

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## In about-face, Pentagon says US-trained Syrians gave trucks, weapons to al-Qaida

McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — In another embarrassing setback for one of President Barack Obama's centerpiece strategies for defeating the Islamic State group, the Pentagon said Friday that the commander of U.S.-trained Syrians appears to have turned over his pickup trucks and weapons to al-Qaida militants in exchange for protection within days of re-entering his homeland.

The Pentagon admission represented an abrupt reversal of its position as recently as Wednesday, when American military officials firmly denied social media reports that a U.S.-backed commander had defected to Nusra Front, Syria's al-Qaida affiliate, and provided trucks and weapons to the radical Islamic group.

"Unfortunately, we learned today that the New Syrian Force unit now says it did in fact provide six pickup trucks and a portion of their ammunition to a suspected al Nusra Front (representative)," Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman, said Friday evening.

Two days earlier, Davis had stated: "The folks that are part of the New Syrian Force are accounted for, as are their weapons."

The new revelations angered American military leaders.

"If accurate, the report of New Syrian Force members providing equipment to al Nusra Front is very concerning and a violation of Syria train-and-equip program guidelines," said Air Force Col. Patrick Ryder, chief spokesman for U.S. Central Command, which runs American military operations in the Middle East.

People claiming to be Nusra Front members or support-

**'The New Syrian Force unit now says it did in fact provide six pickup trucks and a portion of their ammunition to a suspected al Nusra Front (representative).'**

**Navy Capt. Jeff Davis**  
Pentagon spokesman

ers had posted online photographs of what they said were U.S. weapons handed over to them by the pro-American Syrians, but Davis had dismissed the pictures, saying they were old images that had been "repurposed."

On Friday, the Pentagon was forced to backtrack.

"We are using all means at our disposal to look into what exactly happened and determine the appropriate response," Ryder said.

The distressing episode was the most recent in a series of perplexing problems for a program that Obama had heralded as a key response to Islamic State territorial gains in Iraq and Syria, and one for which Congress appropriated \$500 million last December.

Following several months of training in Turkey by U.S. special operations forces, the first group of Syrian fighters was dispatched back into the country in late July, only to be ambushed by Nusra Front combatants on July 31, with some of them fleeing and others being killed, wounded or captured.

Then, too, the Pentagon denied initial reports of problems but later changed course.

However the Pentagon decides to respond to the new setback, senators from both parties already castigated the Syria train-and-equip program, cast-

ing doubt on its future viability.

Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Ala., called the program "a failure"; Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., labeled it "a joke."

Other lawmakers and analysts have criticized virtually every aspect of the training program, from how Syrian candidates are vetted to how they are trained and whether the U.S.-led air campaign provides sufficient protection once the American-trained troops are back in their homeland.

Pentagon officials in recent weeks have acknowledged past errors and said the train-and-equip program is being re-evaluated.

"There were some mistakes made, initially, with the first class," Pentagon press secretary Peter Cook said. "I think they've been documented pretty well."

Regarding the second class of New Syrian Force fighters who entered the country Saturday and future U.S.-trained troops, Cook said, "We're doing what we can to provide support for these forces as they go back into Syria."

At a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on Tuesday, retired Gen. David Petraeus, who commanded American and allied forces in both Iraq and Afghanistan, said the training program should be completely overhauled. He advocated al-

lowing the U.S.-backed Syrians to take on soldiers loyal to President Bashar Assad and creating "safe zones" in Syria protected by American Special Operations forces — two ideas that the Pentagon and the White House repeatedly have rejected.

The new controversy with the train-and-equip program was sparked by a series of Facebook and Twitter posts on Tuesday.

On a Facebook page claiming to belong to Maj. Anas Obaid, commander of a Syrian military unit called Division 30, Abu Zayd (his battlefield name) said he and some of his men had severed ties with the U.S. program and were going to fight the Islamic State group on their own.

"In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, we, the grouping of revolutionaries of Atareb and its countryside, announce that we are outside Division 30 infantry and we are an independent faction working on the Syrian lands in isolation from coordination with the international (U.S.-led) coalition."

In a separate Facebook post purporting to belong to Division 30, unidentified posters said they had lost contact with Abu Zayd, could not confirm that he had defected to Nusra Front and vowed to "submit him to the military court on charges of high treason" if he is found to have joined the al-Qaida group.

Yet still another source, claiming to be a Dutch member of Nusra Front, told The Daily Beast, an online American news outlet, that Abu Zayd had been arrested by Nusra Front and had offered to give the al-Qaida group his vehicles and weapons in exchange for his release and protection.

# Retiring Dempsey lauded at Va. ceremony

By TARA COPP  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Retiring Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin Dempsey was hailed Friday as “a singular leader” who led the military with a steady hand during unsteady times.

In an emotional, family filled ceremony, Dempsey was at once funny and overwhelmed, noting that he felt very much on the last day of his 41-year career as he felt on his first.

Back then, as now, “I was a little nervous. I was humbled to wear the uniform of an Army officer ... and I was in love with a girl named Deanie,” Dempsey said, choking up.

As he spoke, Dempsey’s wife, Deanie, his high school sweet-

heart, wiped her eyes and held one of their nine grandchildren close.

At the full-honors military retirement ceremony at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Va., on Friday, President Barack Obama said Dempsey’s “wisdom, his vision and his character have helped lead the greatest fighting force the world has ever known. I am extraordinarily grateful to have had him by my side.”

Dempsey’s son, Army Maj. Chris Dempsey, read out his father’s retirement orders. All three of Dempsey’s children served in the Army.

“Attention to orders. Headquarters Department of the Army order number 110-02,” Chris Dempsey said, his voice starting to break. “The follow-

ing general officer is retired. Dempsey, Martin E. Rank of general.”

His son then walked away from the microphone, wiping away tears.

The retiring general was introduced as “my friend General Dempsey” by Lizzie Yaggy, a young girl he’s gotten to know through his regular appearances at the military’s Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors children’s camps. Lizzie, according to a Defense Department news release, first met Dempsey when she was 4, after she had lost her father, and asked Dempsey, “Is my Daddy an angel?”

Dempsey, taken aback, decided to start singing to the kids, and a tradition was born. The programs offer kids who have

lost a family member to war the chance to bond with other children in similar situations.

“I think my (United States Military Academy at West Point class of 1974) classmates probably had a few side bets going” on when he would get emotional, Dempsey said. They didn’t have to wait long.

While he cried multiple times, he got a few zingers in, too.

Turning to the president, he noted, “I also want to thank the 22nd, the 23rd, the 24th and the 25th secretaries of defense with whom I’ve served over the last five years,” adding wryly, “Seriously?”

“I’m almost out of water to choke back emotion,” Dempsey said.

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## Trump: Let Russia fight militants in Syria

*The Washington Post*

OKLAHOMA CITY — Donald Trump accused his Republican presidential rivals on Friday night of wanting to “start World War III over Syria,” and suggested that the United States instead should let Russia deal with the problem.

Trump recently has faced criticism for not providing details on what sort of foreign policy positions he would take as president. That lack of specifics is purposeful and strategic,

Trump said during a 50-minute speech at the Great State Fair of Oklahoma on Friday night. He said Republicans who publicly share their strategic foreign policy plans are “crazy.”

“This is what they say,” Trump said. “They want to start World War III over Syria. Give me a break. You know, Russia wants to get ISIS, right? We want to get ISIS. Russia is in Syria — maybe we should let them do it. Let them do it,” he said, referring to the militant group by an

alternate acronym.

Earlier in the evening, Trump made clear that while he wants to strengthen the military, he does not want to send troops into war. Trump said he was opposed to the Iraq War, even though he considers himself “the most militant person here ... the most militaristic person you’ll ever meet.”

Trump said that war ended as he predicted: trillions of dollars spent, thousands of lives lost and a destabilized Middle East.

## Ex-con found guilty of killing servicemember

LAS VEGAS — A jury in Las Vegas found an ex-convict guilty on Friday of conspiracy and murder for killing his girlfriend’s husband, a U.S. Air Force servicemember and Iraq War veteran from Guam, in a bid to collect a \$650,000 life insurance windfall.

Michael Rudolph Rodriguez stared straight ahead and showed no emotion as the verdicts were read Friday by Clark County District Court Judge Douglas Herndon.

Rodriguez, 36, also was found guilty of burglary for entering the home garage where Staff Sgt. Nathan Paet was shot five times in December 2010 as he prepared to drive to work at Nellis Air Force Base outside Las Vegas.

The six men and six women deliberated less than two hours. They immediately began a separate proceeding to decide whether Rodriguez is also guilty of being an ex-felon in possession of a weapon.

From The Associated Press

## In Philadelphia, Pope honors women in church

*Associated Press*

PHILADELPHIA — Pope Francis arrived in the City of Brotherly Love on Saturday for the final leg of his U.S. visit — a festive weekend devoted to celebrating Catholic families — and immediately called for the church to place greater value on women.

The pontiff’s plane touched down at the Philadelphia air-

port after takeoff from New York, bringing him to a city of blocked-off streets, sidewalks lined with portable potties, and checkpoints manned by police, National Guardsmen and border agents.

After speeches to Congress and the United Nations aimed at spurring world leaders toward bold action on immigration and the environment, he is expected

to focus more heavily on ordinary Catholics during his two days in Philadelphia.

Francis rode by motorcade to the downtown Cathedral Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul and celebrated a Mass for about 1,600 people. In his homily, he said the future of the Catholic Church in the U.S. requires a much more active role for lay Catholics, especially women.

# Steelers aren't shy about going for 2

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Football nerds who have been preaching the virtue of the 2-point conversion over the traditional extra-point kick for years have a friend in Pittsburgh Steelers coach Mike Tomlin.

Tomlin's affinity for one of the game's biggest risk/reward plays has less to do with math and more to do with his gut.

"I have a lot of respect for analytics, but I'm not going to make judgments based on them," Tomlin said. "It's an emotional game played by emotional and driven men. That's an element that can't be measured."

Except on the scoreboard.

The Steelers converted a pair of two-pointers early in last Sunday's 43-18 win over San Francisco, decisions based more on momentum and matchups than the precious sheet that has told coaches when to go for it since the option was introduced in the NFL in 1994.

"It's a feel thing because there's a lot we don't know until we get into the stadium," Tomlin said. "As we start to play, particularly during touchdown drives, we have an inclination of what (an opponent's) personality is. All of those things carry

weight."

Pittsburgh is 13-for-16 when going for two during his nine-year tenure, including 3-for-3 this season. On most of those attempts, Tomlin was following the recommendations of the sheet.

Not last Sunday. When Heath Miller caught a short touchdown pass from Ben Roethlisberger in the first quarter, Roethlisberger motioned for the offense to stay on the field. He then hit Antonio Brown for an easy conversion to make it 8-0. Leading by five in the second quarter, the Steelers initially were going to kick but opted to go for it after the 49ers were flagged, pushing the ball to the 1-yard line. A short flip to Miller later, Pittsburgh was up 16-3.

"It's something we practiced a lot and felt comfortable with," Roethlisberger said. "I tried to tell (people) early on that we would do it, and you just didn't quite believe it."

Pittsburgh's opportunism is exactly what the NFL competition committee had in mind when it moved the extra point back in the offseason. What was once a gimme chip shot is now a less automatic 33-yard try. The success rate through two weeks is at 94 percent, compared to over 99 percent during the 2014 season. When

Washington's Kirk Cousins found Jamison Crowder for two on Thursday night, it was the eighth 2-pointer of the year, putting the league well on pace to outdistance last year's total of 28.

The Redskins, however, were way behind and chasing points. The Steelers weren't. For now, that seems to make them an outlier.

Philadelphia coach Chip Kelly was the last coach to go for two so early in a game, when he lined the Eagles up in a peculiar formation in the first quarter of a Week 3 matchup with San Diego in 2013. Tight end Zach Ertz took a direct snap and was tackled short of the goal line. After experimenting unsuccessfully with Tim Tebow during the preseason, the usually rebellious Kelly sounds like a traditionalist.

"I don't think there is anything to entice us," Kelly said. "The ball has been on the 2-yard line for the longest time. So just look at the statistics on trying to get a 2-point play; if they wanted to encourage us to go for two, then they should have moved where we were going for two from."

That's not an issue for the Steelers. They incorporate a "seven shots" drill into nearly every practice, with the first-team offense getting seven chances to score from the 2. The night before each game

the coaching staff and Roethlisberger find 7-10 conversion plays they like.

St. Louis coach Jeff Fisher, whose team hosts Pittsburgh on Sunday, says the Rams spent more time than usual on 2-point plays this week. While many coaches remain hesitant to embrace going for two, he anticipates attempts rising. If there's anything the NFL loves, it's trying to find a way to copycat success.

"I think you will see a change in offensive philosophy, especially as time goes on as we move later into the season," he said.

The Steelers and their alpha dog of a coach are in no mood to wait. If they've got the momentum and the advantage, they'll take their chances. With one of the league's best offenses, why not?

"That's why you play the game," Tomlin said. "Analytics can work, but football is always going to be football."

AP Sports Writers Dave Skretta in Kansas City, Missouri, Rob Maaddi in Philadelphia, Jon Krawczynski in Minneapolis and Dennis Waszak in East Rutherford, New Jersey contributed to this report.

## Redskins sticking with Cousins as QB

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Three games into the season, Washington Redskins quarterback Kirk Cousins is already getting public votes of confidence from coach Jay Gruden.

Cousins has a pair of two-interception games — and both were losses.

The Redskins (1-2) host NFC East rival Philadelphia on Oct. 4, which gives Gruden, his staff and his players plenty of time to try to improve things. And there is a lot to improve, by the looks of how things went in Washington's 32-21 loss to the New York Giants on Thursday night.

There was the blocked punt for a safety on Washington's first possession. Then came Cousins' first interception, deep in his territory. That led to a touchdown for the Giants. Cousins' second pick also led to a score. And what about Washington's most impressive drive of the day? Well, it ended with Matt Jones fumbling the ball out of the end zone.

"There's too many good things going on with Kirk and his progression for us to pull the plug right now because he threw an interception or two," Gruden said in a conference call Friday. "But he's got to be aware and he's got to protect the football — as does Matt Jones, as does the rest of our football team — for us to have a chance."

Cousins can't seem to get out of his own way for very long.

Yes, he had zero turnovers in a Week 2 victory over the St. Louis Rams. But he is now up to 23 picks in 17 NFL games since being a fourth-round draft pick in 2012 out of Michigan State.

"I made a couple bad plays tonight," the QB acknowledged after the loss to New York. "I've got to find a way to clean those up."

For now, at least, the job remains his. Last season, he got benched after repeatedly giving the football to opponents.

"Now we're letting him be the starter here, and he's going to have to play through some of these pitfalls, so to speak. And we're hoping that he does," Gruden said. "We're hoping that a more mature Kirk Cousins will bounce back from these performances."

There were other problems Thursday, to be sure, including a bend and eventually break defensive showing with little pressure on Eli Manning.

"We can get past it," Pro Bowl left tackle Trent Williams said about this sort of game, the kind that cropped up repeatedly while the Redskins went 7-25 the past two seasons. "We can, but it's going to take us coming together and cutting down on mistakes."

Less than 2½ minutes in, the Redskins trailed 2-0 thanks to that safety. At the end of the first period, it was 12-0. Early in the fourth quarter, 25-6.

## Stenson stretches lead to 3 shots in Tour Championship

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Two years after Henrik Stenson sailed to victory at the Tour Championship, he has another comfortable lead after 36 holes at East Lake and Jordan Spieth is chasing him.

Back then, Spieth was a 20-year-old rookie.

Now he's the Masters and U.S. Open champion, and he found a spark in a steady drizzle Friday.

Stenson overcame a few mistakes off the tee and was solid on the back nine for a 2-under 68, stretching his lead to three shots over Spieth going into the weekend and moving closer to his first win of the year — and a \$10 million bonus for claiming the FedEx Cup.

"I didn't feel like it was my best day, but I managed to keep it together and 2 under around here is never bad," Stenson said.

He doesn't know anything different. This was his sixth straight round under par at East Lake, a course where the Swede has led after every round he has played.

Stenson, who went wire-to-wire in the Tour Championship in 2013, was at 9-under 131.

Spieth has made only one bogey over two rounds, and a pair of par saves on consecutive holes on the front nine felt just as valuable as his four birdies in a round of 66. The average score was 71.6 on a wet day that yielded only four rounds under par.

Spieth went from the right rough to the left rough on No. 5 and still had 60 yards

left and a tree in front of him. He took a risk going through the tree to 6 feet for par, and then rolled in a 20-foot par putt for a bunker save on the par-3 sixth.

"It was huge," Spieth said about the par saves. "I thought I may have to re-tee, and I was just kind of all over the place at that time. And that third shot I hit on 5, I mean, one of 10, maybe. There was no other option, but it wasn't necessarily smart. And I had to have the wind blowing this branch back and forth, I had to hit it when it blew it this way or else it would have gone up into it."

He closed with a 20-foot birdie putt on the par-3 18th to get into the final group.

Paul Casey made bogey from the bunker on the 18th for a 70 and was four shots behind, while British Open champion Zach Johnson birdied three of his last four holes to overcome a double bogey on the par-5 ninth. He had a 70 and was at 4-under 136.

Jason Day, in his first event as No. 1 in the world, finally looked human. He felt flat, wasn't sharp off the tee or into the greens, and shot a 71. It was his third round over par in his last 10 tournaments, and it left him nine shots behind.

Stenson was four shots clear of Adam Scott after 36 holes when he won the Tour Championship two years ago, with Spieth another shot behind. Spieth made a late run on Sunday and tied for second, capping off a remarkable rookie season.

The biggest challenge figures to be East Lake, especially with more wet conditions in the forecast.



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# Stanford rolls over Oregon St.

Associated Press

CORVALLIS, Ore. — Quarterback Kevin Hogan was back in an ankle boot following Stanford's victory over Oregon State.

It certainly didn't appear that his sprained left ankle gave him any trouble in the 42-24 victory Friday night for the No. 21 Cardinal. A game-time decision, he completed 9 of 14 passes for 163 yards and two touchdowns.

"I'm out there, the adrenaline is kicking in," Hogan said. "I feel good. I feel no limitations."

Christian McCaffrey ran for a career-high 206 yards and ended up with 303 all-purpose yards for Stanford (3-1, 2-0 Pac-12), which held just a 21-17 lead at the half over the Beavers (2-2, 0-1) before a pair of third-quarter touchdowns.

Oregon State freshman Seth Collins hit Jordan Villamin with a 40-yard scoring pass to open the fourth quarter and the Beavers pulled within 35-24, but Stanford answered with Barry Sanders' 65-yard touchdown run and Oregon State couldn't catch up.

Collins passed for 275 yards and a touchdown, while rushing for another score. Villamin caught seven passes for 138 yards.

Sanders rushed for 97 yards and two scores for the Cardinal.

Oregon State first-year coach Gary Andersen said Stanford was the more physical team in the end.

"Not effort," he said of his team. "But we got worn down."

Hogan was a question mark for the game after injuring his left ankle in the second half of last week's upset of then-No. 6 USC. He threw for 279 yards and two touchdowns in that one, gritting out a 41-31 win that put Stanford back in the rankings.

He deftly moved the Cardinal downfield on the opening series of the game against the Beavers. Remound Wright capped the drive with a 1-yard scoring run.

Collins answered for the Beavers with a 1-yard touchdown run after finding Victor Bolden in traffic with a 7-yard pass to get close.

After Hogan hit Austin Hooper with a 42-yard TD pass to make it 14-7, Collins again led Oregon State on a successful drive that ended with redshirt freshman Ryan Nall's 5-yard scoring run, the first touchdown of his career.

Stanford went up 21-14 in the second quarter on Wright's 2-yard scoring run. But Cardinal starting defensive end Aziz Shittu was injured before the half and had to be helped from the field.

Garrett Owens made a 24-yard field goal for Oregon State just before halftime that cut the margin to 21-17.

Collins fumbled on the opening series of the second half and Stanford recovered on the Oregon State 9-yard line, but the Beavers' defense held and the Cardinal had to settle for a 28-yard field-goal at-

tempt — which missed wide left.

Stanford began to pull away midway through the third quarter when Hogan hit Michael Rector with a 49-yard touchdown pass that extended the lead to 28-17. Sanders added an 11-yard scoring run for the Cardinal later in the quarter.

Hogan rested much of the short week, and coach David Shaw said he'd handle next week much the same way in preparation for No. 16 Arizona.

"We'll be really smart with him during the course of the week," Shaw said.

Senior linebacker Kevin Anderson, Stanford's second-leading tackler, did not play because of an undisclosed injury. Teammates wrote his number on arm and elbow wraps.

Linebacker Joey Alfieri made his first career start against the Beavers. His dad, Phil, played defensive end at Oregon State from 1983-88.

Villamin was asked if there was anything positive to take from the game.

"Our offense started to roll a little bit, we started getting the passing game going, the running game was good," he said. "I'm just more concerned about the loss. I just really wanted to win. I don't care about the stats."

The Beavers were coming off a 35-21 victory over San Jose State last weekend.

It was Stanford's sixth straight victory over Oregon State.

# Boise State starts fast, cruises past Virginia

Associated Press

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — From the beginning — indeed, the very first play from scrimmage — Boise State had Virginia on its heels, and the Broncos never let up.

Justin Taimatuia returned an interception 21 yards for a touchdown on that first play, Brett Rypien threw three touchdown passes and Jeremy McNichols scored twice in the Broncos' 56-14 victory Friday night.

Boise State led 17-0 before the game was barely 7 minutes old, forced five turnovers and added another defensive touchdown late.

Matt Johns dropped back to pass, and as the pocket collapsed around him, he attempted to flip the ball over his shoulder. Taimatuia, a 300-pound defensive tackle, intercepted it and lumbered 21 yards for a touchdown. The Broncos led 7-0 after 16 seconds.

McNichols' 47-yard run on third down set up his first touchdown, on a 2-yard run. Johns' second interception, by Darian Thompson on a deep ball, set up a four-play drive to Tyler Rausa's 51-yard field goal. The game was barely 7 minutes old, and the Broncos led 17-0.

# Despite loss, Cubs clinch playoff berth

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Gerrit Cole outpitched Jon Lester as the Pittsburgh Pirates hung on for their seventh straight win, beating Chicago 3-2 to delay the Cubs' playoff celebration until later Friday.

Pittsburgh increased its lead for the NL's top wild card to 4½ games over the Cubs, who would have secured their first postseason appearance since 2008 with a victory. Chicago clinched later Friday when San Francisco lost to Oakland.

Cole (18-8) and Lester (10-12) each lasted seven innings, and Mark Melancon held off a rally attempt in the ninth for his major league-leading 51st save in 53 chances.

**Rangers 6, Astros 2:** Shin-Soo Choo homered and drove in three runs as Texas beat host Houston for the eighth straight time, extending its AL West lead over the Astros to 4½ games.

Houston star second baseman Jose Altuve exited early after being hurt in a collision with shortstop Carlos Correa while chasing a popup. Manager A.J. Hinch said Altuve didn't have a concussion and hoped to play on Saturday.

The Rangers improved to 16-7 this month while Houston lost its third in a row and fell to 7-15 in September. The Astros' lead for the second AL wild-card spot was whittled to a half-game over the Los Angeles Angels, who played later.

**Angels 8, Mariners 4:** Johnny Giavotella left Los Angeles five weeks ago while they were plunging to the fringe of the AL playoff race. When he returned on Friday night, the scrappy second baseman added two big hits to the host Angels' latest win in an impressive surge back up the standings.

Albert Pujols and C.J. Cron hit two-run homers, and the Angels moved within a half-game of playoff position with an 8-4

victory over the Seattle Mariners.

**Brewers 4, Cardinals 3:** Khris Davis homered off Trevor Rosenthal leading off the ninth inning and Milwaukee beat host St. Louis.

The loss cut the Cardinals' NL Central lead to three games over Pittsburgh with eight games remaining.

**Rockies 7, Dodgers 4:** Corey Dickerson hit one of Colorado's three solo homers in the fourth inning and the host Rockies prevented Los Angeles from moving a step closer to clinching its third straight NL West title.

The magic number for Los Angeles remained at three.

**Blue Jays 5, Rays 3:** R.A. Dickey pitched seven innings to earn his 100th career win, Josh Donaldson hit his 40th home run and host Toronto moved closer to clinching its first playoff berth in 22 years.

Toronto leads the AL East and hasn't been to the postseason since winning its second straight World Series in 1993.

Jose Bautista and Kevin Pillar also went deep for Toronto, which leads the majors with 217 homers, the fourth-highest total in team history. The Blue Jays hit 257 homers in 2010.

**White Sox 5, Yankees 2:** CC Sabathia gave up two costly homers in the seventh inning and prized rookie Carlos Rodon pitched out of trouble all night as visiting Chicago damaged New York's playoff drive.

Mike Olt hit a tiebreaking shot off Sabathia that soared into the second deck in left field. One out later, No. 9 batter Gordon Beckham homered off Sabathia (5-10).

**Mets 12, Reds 5:** Lucas Duda hit a pair of three-run homers, and Noah Syndergaard dominated with his 99 mph fastball while pitching into the eighth inning, leading New York over host

Cincinnati and to the verge of its first playoff spot since 2006.

The Mets' magic number for clinching the NL East was reduced to one with Washington's 8-2 loss to Philadelphia.

**Athletics 5, Giants 4:** World Series champion San Francisco was eliminated from playoff contention, falling to Sonny Gray and host Oakland.

San Francisco, which won the World Series in three of the past five seasons, fell to 79-74 this year. Far behind the NL West-leading Dodgers, the Giants were chased from a possible wild-card spot.

**Tigers 6, Twins 4:** Rajai Davis hit a two-run homer in the eighth inning, and lifted host Detroit past playoff-chasing Minnesota.

It was the type of loss the Twins may look back on if they don't make the postseason. They entered the day trailing Houston by 1½ games for the second wild card in the American League, and they led 4-1 in the seventh against the sub-.500 Tigers before the bullpen gave away the lead.

**Indians 6, Royals 0:** Carlos Carrasco pitched a one-hitter, allowing only a seventh-inning single, and struck out a career-high 15 to lead visiting Cleveland over Kansas City.

The AL Central champion Royals didn't come close to a hit until Alex Rios lined a single to center with one out in the seventh.

Carrasco (14-11) was trying to pitch Cleveland's first no-hitter since 1981, when Len Barker threw a perfect game.

**Phillies 8, Nationals 2:** Rookie Aaron Altherr had four hits, including an inside-the-park grand slam and a solo homer, and Philadelphia beat Washington in what was likely Jordan Zimmermann's home farewell.

The Nationals lost their fourth straight and trail the Mets by 8½ games in the NL

East.

New York cut its magic number to one Friday, beating Cincinnati 12-5.

Zimmermann (13-9), who will be a free agent this offseason, exited after allowing six earned runs on six hits over five innings and suffered his first loss since Aug. 12.

**Marlins 12, Braves 11:** Jose Fernandez became the first pitcher in the modern era to win his first 17 career home decisions, overcoming a rough start to help Miami beat Atlanta.

Fernandez gave up a homer to Nick Markakis to start the game and allowed four runs in a 35-pitch first inning. He tied a career high by allowing six earned runs in five innings.

But the Marlins rallied with four runs in the first, led 11-4 by the fourth inning and totaled 20 hits in the matchup of the majors' two lowest-scoring teams.

Rookie Justin Bour hit his 20th homer, and Dee Gordon's three hits hiked his average to .332.

**Red Sox 7, Orioles 0:** Rich Hill kept up his startling comeback, pitching a two-hitter and striking out 10 as host Boston beat Baltimore.

The 35-year-old Hill (2-0) was released by Washington in June, then played for the Long Island Ducks in an independent league before signing a minor league deal with the Red Sox in August.

Hill threw his second career shutout — the other came in 2006 with the Chicago Cubs. The game ended when right fielder Mookie Betts made a leaping catch at the wall, robbing Chris Davis of a homer.

**Diamondbacks 6, Padres 3:** A.J. Pollock hit his first career grand slam and drove in a career-high five runs in his first two at-bats, and Arizona beat host San Diego in Casey Kelly's first big league start in just under three seasons.