

US warns of Russia's reach across Americas

McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Over dinner at the lush Getty Villa in Los Angeles, where curators have recreated a classical Roman home overlooking the Pacific, President Joe Biden had a rare opportunity to speak with leaders from across the Americas all together and in private.

He put his prepared remarks aside. The first thing he wanted to talk about was Russia.

“What Russia does in Ukraine has an impact on the entire world,” Biden told leaders sitting beside their spouses, free of staff or press.

On the surface, the effects of the war in the region have been subtle. But there are signs of rippling impacts underneath.

The fates of Russia's military contracts with Peru, Bolivia and Brazil have grown precarious, with the United States sanctioning Russia's defense industry and Moscow shoring up its assets as the war drags on.

Argentina has been forced to find alternative second doses of coronavirus vaccines now that Russia's Sputnik 2, once widely

adopted there, faces supply chain problems. A rush of Russian tourists that boosted Cuba's tourism industry in recent years has ground to a halt since international flights from Russia were restricted.

And a food crisis gripping nearly 60 million people across the region risks deepening as Russia targets Ukraine's food exports, spiking global prices.

Still, while at the Ninth Summit of the Americas, hosted by the U.S. last week, Biden's team faced repeated questions from regional presidents and prime ministers over why the U.S. is so focused on Russia's invasion of Ukraine and how long it thinks the war will last.

“What the president was talking about was how the invasion of Russia in Ukraine really impacts the world, impacts world order and impacts cooperation between countries,” a senior administration official said.

“It was the first time that the president was able to sit down with his regional counterparts at the summit without the cameras and the large backbench of staff in the room,” the official said. “He

went off-script.”

Ahead of the summit, Biden was briefed on an increase in Russian diplomatic engagement across the region since the war began on Feb. 24. Spanish-language channels of Russian state media outlets, RT and Sputnik, exploded with content on Latin American forums in the days after the invasion.

U.S. officials have closely monitored the effects of Russia's war on its influence across the hemisphere since then, watching Moscow's ability to maintain its commitments on economic assistance and military aid in Latin America.

The initial invasion sparked a frenzy of diplomatic activity, with senior Russian officials touring the region, heads of state from Latin America visiting Moscow and U.S. counterparts visiting Caracas for their first talks with Venezuela in years.

But since that time, the administration has come to believe that Russia's recent diplomatic activity is less about enhancing its presence in the region and more about maintaining it, an effort at damage control amid fallout from

the war.

“I would expect we're sharing levels of information, maybe even intel insights as to what Russia is up to globally,” said retired Navy Adm. Craig S. Faller, former head of the U.S. Southern Command. “It's got to be a global view, because it impacts everybody as we've seen time and time again — certainly with the Ukraine crisis.”

Countries that are ideologically aligned to Russia such as Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua are unlikely to pull away, said Ryan Berg, senior fellow in the Americas Program and head of the Future of Venezuela Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

“If supply chains are so snarled that nitrates for fertilizers from Russia are no longer a possibility, then of course, Brazil and Argentina are going to have to find different solutions,” Berg said. “Peru and Bolivia that have legacy Russian military equipment, and running contracts for spare parts, will similarly need to find workarounds, or move away from Russian supplies.”

Marine head: US ready to bolster defense in Japan

Associated Press

TOKYO — The head of the U.S. Marine Corps in the Pacific said Friday that his forces are committed to defending southwestern Japanese islands as the allies try to bolster their defenses amid growing threats from China and Russia.

Lt. Gen. Steven Rudder said at the beginning of talks with Japanese Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi that the U.S. Marine presence is focused on the so-called first island chain in the western Pacific — the string of islands stretching from Japan's East China Sea islands through the Philippines that has traditionally defined a boundary of China's

sphere of influence, which Beijing now appears to be pushing eastward.

“With our forces west of the international dateline, we will continue to live, train and work in the first island chain primarily with the assistance and support of our Japanese host,” Rudder said. The United States and Japan are looking to develop capabilities and tactics to ensure readiness in the region, he said.

His comments follow increased naval activity by China and Russia around Japan.

The Defense Ministry said it spotted a fleet of seven Russian warships Thursday off the southern coast of Chiba heading

southwest. The ministry also found several Chinese intelligence ships near the Tsugaru Strait in northern Japan, just days after they were seen in waters off southern Japan.

The III Marine Expeditionary Force is working closely with Japanese troops to advance their amphibious capabilities in defending remote islands in southwestern Japan, Kishi said.

After a decade of steady increases in military spending, Japan has pledged to further bolster its military readiness over the next five years and is working on a revision of its security strategy in the face of threats from China, North Korea and Russia.

Petition seeks release of officer facing jail

By ALEX WILSON
AND HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — A petition seeking the release of a U.S. Navy officer convicted of killing two people in a 2021 vehicular accident near Mount Fuji alleges he was mistreated by Japanese police and denied a fair trial.

The petition, started on Change.org by a family friend, claims police interrogated Lt. Ridge Alkonis, 34, several times per day for 26 days without legal counsel present and deprived him of sleep.

A spokesman for Alkonis' family, Jonathan Franks, also alleged Wednesday that Japanese authorities ignored the status of forces agreement, which allows the release to U.S. custody of service members accused of crimes in Japan. SO-

FA outlines the rights and responsibilities of individuals in Japan with the U.S. military.

"Lt. Alkonis' detention was in violation of SOFA, and the conduct of his interrogation was indefensible — so much so that interrogators didn't video tape it as required by Japanese law," Franks said in a text message to Stars and Stripes. Franks also alleged Alkonis was pressured into signing statements in Japanese that should have been translated into English.

Aspects of Alkonis' treatment, however, appear to be the norm in Japan. Suspects in criminal cases may be held up to 23 days without an opportunity to post a release bond until they're formally charged, according to information from the Japan Federation of Bar Asso-

ciations.

Police may question a suspect in a closed interrogation room for a long time over many sessions without an attorney present, according to the bar associations. Video or audio recordings are required only under specific circumstances.

Martin's petition also claims police kept Alkonis in a cell under bright lights that kept him from sleeping.

"Lt. Alkonis has not received a fair trial and has endured numerous injustices," according to the petition.

A spokesman at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo referred questions Tuesday to the Defense Department, the lead agency for cases involving American citizens covered by SOFA.

"The Department of State has no higher priority than the

safety and security of U.S. citizens overseas, including those arrested or detained," embassy spokesman Kurt Aufderheide said.

Alkonis is free on bail while the Tokyo High Court considers his appeal of a three-year prison sentence stemming from the deaths of a woman and her son-in-law when the Alkonis family car veered into a restaurant parking lot in Fujinomiya on May 29, 2021.

The petition, begun June 6 by Kristin Martin, a Navy spouse and friend of the Alkonises, alleges Alkonis was falsely convicted in October in the Shizuoka District Court. By Wednesday, 30,082 people had signed the petition, which calls on the U.S. government to do "whatever is necessary to return Alkonis to the U.S."

US sailors honored for crash rescue

By JUAN KING
Stars and Stripes

A pair of soldiers at Misawa Air Base, Japan, were recognized recently for rescuing a local motorist in danger of suffocating in April.

Petty Officer 1st Class Andre Griffith, 29, and Petty Officer 2nd Class Ryan Sorrem, 26, received letters of appreciation and recognition June 9 from the Hachinohe Fire Department for their actions on April 17.

The two sailors rescued a Japanese driver who had crashed into a light pole that day in Oirase Town, about 8 miles south of the air base in northeastern Japan.

Griffith, a Navy electronics technician originally from Sunrise, Fla., heard what sounded like an explosion from the second-story window of his house in town and saw a fireball near

his backyard, he told Stars and Stripes in a Facebook message Thursday. Griffith has since relocated to another duty station.

"My first thought was that whoever was in that car would need my help," Griffith said.

Sorrem, a gunner's mate from Wyoming, Minn., who works with the Naval security forces at the base, said he also heard the explosion as he grabbed a soda from a vending machine outside his off-base home, he told Stars and Stripes in an email Wednesday. The driver, who was not wearing a seat belt, was left unconscious after the impact, with a minor laceration to his head from hitting the windshield, Griffith said.

The driver's foot was still on the gas pedal, Sorrem said. They both saw the door was locked and the car was filling with black smoke.

"My immediate reaction was not so much on the fire, but from removing the individual from the car as the interior was filling with smoke and unknown fluids were leaking from the vehicle," Sorrem said.

The driver regained consciousness and unlocked the door, allowing Sorrem to cut the engine, Griffith said.

Not knowing the extent of the driver's injuries, the two sailors cautiously removed him from the vehicle, they said.

They immediately got him a safe distance from the car, administered first aid and stabilized him until the paramedics arrived.

He said he felt his training as a first responder helped him recognize the situation and act. "I feel honored that the local fire department thanked me," he said.

Navy warship bears name of fallen Marine

Associated Press

BATH, Maine — The christening of a Navy destroyer on Saturday highlighted the sacrifices of the ship's namesake killed in World War II.

The future USS Basilone bears the name of a Marine who was awarded the Medal of Honor before his death on Iwo Jima.

The legacy and sacrifice of such Marines are never forgotten, Sgt. Maj. of the Marine Corps Troy Black told a crowd of 2,000 gathered next to the warship at Navy shipbuilder Bath Iron Works in Maine. Gunner Sgt. John Basilone was awarded the Medal of Honor for heroism while defending Henderson Field against an assault by the Japanese during the Battle of Guadalcanal in 1942.

Trump stalwarts unconvinced by Jan. 6 witnesses

Associated Press

One by one, several of Donald Trump's former top advisers have told a special House committee investigating his role in the Jan. 6 insurrection that they didn't believe his lies about the 2020 election, and that the former president knew he lost to Joe Biden.

But instead of convincing Trump's most stalwart supporters, testimony from former attorney general Bill Barr and Trump's daughter Ivanka about the election and the attack on the U.S. Capitol is prompting many of them to simply reassert their views that the former president was correct in his false claim of victory.

Barr's testimony that Trump was repeatedly told there was no election fraud? He was paid off by a voting machine company, according to one false claim that went viral last week. Ivanka Trump saying she didn't believe Trump either? It's all part of Trump's grand plan to confuse his enemies and save America.

The claims again demonstrate how deeply rooted Trump's false narrative about the election has become.

"It's cognitive dissonance," said Jennifer Stromer-Galley, a Syracuse University professor who has studied how Trump used social media and advertising to mobilize his base. "If you believe what Trump says, and now Bill Barr and Trump's own daughter are saying these other things, it creates a crack, and people have to fill it."

For those who accept Trump's baseless claims, Barr's testimony was especially

jarring. In his interview with investigators, he detailed Trump's many absurd allegations about the 2020 election, calling them "bogus" and "idiotic."

Barr told the committee when he talked with Trump, "there was never an indication of interest in what the actual facts were."

Following his testimony, many Trump supporters using sites like Reddit, GETTR and Telegram blasted Barr as a turncoat and noted that he's disputed Trump's election claims before.

But many others began grasping for alternative explanations for this testimony.

"I'm still hoping Barr is playing a role," one poster said on a Telegram channel popular with Trump supporters.

Unlike Barr, Ivanka Trump has remained intensely popular with many Trump supporters and is seen by many as her father's potential successor. That may be why so many had to find an alternative explanation for why she told Congress she didn't accept her father's claims.

Some Trump supporters dismissed Ivanka Trump's testimony entirely by questioning whether any of it was real. That's another common refrain seen on far-right message boards. Many posters say they don't even believe the hearings are happening, but are a Hollywood production starring stand-ins for the former president's daughter and others.

"She looks different in a big way," one poster asked on Telegram. "CGI?"

US opens vaccine to infants and children

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The United States on Saturday opened COVID-19 vaccines to infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

The shots will become available this week, expanding the nation's vaccination campaign to children as young as 6 months.

Advisers to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended the vaccines for the littlest children, and the final signoff came hours later from Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the agency's director.

"We know millions of parents and caregivers are eager to get

their young children vaccinated, and with today's decision, they can," Walensky said in a statement.

The shots offer young children protection from hospitalization, death and possible long-term complications that are still not fully understood, the CDC's advisory panel said.

Roughly 18 million kids will be eligible, but it remains to be seen how many will ultimately get the vaccines. Less than a third of children ages 5 to 11 have done so since vaccination opened up to them last November.

Black Americans living abroad reflect on Juneteenth holiday

Associated Press

BANGKOK — As the United States marks only the second federally recognized Juneteenth, Black Americans living overseas have embraced the holiday as a day of reflection and an opportunity to educate people in their host countries on Black history.

President Joe Biden moved quickly last year to federally recognize the day Black Americans have been celebrating since the last enslaved people were told they were free in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865, two years after President Abraham Lincoln's 1863 Emancipation Proclamation.

In Liberia, Saqar Ahhah Aher-shu, 45, from Jersey City, N.J., is organizing the country's first "Journey Home Festival."

"Because this is part of that hidden African American history that still hasn't been completely unpacked," he said in Monrovia.

Liberia, Africa's oldest independent republic, was founded

by freed slaves repatriated to West Africa from the U.S. in 1822, exactly 200 years ago this year. This weekend's event will include a trip to Providence Island, where former slaves settled before moving into what is now mainland Monrovia.

Tashina Ferguson, a 26-year-old debate coach, was living in New York at the time of Eric Garner's death.

She moved to South Korea in 2019 and planned to celebrate Juneteenth on Sunday with a group of drag performers at a fundraising brunch for the Marsha P. Johnson Institute.

She has mixed feeling about the newest federal holiday.

"The commerciality of Juneteenth has become this like whole, 'Put it on a T-shirt, put it on ice cream tubs' type of thing," she said. "But as a Black person within the Black community I'm like, 'Yeah, let's celebrate us.'"

She said only a powerful change would make her consider returning to the U.S.

Groups brace for High Court gun ruling

Associated Press

With Congress closing in on a bipartisan gun-safety deal after last month's run of mass shootings, the Supreme Court soon will issue a ruling that could make it easier for people in at least a half-dozen states to legally carry loaded firearms in public.

It will be the first major Second Amendment decision from the court in more than a decade. And if the justices strike down New York's century-old restrictions on carrying concealed firearms, as appeared likely when the case was argued last fall, similar regulations in California, New Jersey, Maryland, Hawaii, and Massachusetts would be vulnerable.

Elected leaders in those liberal-leaning states and gun-control advocates throughout the country are bracing for a decision that extends the constitutional right to gun ownership beyond a person's home to gathering spots such as restaurants and shopping malls. And they fear that, depending on how broadly the court may rule, related restrictions, including state bans on high-powered, semiautomatic firearms, also could

be at risk.

"Recent events have underscored the importance of this case. How the court interprets the Second Amendment is far from an abstract exercise," said Eric Tirschwell of Everytown for Gun Safety, an advocacy group.

"If the court forces New York to allow more people to carry guns in public, the result will be more people shot and more people killed, and that's what the evidence and social science tells you."

New York's law requires a gun owner to obtain a license to carry a handgun. To get the license, they must demonstrate to local authorities a specific need for carrying the gun. Gun-rights advocates say citizens should not have to justify the need to exercise their constitutional right to bear arms. If New York's "proper cause" requirement is invalidated, the Second Amendment groups will be closely monitoring states with similar laws to ensure that officials take steps to loosen permitting rules.

"If they don't do that," said Matthew Larosiere, policy director for the Firearms

Policy Coalition. "We'll certainly be suing them."

Larosiere said he expects most jurisdictions will "see the writing on the wall and attempt to rewrite" policies to align with the ruling. "Perhaps there will be a state or two on the West Coast that doesn't want to do this and we will insist that they be dragged to court," he said. "That's something we'd rather avoid as it's better to have people's rights respected."

Democratic leaders are preparing to defend their laws, which they say are necessary to ensure public safety, particularly in more densely populated areas. What works for Wyoming doesn't necessarily work for a state like New Jersey, said the state's acting attorney general, Matthew Platkin, a Democrat.

"This case is critical and concerning. It's been a years' long effort to tie the hands of states that would like to pursue common sense, and in my opinion constitutional, gun safety measures," he said. "Any effort to tie our hands makes it harder for us to keep our residents safe."

Buttigieg: US may address airlines on people's behalf

Associated Press

The day after Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg met with airline leaders to quiz them about widespread flight disruptions, his own flight was canceled and he wound up driving from Washington to New York.

"That is happening to a lot of people, and that is exactly why we are paying close attention here to what can be done and how to make sure that the airlines are delivering," Buttigieg told Associated Press in an interview Saturday.

Buttigieg said he is pushing the airlines to stress-test their summer schedules to ensure they can operate all their planned flights with the employees they have, and to add customer-service workers. That could put pressure on airlines to make additional cuts in their summer schedules.

Buttigieg said his department

could take enforcement actions against airlines that fail to live up to consumer-protection standards. But first, he said, he wants to see whether there are major flight disruptions over the July Fourth holiday weekend and the rest of the summer.

Enforcement actions can result in fines, although they tend to be small. Air Canada agreed to pay a \$2 million fine last year over slow refunds.

During Thursday's virtual meeting, airline executives described steps they are taking to avoid a repeat of the Memorial Day weekend, when about 2,800 flights were canceled. "Now we're going to see how those steps measure up," Buttigieg said.

Shortages at the Federal Aviation Administration, part of Buttigieg's department, have contributed to flight delays in Florida.

Poll finds 52% of Germans favor US nuke presence

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — Russia's monthslong war in Ukraine appears to be swaying Germans' stance on storage of U.S. nuclear weapons after decades of staunch advocacy for removal of NATO's most powerful deterrent.

For the first time, a majority of respondents in a recent survey supported maintaining U.S. nuclear weapons in Germany, with some favoring the modernization and expansion of those munitions, German national and international news service Tagesschau reported earlier this month.

Panorama, a TV magazine of German public broadcaster ARD, surveyed 1,337 eligible voters from May 30 to June 1, asking what they would like to see done with the nuclear weapons still believed to be stored in

Germany's Eifel region.

In a 2019 NATO parliamentary assembly report, the alliance accidentally published the locations of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe, which included a site at Buechel Air Base. Although the report was later retracted, the location of the weapons had long been considered an open secret.

Just over half of poll respondents, 52%, expressed support for keeping the weapons in Germany. And of those, 40% said the status quo should remain, while 12% said the munitions should be modernized and augmented, according to the survey.

Meanwhile, 39% said the weapons should be withdrawn.

It's believed that about 20 U.S. nuclear warheads are stored at Buechel Air Base, about 43 miles from the U.S.-operated Spangdahlem Air Base.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Restaurant created by KFC founder for sale

KY SHELBYVILLE — A restaurant created by KFC founder Harland Sanders for his wife decades ago is for sale.

Claudia Sanders Dinner House in Shelbyville, Ky., hit the market, news outlets reported, citing a statement from the listing agents describing the nearly 25,000-square-foot restaurant and banquet hall.

The sale of the 3-acre property is being handled by Six Degrees Real Estate and includes the trademark and likeness of the Claudia Sanders name as well as memorabilia from the Sanders family. Also included is a 5,000-square-foot residence where Harland and Claudia Sanders lived for more than 20 years.

The Claudia Sanders Dinner House opened in 1959 and also served as the first KFC headquarters, but was sold to a local couple years ago.

Metallic balloon cuts power to 6K customers

CA SANTA CRUZ — Crews were working to restore electricity to more than 6,000 customers in Santa Cruz after a metallic balloon became tangled in power equipment.

Mayra Tostado, a spokesperson with Pacific Gas & Electric, told the Santa Cruz Sentinel that crews were working diligently to turn the lights back on.

Tostado said in an email that PG&E was seeing an increase in outages caused by metallic balloons on the Central California Coast. Balloons are popular for

graduations but should be tied securely.

Burmese python hunt to begin in August

FL MIAMI — Flanked by a huge writhing snake, Gov. Ron DeSantis announced that the annual prize-winning hunt for invasive Burmese pythons in the Florida Everglades will begin Aug. 5.

People must register to participate and complete an online training course for the event, which typically draws hundreds from across the country. Last year's "Python Challenge" involved more than 600 people from 25 states, DeSantis said at a news conference in the Everglades.

Behind the Republican governor, it took three people to hold a live, 10-foot female python as a demonstration. The snakes have virtually no natural enemies in the Everglades and have decimated native populations of mammals, birds and other reptiles.

The hunt begins Aug. 5 at 8 a.m. and ends Aug. 14 at 5 p.m. Prizes include \$2,500 for the most pythons captured and \$1,500 for the longest snake.

Judges block pop-up beach parties in 2 towns

NJ POINT PLEASANT BEACH — Two Jersey Shore towns plan to have extra police on hand even though judges have blocked pop-up beach parties from happening there.

In separate rulings, judges in Monmouth and Ocean counties issued rulings prohibiting the parties from taking place without organizers first obtaining

permits.

That put an end to plans for large parties in Long Branch and Point Pleasant Beach that were widely promoted on social media. Fliers encouraged attendees to bring their own liquor and marijuana, and promised public boxing matches, among other things.

"We believe we have headed off this insanity as much as possible," Point Pleasant Beach Mayor Paul Kanitra said.

Nonetheless, police in his town and in Long Branch will be out in heightened numbers to deal with whatever might occur.

House-flipper pleads guilty in defraud case

MN MINNEAPOLIS — A woman who ran a house-flipping business in the Minneapolis area has pleaded guilty to defrauding real estate investors out of more than \$3 million.

Suzanne Griffiths, 46, is charged with one count of wire fraud and one count of money laundering. Authorities said she frequently made material misrepresentations about the status of real estate projects, failed to take promised action, falsified documents and misappropriated investments for her own use.

Griffiths, who now resides in Arizona, allegedly recruited investors at seminars of a national real estate investment coaching program.

In one case, prosecutors said, Griffiths solicited a \$100,000 investment from an investor to finance the renovation of a property. She assured the investor that the necessary mortgage documents had been filed with

the appropriate county. The documents were never filed and the victim lost their entire investment.

12K marijuana plants, 3K pounds of pot seized

OR EAGLE POINT — More than 12,000 marijuana plants in 32 greenhouses were seized from a marijuana grow site in southern Oregon, according to the Jackson County Sheriff's Office.

A search warrant was served by Illegal Marijuana Enforcement Team detectives along with Jackson County Sheriff's Office deputies at a rural property in Eagle Point, officials said in a statement.

The property contained the cannabis plants and 3,000 pounds of processed marijuana, sheriff's officials said.

Seven workers at the site were detained, interviewed, and released, officials said.

Explosive device found at councilwoman home

CA SAN JOSE — Police were investigating after an explosive device was found at the home of San Jose City Council member Dev Davis.

Davis was home with her family in the Willow Glen neighborhood when a neighbor found a suspicious device near her house, the Bay Area News Group reported.

Her family and nearby neighbors were evacuated.

A bomb squad confirmed the device was explosive, police said, although they didn't immediately provide details.

No arrests had been made.
From Associated Press



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Avs rock Lightning 7-0 for 2-0 lead

Associated Press

DENVER — Cale Makar barely broke a smile after scoring his second goal and Colorado's seventh of the night.

He fist-bumped Mikko Rantanen to thank him for the pass and skated to the bench. He and the Avalanche are calm, confident and rolling. They're now two wins from dethroning the two-time defending champions.

Looking like by far the better team, Colorado overwhelmed the Tampa Bay Lightning 7-0 in Game 2 of the Stanley Cup Final on Saturday night to take a 2-0 lead in the best-of-seven series.

Coach Jared Bednar called it "as close to perfect of a game as you can get from your players."

"I feel like we played to our identity to a 'T' tonight," Makar said. "We had some good goals and stuff like that. ... It was a little bit of a weird one tonight. Obviously, we're getting opportunities but guys were able to capitalize, so that's the good part."

Valeri Nichushkin scored his seventh and eighth goals of the playoffs and continued to be the best player on the ice in the final, Game 1 overtime hero Andre Burakovsky beat Andrei Vasilevskiy again and even defensive defenseman Josh Manson and 35-year-old grinder Darren Helm got in on the fun with a goal apiece. Makar, who didn't even have a shot on goal in Game 1, scored twice in the third period, inciting chants of "We want the Cup!" from a fired up crowd.

"They're playing at an elite level right now — give them credit. We are not," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said. "They're two good teams. They're just playing a much higher level right now than we are."

Rarely have the Lightning been completely outclassed during this run of post-

season success, but they also hadn't faced an opponent like the Avalanche, who forced them into one uncharacteristic mistake after another. Colorado was dominant in every facet of the game to move two victories away from its first title since 2001 and the first by this core led by Nathan MacKinnon.

The Avalanche go to Tampa for Game 3 on Monday night up in the series despite no goals in the series from MacKinnon, who at times has played like a man possessed in an effort to finally break through and hoist the Cup. They still became just the third team in NHL history to score three-plus goals in the first period of Games 1 and 2 in the final.

"We played a pretty good game," Helm said. "We just played a full 60-minute game."

The dominant performance started by pouncing on an early mistake by typically reliable Tampa Bay defenseman Erik Cernak when he bobbled the puck at the blue line on one of the game's first shifts. It was all Colorado after that.

Their aggressive forecheck led them to draw a penalty on veteran Ryan McDonagh and a score on the ensuing power play when Burakovsky fed Nichushkin for his first of the night. It wasn't his last, and the Avs poured it on with six of the game's first seven shots and complete territorial domination with much of the game played in the Lightning's end.

With Vasilevskiy — whose play was the key to Tampa Bay's incredible ability to bounce back after a loss in the playoffs — looking shaky and even dropping his head after letting Makar beat him clean on one of many 2-on-1 rushes, Colorado made the most of all their offensive zone time. The highest-scoring team this postseason put on

a clinic against the team that has played more hockey than anyone else over the past two years. That may finally be taking its toll, and it's exacerbated by the blazing speed with which the Avalanche play. They again not only outskated the Lightning but used quick feet to force errors that turned into goals.

"We came out with a purpose," said forward Andrew Cogliano, who returned after missing Game 1 with a right finger injury. "We got to our game, we skated from the drop of the puck and we just didn't let up."

Tampa Bay fell to 18-2 after a loss since the start of the first round in 2020. The streak of 18 in a row ended in the Eastern Conference final against the New York Rangers when the Lightning fell behind 2-0 before roaring back, though it's hard to see Colorado falling into the same trap.

The way Tampa Bay lost this one — by far its biggest blowout loss during this run — came as a surprise to just about everyone.

"Am I shocked that we lost 7-0?" Lightning captain Steven Stamkos said. "I mean, I don't think we saw that coming."

Even if players brush off the concept of momentum from game to game during a playoff series, their romp over the champs combined with a 7-0 road record should fill Colorado with confidence. But they might again need to dip into their pool of depth because of injuries.

After getting Andrew Cogliano back from missing the season opener with a right finger injury, the Avalanche lost Burakovsky again in the second period. Burakovsky blocked a shot in the first game in the West final and has been playing through pain since. Bednar said his winger would likely be reevaluated ahead of Game 2.

From thin air to thin ice: Lightning fall into 2-0 hole

Associated Press

DENVER — This loss wasn't as easy for the Tampa Bay Lightning to shrug off.

What emerged from the reigning two-time Stanley Cup champs Saturday night wasn't their clutch pedigree or vaunted ability to bounce back after a loss but frayed nerves and maybe a realization the Colorado Avalanche are coming swiftly for their crown.

Out-muscled. Out-hustled. Out-tussled.

Andrei Vasilevskiy and the rest of the Lightning were thumped 7-0 by the Avalanche, losing their cool and their mojo along

with the game to fall behind two games to nothing in the best-of-seven series.

This marked just the second time in Vasilevskiy's 465-game NHL career that he allowed that many goals in a game, but his teammates said it was absurd to pin this loss on him.

"We left him out to dry tonight" said Tampa Bay's captain, Steven Stamkos. "He's been our backbone for years and years and years and we owe it to him to have a better game next game. And, I mean, it could have been worse. He made some unbelievable saves. So

by no means is this on him tonight. We got to be better as a group."

Lightning coach Jon Cooper said he never considered pulling his star goaltender even as the score grew more ridiculous.

"He's the best goalie in the world," Cooper retorted. "And we win together, we lose together."

Besides, Cooper said, even if he had contemplated replacing Vasilevskiy in net with backup Brian Elliott, "I don't think he would have come out. That's the kind of competitor he is. That's why he's the best."

Zalatoris, Fitzpatrick share lead in US Open

Associated Press

BROOKLINE, Mass. — Eight players spent time atop the leaderboard, all of them getting kicked around — some worse than others — on a U.S. Open course that felt every bit like the toughest test in golf on a cool, windy afternoon at The Country Club.

Saturday was a classic U.S. Open, all about survival, a highlight reel of golf carnage.

Will Zalatoris and Matt Fitzpatrick kept the damage to a bare minimum, giving them another crack at a major championship that is 18 holes away and feels so much longer.

Zalatoris, who lost in a playoff at the PGA Championship last month at Southern Hills, made only one bogey — a staggering feat on a beast of a Brookline course — for a 3-under 67.

“Felt like I shot a 61,” Zalatoris said. “Whenever I made a mistake, I was able to get away with it or pull off something miraculous.”

Fitzpatrick played in the final group at the PGA Championship. Now the 27-year-old from England is on familiar turf at The Country Club, where he won the U.S. Amateur in 2013. He was equally steady and ran off three birdies over his last five holes for a 68.

Most telling: They didn’t make any double bogeys.

That’s what knocked defending U.S. Open champion Jon Rahm out of the lead on the final hole. The Spaniard thought he had seen it all — including a shot he played backhanded from the base of a tree on the eighth hole — until he took three swipes from sand in two bunkers.

Rahm’s first shot from a fairway bunker hit the lip and nearly rolled into his footprint. His next shot found a plugged lie in a green-side bunker, and two putts later he had a 71 and went from one ahead to one behind.

Rahm wasn’t upset with his swing on the final hole. If anything, he said it was getting dark and he didn’t notice his ball sitting down in the sand. The USGA sent the last group off at 3:45 p.m. to maximize television exposure. And maybe he tried to take on too much.

Either way, he was in no mood to look anywhere but ahead.

“I have 18 holes, and I’m only one shot

back,” he said. “That’s the important thing.”

Zalatoris and Fitzpatrick were at 4-under 206, the same score of the 54-hole lead when the U.S. Open was last at The Country Club in 1988.

It’s not like Rahm had full rights to the lead. This Saturday at Brookline was so wild that Rahm was the last of eight players who had at least a share of the lead at some point. Three of them didn’t even finish among the top 10, including two-time major champion Collin Morikawa.

Morikawa, who shared the 36-hole lead with Joel Dahmen, had double bogeys on the seventh and 13th holes, and might have had a third after a chunked wedge on No. 4 except that he made a 25-foot putt for bogey. He finished with a 77.

Masters champion Scottie Scheffler was not immune. The world’s No. 1 player looked to be pulling away when he holed a wedge from some 80 yards for eagle on the par-5 eighth.

He was at 6 under and cruising until his wedge to a back pin on the 141-yard 11th hole bounced hard over the green and into deep rough. He took two to the green and two putts later was no longer leading. And it only got worse as three straight bogeys followed and he shot 71 to end up two strokes behind

“After that,” he said of his double bogey, “I didn’t really play that bad. I just made three bogeys in a row. I didn’t do anything that bad. It’s just U.S. Open. Things happen like that, and they happen quickly.”

Seven of the top 12 players going into Saturday made at least one double bogey.

Rory McIlroy was not on that list. His was more of a slow bleed, mostly from a putter that wasn’t behaving. He made one birdie in his round of 73.

All that, and this U.S. Open was far from settled.

“It was one of the toughest days on a golf course I’ve had in a long time,” McIlroy said. “I just needed to grind it out, and I did on the back nine. To play that back nine at even par today was a really good effort, I thought. Just kept myself in the tournament. That’s all I was trying to do. Just keep hanging around.”

Twenty-three players were under par going into the third round. Only nine remain with 18 holes remaining, all of them separated by three shots.

Arkansas hands Stanford its worst ever CWS defeat

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Connor Noland allowed one run in 7 $\frac{2}{3}$ efficient innings, Chris Lanzilli hit a tiebreaking three-run homer and Arkansas beat No. 2 national seed Stanford 17-2 on Saturday in the most-lopsided College World Series game in 34 years.

The Razorbacks knocked out Pac-12 pitcher of the year Alex Williams in the fifth inning and went on to log their biggest margin of victory in 36 CWS games. It was the Cardinal’s biggest loss in 73 CWS games.

“I thought we played just a fantastic game,” Arkansas coach Dave Van Horn said. “Started on the mound with pitching. Outstanding. A lot of strikes. Defense behind him was outstanding as well. And offensively swung the bat extremely well up and down the lineup. Got production 1 through 9.”

The Razorbacks (44-19) will play Monday against Mississippi, a 5-1 winner over Auburn in the night game. Stanford (47-17) will face Auburn in an elimination game.

Arkansas scored 11 runs in the last three innings and finished with a season-high 21 hits, including Cayden Wallace’s 30th career homer in the ninth.

“That’s not what you want the country to see. We haven’t been that team,” Cardinal coach David Esquer said. “You can’t let (the players) worry about that or feel like that’s their defining moment of the season.”

Noland (8-5) surrendered a homer to Stanford leadoff man Brock Jones on his third pitch, but with the help of a defense that turned double plays to get him out of two jams, the Cardinal didn’t score again until Carter Graham greeted reliever Kole Ramage with a base hit in the eighth.

Mississippi 5, Auburn 1: Dylan DeLucia allowed one run and struck out 10 in 7 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings and the Rebels continued their post-season roll.

DeLucia mostly dominated a Tigers team that came in averaging just under 11 runs per game in the NCAA Tournament, allowing just four hits without a walk before giving way to Josh Mallitz.

“I thought Dylan was terrific, as he’s been not just down the stretch, but probably since we’ve injected him into the rotation,” Mississippi coach Mike Bianco said. “Against what we consider a really good Auburn offense, I thought he just mixed his pitches so well, fastballs in and out, a ton of sliders for strikes and then able to move the slider to get some punch-outs.”

Yankees push win streak to 9 games

Associated Press

TORONTO — Jameson Taillon and two relievers combined on a five-hitter, Aaron Hicks lined a three-run double and the New York Yankees extended their winning streak to nine by beating the Toronto Blue Jays 4-0 Saturday.

Taillon (8-1) allowed four hits and struck out eight in 5⅓ innings to win his eighth straight decision.

“It just seems like every day we show up, we expect to find a way to win that night,” Taillon said. “There’s a confidence within the group that we’re going to find a way to do it.”

Michael King worked two innings and Clay Holmes got the final four outs.

Holmes made his 29th consecutive scoreless relief appearance, breaking Mariano Rivera’s 1999 team record.

“He’s a guy that I grew up watching,” Holmes said of Rivera. “Just to be in the same category for this one little thing he’s done is pretty cool.”

Holmes has pitched 31⅓ consecutive scoreless innings, the longest active streak in the majors this season.

The Yankees threw their 11th shutout of the season and improved to a major league-best 49-16.

“Just another really good win by the guys doing it in a lot of different ways,” manager Aaron Boone said.

Boone said he believed Taillon deserves All-Star consideration for his strong start to 2022.

“You look up at the scoreboard or pick up a stat sheet or look at any number you want,” Boone said. “He’s been great.”

New York had an 11-game winning streak from April 22 to May 3. That run ended with a loss to left-hander Yusei Kikuchi in the finale of a three-game series in Toronto. Kikuchi was scheduled to start for the Blue Jays on Sunday.

Mets 3, Marlins 2: Taijuan Walker retired 18 in a row and pitched into the seventh inning, Francisco Lindor homered for the second straight game and host New York beat Miami.

The Mets have won three straight and five of six, earning their NL-best 44th victory and improving to a season-high 21 games over .500.

Walker (5-2) pitched one-run ball and struck out nine in 6⅓ innings.

Phillies 2, Nationals 1 (10): Pinch-hitter Rhys Hoskins singled home the go-ahead run in the 10th inning and visiting Philadel-

phia beat Washington for its 15th win in 17 games.

The Phillies are a season-high five games over .500 and 14-2 since firing former manager Joe Girardi on June 3.

The last-place Nationals lost on the day they retired the No. 11 of organizational stalwart Ryan Zimmerman.

Cubs 6, Braves 3: Willson Contreras had three hits and stole a base in his first game against younger brother William, helping host Chicago past Atlanta.

The Cubs won a day after ending their 10-game losing streak and also stopping the Braves’ 14-game winning string.

The Contreras brothers both started at catcher, marking the first time they shared a field.

Dodgers 7, Guardians 1: Freddie Freeman had three hits, Trea Turner homered and four Los Angeles pitchers limited visiting Cleveland to two hits in the win.

Julio Urias (4-6) pitched six strong innings to earn his first win since May 20, allowing an unearned run on two hits with six strikeouts and two walks.

Twins 11, Diamondbacks 1: Gary Sánchez hit a long two-run homer that capped a six-run third inning, Dylan Bundy threw eight effective innings and visiting Minnesota beat Arizona.

The Twins jumped ahead 6-0 with their big third inning, highlighted by a mammoth two-out, two-run homer from Sánchez that traveled 456 feet into the left-center seats and left his bat at over 107 mph. It was the two-time All-Star’s eighth homer of the season.

Angels 4, Mariners 2 (10); Angels 3, Mariners 0: Mike Trout hit his 51st career home run against Seattle, Jared Walsh added a pinch-hit two-run homer and visiting Los Angeles swept a doubleheader from the Mariners.

Trout hit his 20th homer of the season and his 32nd at T-Mobile Park with a solo shot off Tommy Milone (0-1) with two outs in the third inning.

White Sox 7, Astros 0: Johnny Cueto and Reynaldo López combined for a three-hitter and Luis Robert tied a career-high with four RBIs as visiting Chicago jumped on Justin Verlander early in a win over Houston.

Robert tied a season-best with three hits and José Abreu drove in two runs as the White Sox built a 7-0 lead after four innings to get their fourth win in five games.

Verlander (8-3) had a rare sub-par start. He allowed nine hits and seven runs — four

earned — in a season-low 3⅓ innings to snap a two-game winning streak.

Cardinals 11, Red Sox 2: Nolan Arenado hit a two-run homer over the Green Monster in the first inning and St. Louis broke it open with a six-run sixth in a win at Boston, where Neil Diamond made a rare appearance to sing “Sweet Caroline” — a staple song in the middle of the eighth at Fenway Park.

Nolan Gorman and Tyler O’Neill had solo shots for the Cardinals. Paul Goldschmidt and Tommy Edman each had a two-run single during the big inning.

Giants 7, Pirates 5: Brandon Crawford tied the game with an RBI single in the sixth and provided some breathing room with an RBI double in the ninth as visiting San Francisco rallied past Pittsburgh.

Wilmer Flores and Austin Slater homered for the Giants, who have won seven of eight and 13 of 19 to move 10 games over .500 (37-27) for the first time this season.

Alex Wood (5-5) surrendered a three-run homer to the Pirates’ Diego Castillo in the fourth but hung around long enough to win.

Rockies 5, Padres 4: Ryan McMahon’s third hit of the game was a tiebreaking solo homer in the bottom of the eighth inning, leading host Colorado over San Diego.

C.J. Cron and Charlie Blackmon also homered for the Rockies, who won their second straight after a seven-game home losing streak.

Manny Machado homered for the Padres, who lost their ninth in a row at Coors Field.

Rays 7, Orioles 6: Harold Ramirez hit a tiebreaking sacrifice fly in the top of the ninth inning, and visiting Tampa Bay snapped its four-game losing streak with a victory over Baltimore.

Francisco Mejía had a career-high four hits for the Rays and Yandy Díaz had three.

Brewers 7, Reds 3: Willy Adames and Hunter Renfroe homered for the second straight day, rookie Jason Alexander earn his first career win and host Milwaukee beat Cincinnati.

Tigers 14, Rangers 7: Eric Haase had three hits, including one of three Detroit homers, and the host Tigers snapped a six-game losing streak with a win over Texas.

Javy Baez and Robbie Grossman also homered and top prospect Riley Greene scored twice in his major league debut for Detroit.

Royals 2, Athletics 0: Brad Keller allowed one hit in seven crisp innings, helping visiting Kansas City get past Oakland for its third straight win.