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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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US troops join battle for Afghan city

BY JOSH SMITH
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Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — American special operations troops joined the battle around Kunduz on Wednesday, exchanging fire with Taliban fighters near the airport where Afghan forces withdrew after ceding control of the city two days before, the U.S.-led coalition announced.

“Coalition special forces advisers, to include U.S. servicemembers, while advising and assisting elements of the Afghan security forces, encountered an insurgent threat in the vicinity of the Kunduz airport,” U.S. military spokesman Col. Brian Tribus said in a statement.

Tribus acknowledged the special operations troops are in Afghanistan to “advise and assist,” but that “servicemembers have

the right to protect themselves if necessary.”

He did not specify what other nationalities may have been involved in the firefight but the French news agency Agence France Presse, citing a Western official, said special operations advisers in Kunduz come from several countries, including Britain, Germany and the United States.

The Reuters news agency quoted a senior Afghan security official as saying about 100 U.S. special operations troops fought off Taliban attackers threatening to breach the airport early Wednesday.

U.S. aircraft also launched a failed attempt to drop supplies to a force of besieged Afghans in the ancient Bala-e-Hisar fortress who were later forced to surrender, an Afghan official told *The New York Times*. Media reports indicated 60 sol-

diers at the key position agreed to give up some of their weapons in return for their safety.

Fighting around Kunduz, a city of about 300,000, has centered on the airport, where Afghan forces are trying to launch a counteroffensive to recapture the city. Reports from the scene said the counteroffensive faltered Tuesday because of stiff Taliban resistance including improvised explosive devices along the road into the town about 6.5 miles to the north of the airport.

The U.S. has carried out at least five airstrikes in the airport area, coalition officials have reported.

The coalition said one of its servicemembers died of a “non-battle cause” on Tuesday in northern Afghanistan, but that the incident was not connected to the situation in Kunduz.

Kunduz is the first major

urban center the insurgents have occupied since the American invasion that ousted them from power in 2001 following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. During the past year, the guerrillas succeeded in seizing several small district centers but held them only briefly before being chased out by government reinforcements.

The loss of Kunduz has struck a major blow to the coalition-trained Afghan forces, who until now had been lauded by coalition officials for their ability to hold their own against the insurgents during this year’s fighting season, the first since the coalition ended its combat mission.

In Washington on Tuesday, Defense Department spokesman Peter Cook acknowledged the loss of Kunduz was a “set-back” but said security forces are up to the challenge.

Russia launches airstrikes in Syria

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russian military jets carried out airstrikes in Syria for the first time on Wednesday, targeting what Moscow said were Islamic State positions. U.S. officials and others cast doubt on that claim, saying the Russians appeared to be attacking opposition groups fighting Syrian government forces.

President Vladimir Putin sought to portray the airstrikes as a pre-emptive attack against the Islamic militants who have taken over large parts of Syria and Iraq. Russia estimates at least 2,400 of its own citizens are already fighting alongside extremists in Syria and Iraq.

“If they (militants) succeed in Syria, they will return to their home country, and they will come to Russia, too,” Putin said in a televised speech at a government session.

The U.S. and Russia both agree on the need to fight the Islamic State, but are in dispute about what to do about Syrian President Bashar Assad’s government. At the U.N. General Assembly, President Barack Obama said the U.S. and Russia could work together on a political transition, but only if Assad leaving power was the result. Putin is Assad’s most powerful backer.

The Russian airstrikes targeted positions, vehicles and warehouses that Moscow be-

lieves belong to Islamic State militants, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov told Russian news agencies.

Secretary of Defense Ash Carter, however, said the airstrikes appear to be targeting opposition groups fighting Assad.

Syrian state television quoted an unnamed military official as saying that Russian warplanes have targeted Islamic State positions in central Syria, including the areas of Rastan and Talbiseh, and areas near the town of Salamiyeh in Hama province.

Islamic State militants control parts of Homs province, including the historic town of

Palmyra. Homs also has positions run by al-Qaida’s affiliate in Syria, known as the Nusra Front. Both groups have fighters from the former Soviet Union including Chechens.

U.S. State Department spokesman John Kirby said in a statement that a Russian official in Baghdad informed U.S. Embassy personnel that Russian military aircraft would shortly begin flying anti-Islamic State missions over Syria. The Russian official also asked that U.S. aircraft avoid Syrian airspace during those missions Wednesday. Kirby didn’t say whether the U.S. agreed to that request.

Defense bill would change GI benefits

By TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Congressional leaders on Tuesday unveiled an annual defense authorization bill that calls for reforming troop benefits, but it faces stiff opposition from Democrats and a possible White House veto over spending.

The legislation comprises \$515 billion for national defense and more than \$89 billion in an overseas war fund. It pushes ahead with a historic overhaul of the military's 20-year retirement system, reduc-

tions in headquarters staffing, and increases in Tricare prescription fees.

Members of the House and Senate armed services committees who crafted the bill said it contains historic reforms and should be passed as soon as possible, with a possible House vote Thursday. But Democrats on the panels — aligning with an earlier veto threat by President Barack Obama — refused to back the bill because it sidesteps a defense spending cap by pumping an extra \$38.3 billion into the overseas war fund, called Overseas Contingency

Operations.

"They are the most sweeping reforms in years and years in this bill, whether it be in retirement, whether it be in changing the makeup of the Pentagon," said Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., chairman of the Armed Services Committee, who took a lead role in writing the legislation and unveiled it Wednesday.

If passed, the proposed National Defense Authorization Act would overhaul the retirement system that pays out after 20 years of service into a blended system with a 401(k)-style savings plan, which troops

could take whenever they separate. All new servicemembers would automatically have 3 percent of their pay placed into a Thrift Savings Plan account with a Defense Department match equal to 1 percent of their pay. The 20-year pensions would remain but reduced to 80 percent of the current value for anybody joining the military after passage of the NDAA. Those now serving could choose to opt out of the changes.

The overhaul would save about \$8.1 billion over a decade, according to congressional estimates.

Armed robbers target upscale restaurants in New Orleans

The Washington Post

Armed assailants robbed an upscale restaurant in New Orleans this week and, though police said the crimes are not necessarily related, the incident followed the robbery of two other tony eateries in the city.

The crime wave began Aug. 20 at Patois, billed on its website as a "quaint, romantic, neighborhood restaurant featur[ing] classic French cuisine with a patois, or local accent." Three masked gunmen burst in, then held staff in the kitchen while they ransacked the register and took diners' belongings.

Next was Atchafalaya Restaurant. On Sept. 24, two masked gunman appeared to repeat the scene at Patois. Executive chef Chris Lynch spotted the men outside and told the few remaining patrons to pocket their rings. When he tried to lock the front door, the gunmen kicked it down.

Just four days later, armed men robbed Monkey Hill Bar.

"I knew it was a matter of time," Johnny Vodanovich, Monkey Hill's owner, said.

US in unsavory alliance in pursuit of Kony

The Washington Post

U.S. Special Operations forces have opened a new front in their hunt for African warlord Joseph Kony, moving closer to his suspected hideout in a lawless enclave straddling Sudan and South Sudan, according to military officials and others familiar with the operation.

As their mission stretches into a fifth year, however, U.S. troops have turned to some unsavory partners to help find Kony's trail. Working from a new bush camp in the Central African Republic, U.S. forces have begun working closely

with Islamist rebels — known as the Seleka — who toppled the central government two years ago and triggered a still-raging sectarian war.

The Pentagon has not previously disclosed its intelligence sharing and other forms of cooperation with the Seleka. The arrangement has made some U.S. troops uncomfortable.

The Seleka "are playing us," said one military official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak with reporters. The official described the Seleka as a "mafia" that is trying to curry favor with the

Americans even as the rebels extort local villagers and engage in illicit trade with Kony's fugitive fighters.

About 100 U.S. military advisers are deployed across four countries to guide the international campaign to catch Kony, whose brutal militia, the Lord's Resistance Army, has raped, abducted and killed tens of thousands of people over the past three decades.

After first sending U.S. forces to central Africa in 2011, President Barack Obama must decide next month whether to reauthorize the deployment for another year.

Only woman on Ga.'s death row executed

Associated Press

JACKSON, Ga. — The only woman on Georgia's death row was executed early Wednesday, making her the first woman put to death by the state in seven decades.

Kelly Renee Gissendaner was pronounced dead by injection of pentobarbital at 12:21 a.m. at the state prison in Jackson. She was convicted of murder in the February 1997 slaying of her husband after she conspired

with her lover, who stabbed Douglas Gissendaner to death.

Gissendaner, 47, sobbed as she said she loved her children and apologized to Douglas Gissendaner's family, saying she hopes they can find some peace and happiness.

Gissendaner's three children visited with her Monday but weren't able to see her Tuesday because they were at a meeting of the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles, Bacote said. The parole board is the only

entity authorized to commute a death sentence in Georgia.

Various courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court, denied multiple last-ditch efforts to stop her execution, and the parole board stood by its February decision to deny clemency.

Gissendaner repeatedly pushed her lover, Gregory Owen, to kill her husband rather than just divorcing him as Owen suggested, prosecutors have said.

NBA teams return to court

Associated Press

Summer is over in the NBA. Time to get back to work.

Guys like Kevin Durant, Kobe Bryant and Carmelo Anthony probably can't wait. Their 2014-15 seasons were cut short by injury, and they were set to join their teammates on the court this week when training camps open.

Stephen Curry couldn't be blamed if he wanted more time.

It's been barely three months since his Golden State Warriors ended their 40-year title drought, not exactly a ton of time to plop down, put the feet up, recover from one nine-month grind and prepare for the next.

But he's ready to go.

"I would never complain about too short of a summer winning a championship," Curry said.

Most NBA teams reported to camp Monday, although a few who are headed overseas for exhibition games got started late last week. After media day responsibilities Monday, they began practicing Tuesday — many teams doing it twice a day.

Durant, Bryant and Anthony will probably ease their way in after the former scoring champions had to shut it down early last season, though not everyone can afford to take it slow. The preseason exhibition opener is Friday when the Los Angeles Clippers face Denver, and Curry's

Warriors will be practicing less than a week before they host Toronto in their first game.

They had one of the great seasons in NBA history, going 67-15 in Steve Kerr's first year as coach before beating LeBron James and Cleveland in the Finals.

Only a year earlier they were out in the first round, so plenty of teams will arrive for work believing it's their turn to make the jump.

"Last year was Golden State's year," said Anthony Davis, whose Pelicans were swept by the Warriors in the first round and then hired Golden State assistant Alvin Gentry as their coach. "They did what they had to do to win, they were the best team in the league."

"I think our thing, for my team, is just staying healthy. If we stay healthy, then we can beat anybody and compete with anybody, so that's our biggest thing. That's how we're approaching training camp."

Some of the interesting teams to watch during camps:

Thunder: Durant will love being back from his broken foot and dread any time he has to talk about his impending free agency. Former Florida coach Billy Donovan is now running the show after refusing for years to make the jump from college.

Lakers: Beyond beginning to develop a minutes limit for Bryant in his return from shoulder surgery, coach Byron Scott wel-

comes No. 2 pick D'Angelo Russell and off-season addition Roy Hibbert, and brings back Julius Randle after he broke his leg in last year's season opener.

Spurs: Prized free agent signings LaMarcus Aldridge and David West fortify the frontcourt alongside Tim Duncan and Kawhi Leonard, but keep an eye on the backcourt. Tony Parker didn't look sharp while playing for France in EuroBasket, so Gregg Popovich will want to find some time to rest his veteran point guard.

Cavaliers: If Kyrie Irving and Kevin Love look fully recovered from their injuries in the postseason, it will calm Cavs fans worked up over the team's inability to work out a contract extension with Tristan Thompson yet.

Knicks: Phil Jackson brought in plenty of newcomers to surround Anthony, who is returning from knee surgery, and he will be able to keep a close eye on them. The Knicks' president of basketball operations plans to spend more time around the coaching staff this season at the request of coach Derek Fisher.

Bulls: Tom Thibodeau is gone, but Chicago's injury woes didn't go with him. Fred Hoiberg will begin his NBA coaching career without starting forward Mike Dunleavy Jr., who is expected to miss at least eight weeks after back surgery.

Kings: George Karl? DeMarcus Cousins? Rajon Rondo? This team could be really talented, and really moody.

Bryant not quite ready to retire yet

Associated Press

EL SEGUNDO, Calif. — The third-leading scorer in NBA history had only the faintest smirk when he stood in front of the photographers in his gold jersey Monday and held up a white sign reading: "Kobe Bryant."

Even heading into his 20th season, Bryant isn't exempted from the Los Angeles Lakers' regular preseason rites like the media day that precedes the start of training camp. The little things don't appear to bother Bryant as much as they might have when he was closer to championship parades than retirement parties.

If the 37-year-old Bryant is beginning the final season of his incredible career this week, he insists he doesn't know it.

"Maybe it is, maybe it isn't," Bryant said. "If it is, it is. If it isn't, I'll be ready for next season."

Bryant understands sports well enough to know his future will be a constant topic this season. He's ready for the speculation, but he can't resolve it.

"People want to know when the time has come for you to hang them up," he said. "Like me, don't like me, they respect the career that I've had. I think that's a pretty damn cool thing."

Bryant has accomplished nearly everything possible in an NBA career, but the five-time champion's last three seasons have ended early due to injury. He has played only 41 games in the past two years — and none since tearing the rotator cuff in his right shoulder last January, his famously resilient body finally breaking down under heavy minutes and responsibilities.

Without him, the Lakers went 21-61 in the worst season in the club's history. Los Angeles missed the playoffs in consecutive years for the first time since the 1970s, and few give them much of a chance to avoid the Lakers' first three-year playoff drought ever.

Bryant intends to mentor D'Angelo Russell, the No. 2 pick in this summer's NBA draft. The 19-year-old point guard's locker is next to his at Staples Center — and that's totally by coach Byron Scott's design.

"I'm excited to be out there with these young players who are starting their careers, starting their journeys," Bryant said.

The Lakers' bounty of young talent still treats Bryant with a respect bordering on reverence, although that might change after they've been in a few workouts with him.

"I don't know how much longer he's going to be around, so I love to get the opportunity to pick his brain a bit every day," Russell said.

Court nixes plan to pay NCAA athletes

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — A federal appeals court agreed Wednesday that the NCAA's use of college athletes' names, images and likenesses in video games and TV broadcasts violated antitrust laws but struck down a plan to allow schools to pay players up to \$5,000.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said the NCAA could not stop schools from providing full scholarships to student athletes but vacated a proposal for deferred cash payments.

"The difference between offering student-athletes education-related compensation and offering them cash sums untethered to educational expenses is not minor; it is a quantum leap," Judge Jay Bybee wrote. "Once that line is crossed, we see no basis for returning to a rule of amateurism and no defined stopping point."

A statement from NCAA President Mark Emmert said the organization agrees with the court that "allowing students to be paid cash compensation of up to \$5,000 per year was erroneous."

"Since Aug. 1, the NCAA has allowed member schools to provide up to full cost of attendance; however, we disagree that it should be mandated by the courts," he said.

The NCAA had appealed U.S. District Judge Claudia Wilken's 2014 decision to allow players in the top division of college football and in Division I men's bas-

ketball to be paid. The money would have been put in a trust fund and given to them when they left school.

The decision came in a lawsuit filed by UCLA basketball star Ed O'Bannon and 19 others.

The NCAA was accused of violating antitrust laws by conspiring to block the athletes from getting a share of revenue generated by the use of their images.

Bulls' Rose fractures face

CHICAGO — Chicago Bulls star Derrick Rose was to have surgery on his left eye after being elbowed in the face.

The Bulls say the 2011 NBA MVP sustained a left orbital fracture on the first day of practice. He was scheduled for surgery on Wednesday, and a timetable for his return will be determined after the operation.

Rose missed all of the 2012-13 season after tearing his left ACL during the first round of the 2012 playoffs, and played only 10 games two years ago after tearing the meniscus in his right knee.

Also on Tuesday, Rose said in a court filing that a woman accusing him of sexual battery consented to group sex and became upset because she felt she should be reimbursed for a sex toy.

The Sept. 24 filing is in response to a lawsuit filed by a woman identified as Jane Doe alleging Rose and two other men drugged and gang-raped her at her

home. The case has been transferred to U.S. District Court, and a scheduling conference is set for Nov. 9.

Cavs' Shumpert sidelined

INDEPENDENCE, Ohio — With Kyrie Irving and Kevin Love still recovering from injuries that severely hurt Cleveland's chances at an NBA title last season, the Cavaliers announced Tuesday that guard Iman Shumpert needs surgery on his right wrist and will be out at least three months.

Cavs general manager David Griffin said Shumpert injured his wrist when he hit it on a rim last week during a workout. Shumpert underwent an MRI which revealed a ruptured sheath protecting a ligament in his wrist.

Stewart: My choice to retire

KANNAPOLIS, N.C. — Tony Stewart said he will retire from Sprint Cup racing following the 2016 season.

The three-time NASCAR champion announced his decision Wednesday at the Stewart-Haas Racing shop in North Carolina, saying "next year will be my last year in the Sprint Cup Series." He said it was "100 percent" his choice.

Clint Bowyer, released from his contract with Michael Waltrip Racing because the team is folding, will replace Stewart in the No. 14 in 2017.



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Dodgers clinch NL West title

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Clayton Kershaw lingered on the field a few moments longer than the rest of his Los Angeles teammates, then looked up at the cheering fans in Dodger Blue, smiled and tipped his cap before quickly disappearing into the dugout and heading off to celebrate.

Kershaw pitched the big-money Dodgers to their third straight NL West title, tossing a one-hitter as Los Angeles beat Madison Bumgarner and the San Francisco Giants 8-0 on Tuesday night.

Kershaw allowed just a third-inning single and struck out 13, and now he'll get a chance to erase those sour post-season memories as the Dodgers (88-69) advanced to face the NL East champion New York Mets in a best-of-five Division Series.

"I've been through it now a bunch, I think this is my fifth postseason now," Kershaw said. "I don't know if you can

get wiser from failing all the time. I know what that feels like."

Kershaw (16-7) finally got the best of his 2015 nemesis in the fourth matchup of the year against World Series MVP Bumgarner, striking out the side in order three times and retiring the final 19 batters as the Dodgers snapped a four-game losing streak. He is six strikeouts away from 300.

"There's a little bit, if you don't win this one then you've got two more and you start getting a little nervous, you start panicking a little bit," Kershaw said. "We've still got something to play for. We're still trying to fight the Mets for home-field advantage. It's kind of a sigh of relief. We weren't playing that well."

Don Mattingly's Dodgers earned a third straight playoff berth for the first time in franchise history, and did so by snapping a seven-game losing streak at AT&T Park this year. It's also their sixth postseason berth in 10 years.

When Kelby Tomlinson grounded out to end it and rookie shortstop Corey Seager made a nice throw to first, Kershaw raised both arms in the air as his teammates streamed out of the dugout. They all began hugging and dancing on the mound.

"He knows what he needs to do against these guys," catcher A.J. Ellis said.

The Giants immediately offered a message on the main scoreboard: "CONGRATULATIONS, L.A. DODGERS! #RESPECTTHERIVALRY"

Los Angeles players pulled on their new NL West champion caps and T-shirts before the party began on the other side of AT&T Park than where clinching celebrations typically take place.

"It just feels good to win it period," Mattingly said. "They are tough to beat. And honestly I did not want to lose the game tonight and have to get into more games here and let the thing build."

Steelers turn QB job over to Vick

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Michael Vick's faith never wavered.

Not when months went by and the phone didn't ring. Not when his arrival in Pittsburgh at the end of training camp sparked small protests outside the Steelers' facility and a few raised eyebrows within it.

And certainly not when he saw Ben Roethlisberger grabbing his left knee in St. Louis last Sunday, the franchise quarterback's medial collateral ligament sprained and his immediate future very much in doubt.

Sure, this isn't the way Vick wanted to get back on the field. Yet the four-time Pro Bowler isn't about to apologize for the opportunity in front of him, the one he was convinced would come.

"I kept the faith and kept believing," Vick said Tuesday. "This is what I love to do, so I continue to work hard at it. I just have to keep fighting every day."

Vick will run out of the tunnel at Heinz Field on Thursday night as the starter when the Steelers (2-1) host Baltimore (0-3). What better showcase to go out and prove that at 35 and in the twilight of an enigmatic career that he remains one of the most unique talents to ever line up under center?

"I feel like I have a chance to go out and play freely and enjoy the game, enjoy this moment and be out there with my teammates," Vick said. "God has put this in front of me and it's up to me to handle it like a professional."

If Pittsburgh wants to keep pace in the AFC North while Roethlisberger's knee heals, Vick doesn't really have a choice. For perhaps the first time in his football life, however, Vick will work within an offense in which he is not the most gifted player.

The presence of All-Pro wide receiver Antonio Brown and All-Pro running back Le'Veon Bell means Vick won't be required to save the day as much as not ruin it.

To that end, Vick and offensive coordinator Todd Haley have been cramming to put together a game plan that allows Brown and Bell to do what they do without asking Vick to do something he can't.

"He is not just stepping in and doing what Ben did, so to speak," Haley said. "He is going to be doing what gives Mike Vick the best chance to help us succeed."

And that includes letting the big arm and the impossibly fast legs that turned Vick into a video game legend in his prime a decade ago do their thing. Haley kept Vick under wraps when Vick replaced Roethlisberger late in the third quarter against the Rams.

Trying to protect a six-point lead, Vick did little more than turn and give the ball to Bell or complete a series of short passes that were mostly extended hand-offs. He wasn't exactly perfect, fumbling once (recovered by Bell) and having his lone incompletion nearly turn into an interception. Maybe that's why he kind of shrugged his shoulders when the clock hit zero even as head coach Mike Tomlin raced over to congratulate him.

"All that was on my mind was how I can get better," Vick said.

Angels pass Astros in AL wild-card race

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — The shouts and cheers rose from the dining room and rolled down the hallway in the Los Angeles Angels' clubhouse when the Mariners squeezed the final out to beat Houston.

After a roller-coaster summer and a brilliant September, the Angels have finally caught up to the Astros in this crazy AL playoff race.

Albert Pujols had an RBI double among his three hits, Erick Aybar drove in three runs and the Angels took over the lead for the second wild-card spot with their seventh consecutive victory, 8-1 over the Oakland Athletics on Tuesday night.

A few minutes after matching their longest winning streak of the season, the Angels (83-74) moved a half-game ahead of the Astros (83-75) when Houston lost 6-4 at Seattle.

"It's a good feeling. We're in a good spot right now," said Johnny Giavotella, who had two hits and drove in a run. "We've got five games to play, and we're in control of our destiny. We're going out and playing the best baseball we can, and then we're on the top step with each other — every game, every pitch."

Mariners 6, Astros 4: Shawn O'Malley damaged Houston's playoff hopes with a two-run, bases-loaded single in the eighth inning that gave host Seattle a comeback victory.

The victory broke the Mariners' six-game losing streak.

Robinson Cano hit his 20th home run, a two-run shot in the sixth off Mike Fiers that tied the game at 4-all.

Rangers 7, Tigers 6: Cole Hamels won his sixth consecutive decision, overcoming a shaky start to strike out eight in six innings, and AL West-leading host Texas snapped a three-game skid.

Texas' lead in the division stretched to two games, with the Angels leapfrogging Houston for second place — the Astros are 2½ games back. Los Angeles starts a four-game series in Texas on Thursday to end the regular season.

Adrian Beltre had three hits and drove in two runs, including Shin-Soo Choo when they had consecutive doubles in the fourth to break a 6-all tie. Choo also had a two-run homer in the first.

Red Sox 10, Yankees 4: Michael Pineda was hit hard at the start, and New York's playoff push was delayed once

again by its longtime rival as visiting Boston got two homers and five RBIs from rookie catcher Blake Swihart.

Rick Porcello (9-14) recovered neatly from a rocky first inning, and the Red Sox won their season-best fifth straight game to pass the Orioles for third place in the AL East.

New York is running second in the division and was spared the possibility of the Blue Jays clinching the crown when they were rained out in Baltimore. Toronto will play a doubleheader Wednesday against the Orioles and needs only one win — or another Yankees loss — to wrap up its first AL East title in 22 years.

White Sox 4, Royals 2: Eric Hosmer and Kendrys Morales homered and Johnny Cueto threw six quality innings, but Kansas City lost to host Chicago.

The Royals, who have lost four of their last five, fell behind 3-0 after Adam Eaton drove a two-run homer into the bullpen in right field off Cueto (10-13) in the fifth inning.

Cueto lost for the third time in his four September outings and gave up three runs and eight hits over six innings. He struck out two and walked two.

Cubs 4, Reds 1: Miguel Montero doubled home a pair of runs during visiting Chicago's four-run first inning, and Dan Haren pitched into the eighth following a long rain delay.

The Cubs already have clinched a spot in the NL wild-card game for their first playoff berth since 2008. They trail Pittsburgh by three games for home-field advantage. The Pirates' game against first-place St. Louis was rained out on Tuesday.

The Reds lost their season-high 10th in a row, their longest slump since they dropped 11 straight in 1998.

Phillies 4, Mets 3: Darin Ruf hit a three-run homer, Odubel Herrera had four hits and Philadelphia snapped New York's franchise-record 11-game road winning streak.

Lucas Duda hit two homers for the NL East champion Mets, who hadn't lost away from home since Sept. 6, at Miami.

Duda hit a two-run shot off Ken Giles on an 0-2 pitch in the ninth before Giles retired Travis d'Arnaud for his 14th save in 18 chances.

Bartolo Colon (14-13) allowed three runs and eight hits in five innings for his first loss to the Phillies since Aug. 30, 2014. He beat them four times this season.

Braves 2, Nationals 1: A.J. Pierzynski hit two home runs and rookie Matt Wisler threw seven strong innings as host Atlanta beat Washington for just its fourth win in 17 tries against the Nats.

Wisler (7-8) picked up the victory, giving up one run while striking out four and walking two.

Rookie Aroldys Vizcaino recorded his eighth save in nine chances. With runners on first and second and no outs in the ninth, Ian Desmond bunted into a 2-5-4 double play. Vizcaino then struck out Matt den Dekker to end it.

Rays 4, Marlins 2: Asdrubal Cabrera hit a go-ahead two-run homer in the eighth inning, a one-out drive off Bryan Morris (5-4), to push host Tampa Bay to 12-6 in interleague play this season.

Adam Conley gave up two runs and five hits in six innings for the Marlins, who had a five-game winning streak end. Miami dropped to 0-8 in road games against American League teams this season.

Tampa Bay's Matt Moore, bidding to win consecutive starts, allowed one run and seven hits in seven innings.

Diamondbacks 4, Rockies 3 (11): Pinch-hitter Phil Gosselin singled in the winning run after Colorado reliever Brooks Brown walked the bases loaded in the 11th inning.

Gosselin knocked in Paul Goldschmidt from third base with one out after Brown (1-3), the eighth of nine pitchers for the visiting Rockies on the night, walked the three batters he faced in the inning. A.J. Pollock, Goldschmidt and David Peralta reached base after Brown threw 11 straight balls.

Christian Friedrich gave up the winning hit. Randall Delgado (7-4) pitched a scoreless top of the 11th.

Brewers 4, Padres 3: Jean Segura hit a go-ahead, two-run homer in the sixth inning to help Jorge Lopez win his major league debut with visiting Milwaukee.

Lopez (1-0) allowed three runs and eight hits in five innings, struck out seven and walked two. The 22-year-old's contract was selected a week earlier from Double-A Biloxi, where he went 12-5 with a 2.26 ERA in 24 starts.

The Brewers trailed 3-2 going into the sixth. Khris Davis singled to left and Segura hit a one-out homer off Tyson Ross (10-12) into the balcony on the third level of the Western Metal Supply Co. Building in the left-field corner.