 1: Colby Rasmus homered twice and George Springer added a two-run shot to back a solid start by Collin McHugh and help host Houston.

The Astros won their second in a row following a five-game skid that knocked them out of first place in the AL West.

Red Sox 4, Blue Jays 3: AL East-leading Toronto lost its grip in the eighth inning, and Boston broke ahead on a sacrifice fly by Jackie Bradley Jr.

Pablo Sandoval reached in the eighth on an error by Toronto reliever Brett Cecil (3-5) and later scored on Bradley's fly when catcher Dioner Navarro couldn't handle the short-hop throw.

Twins 8, Angels 1: Rookie Tyler Duffey pitched seven shutout innings, Eddie Rosario and Joe Mauer hit two-run homers, and Minnesota pulled even with Los Angeles in the AL wild-card race.

A day after the Angels swept a day-night doubleheader, Duffey (4-1) stopped the Twins' five-game losing streak.

Indians 6, White Sox 3: Josh Tomlin pitched 5²/₃ scoreless innings, Lonnie Chisenhall homered and drove in three runs as host Cleveland defeated Chicago.

Rays 7, Orioles 6: Pinch-hitter Brandon Guyer led off the ninth inning with a tying homer and Kevin Kiermaier beat out a two-out single for the winning run as host Tampa Bay rallied past Baltimore.

Chris Davis hit his MLB-leading 43rd homer for the Orioles, who lost for the fourth time in 12 games. Baltimore fell 5½ games behind Houston for the second AL wild card.

Nationals 13, Marlins 3: Stephen Strasburg struck out 10 in an encore to one of the best starts of his career, and Yunel Escobar had four hits and four RBIs for host Washington.

Strasburg (10-7) allowed one earned run in seven innings as Washington won its third straight. He tied a career high with 14 strikeouts in his last start.

Brewers 8, Reds 4: Adam Lind drove in three runs and host Milwaukee ended an eight-game losing streak, taking advantage of Cincinnati's poor fielding.

Braves 2, Phillies 1: Julio Teheran took a perfect game try into the seventh inning and A.J. Pierzynski hit an RBI single in the ninth that lifted host Atlanta.

Pirates 4, Dodgers 3: Gerrit Cole (17-8) allowed three runs and six hits in seven innings and struck out nine, improving to 3-0 in four career starts against Los Angeles. Tony Watson and Mark Melancon followed with perfect innings of relief, and Melancon got his 48th save.

Giants 5, Diamondbacks 1: Buster Posey hit a three-run homer and Tim Hudson (8-8) allowed four hits in six scoreless innings, improving to 11-2 against visiting Arizona.

Padres 10, Rockies 4: Matt Kemp homered and doubled twice to back James Shields (13-6), who pitched two-hit ball into the seventh. Yangervis Solarte, Jedd Gyorko and Cory Spangenberg also homered for visiting San Diego.