

US braces for surge at southern border

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden predicted Tuesday that the U.S.-Mexico border would be “chaotic for a while” when pandemic-related restrictions end, as 550 active-duty troops began arriving and migrants weighed whether or when to cross.

The restrictions have been in place since 2020, and allowed U.S. officials to quickly return migrants over the border. When they end Thursday, the administration will begin denying asylum to migrants who show up at the U.S.-Mexico border without first applying online or seeking protection in a country they passed through.

The rule announced Wednesday is part of new measures meant to crack down on illegal border crossings while creating new legal pathways, including a plan to open 100 regional migration hubs across the Western Hemisphere, administration officials said. U.S. officials have detailed steps they’ve taken to prepare for what many are expecting to be a substantial increase in migrants

attempting to enter the U.S.

The COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions have allowed border officials to quickly return people — and they did so 2.8 million times since March 2020. But after the restrictions expire Thursday, migrants caught crossing illegally will not be allowed to return for five years. They can face criminal prosecution if they do.

The measure announced Wednesday is a key part of the U.S. strategy.

While stopping short of a total ban, it imposes severe limitations on asylum for those crossing illegally who didn’t first seek a legal pathway.

It includes room for exceptions and does not apply to children traveling alone. It was first announced in February and takes effect Thursday.

Biden said his administration was working to make the change orderly. “But it remains to be seen,” he told reporters. “It’s going to be chaotic for a while.”

U.S. officials are bracing for large num-

bers of migrants who may try to cross the border this week, possibly to circumvent the new rules. Others were waiting until after Title 42 goes away, thinking their chances might be better.

Once the change happens, migrants caught crossing illegally will not be allowed to return for five years, and they can face criminal prosecution if they do.

Roughly 24,000 law enforcement officers were stationed along the 1,951-mile border with Mexico. An additional 1,500 active-duty military troops are being sent to back up U.S. Customs and Border Protection but will not interact with migrants.

And 2,500 National Guard troops are already there, tasked to help out CBP.

Migrants are already arriving. About 100 people — mostly from Colombia — came across the border before dawn Tuesday and walked nearly two hours through remote, boulder-strewn mountains east of San Diego to a sandy plateau where Border Patrol agents watched over them.

Austin warns of GOP senator’s hold on nominations

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin is predicting vast ripple effects from a Republican senator’s hold on senior military nominations, including “profound confusion and disturbance” for service members and their families.

Austin outlined the increasing risks in a letter to Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., who unsuccessfully called for the unanimous confirmation of nearly 200 stalled military officer nominations in late April. The effort was again blocked by Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala., who has held up promotions for months over his opposition to new Pentagon policies providing access to abortion services.

“Long-term holds have a corrosive and cascading effect: they prevent our rising officers and their families from being able to predict promotion and rotation windows, which can increase the pressure to leave the military in favor of greater stability,” Austin wrote. “The more our normal promotion

processes are jolted, the more we risk the loss of the diverse warfighting and technical expertise that America needs to confront its 21st-century security challenges.”

The list of officers caught up in the blockade has grown to include 64 three- and four-star admirals and generals for positions such as the Army chief of staff, the chief of naval operations, the commandant and assistant commandant of the Marine Corps, commander of U.S. Northern Command, commander of U.S. Cyber Command and director of the National Security Agency.

The positions are due to rotate within the next 120 days, Austin wrote.

Another 80 three- and four-star positions are expected to come up for rotation in the next nine months, including the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the vice chief of staff of the Army and the vice chief of staff of the Air Force. The Defense Department anticipates sending about 650 general and flag officer nominees for Senate confirmation through the end of the year, Austin wrote.

The Senate typically approves military

promotions all at once by a unanimous consent vote but Tuberville’s obstruction would require the upper chamber to vote on each one by one, a process that would consume months of floor time.

“Ultimately, the breakdown of the normal flow of leadership across the department’s carefully cultivated promotion and transition system will breed uncertainty and confusion across the U.S. military,” Austin wrote.

The impact will be felt not just by the military’s most senior officers but also by rising one- and two-star general and flag officers, he wrote. Extended holds could delay promotion timelines for groups behind the current cadre of officers by one to two years, according to Austin. Tuberville’s hold also introduces a new layer of stress for families planning permanent change-of-station moves. Austin said those moves will need to be delayed or canceled if the senator refuses to lift his objection, and military children will not be able to move to new schools in time for the next school year.

Fort Hood officially renamed Fort Cavazos

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

FORT CAVAZOS, Texas — When Richard Cavazos visited a unit, he always asked to meet with the most junior members of the group, retired Lt. Col. James Tucker said of the Army general.

“He would always spend time with the lowest ranking soldier he could find,” said Tucker, who served under Cavazos. “He loved his soldiers.”

Tucker made his comments Tuesday at a ceremony to officially rename Fort Hood after Cavazos, a native Texan who once commanded the base where he developed Army training methods still used today.

“Gen. Cavazos has been described by many as a soldier’s soldier who earned admiration, loyalty and respect through his warrior ethos, through his selflessness, through his genuine empathy and through his unquestionable love for soldiers,”

Lt. Gen. Sean Bernabe, commander of III Corps and Fort Cavazos, said during his remarks at the ceremony outside III Corps headquarters at the base.

Fort Cavazos, which has a soldier and family population of about 53,000, is the fourth of nine Army posts scheduled to be renamed as the military works to redesignate bases that honor Confederate leaders from the Civil War. Fort Pickett, Va., Fort Rucker, Ala., and Fort Lee, Va., have already been renamed Fort Barfoot, Fort Novosel and Fort Gregg-Adams, respectively.

The next ceremonies scheduled are Fort Benning, Ga., on May 11, Fort Bragg, N.C., on June 2, and Fort Polk, La., on June 13. Fort Gordon, Ga., and Fort A.P. Hill, Va., are also to be renamed but dates have yet to be scheduled.

The service-wide effort is expected to cost more than \$62.5 million, according to a Defense

Department report.

Army Undersecretary Gabe Camarillo spoke Tuesday at Fort Cavazos and said the effort of renaming the nine bases, which was mandated by Congress, was done to shine a light on selected people while recognizing their impact on the Army.

“Today’s change is a fitting one because, in many ways, Gen. Cavazos embodied what has always been great about the Army, which continues to evolve and transform, and it’s always been enabled by the incredible talent of our soldiers,” he said.

During Tuesday’s ceremony, no one mentioned the former namesake of the post, John Bell Hood, who led a Texas unit during the Civil War. The Army established the 280,000-acre post outside of Killeen in central Texas in 1942 to train tank destroying units for combat in World War II. In time, it has been nicknamed “The Great

Place.”

“We’re focused right now on the future of Fort Cavazos, and what it means and what it represents,” Camarillo said.

Cavazos, who died in 2017 at age 88, began his 33-year Army career leading a platoon in the 65th Infantry Regiment, which was known as the “Borinqueneers” because it was comprised mainly of Puerto Rican soldiers. Cavazos was the first Hispanic man to reach the rank of four-star general. He was awarded the Silver Star and a Distinguished Service Cross for his service in the Korean War. He received a second Distinguished Service Cross during the Vietnam War.

After retiring in 1984, Cavazos worked for the Army to create the service’s Battle Command Training Program, which was later renamed to the Mission Command Training Program, retired Lt. Gen. Randolph House said in his remarks.

Cavoli: NATO plan will help to better defend territory

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. European Command’s Gen. Christopher Cavoli and other top NATO defense officials met Wednesday in Brussels to fine-tune new defense plans for Europe that are expected to transform how the alliance will defend itself for years to come.

The meeting came ahead of a summit this summer in Vilnius, Lithuania, where heads of state are expected to formally approve a strategy that NATO commanders have been hammering away at since the last summit in Madrid a year earlier. Tailored regional defense plans will strengthen and

update the ways allies deter and defend, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said at alliance headquarters Wednesday.

The defense plans will call for more troops at higher levels of ready-to-deploy forces who can mobilize on short notice, military officials said.

“This change will move us from an alliance that was optimized for out-of-area contingency operations to an alliance fit for the purpose of large-scale operations to defend every inch of the alliance’s territory,” Cavoli, who also serves as NATO supreme allied commander in Europe, said Wednesday. “This is necessitated by the new realities we face.”

US and Spain agree to add 2 Navy destroyers at Rota

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Spain agreed this week to allow two additional Navy destroyers to join those already forward-deployed to the country, an increase in firepower that U.S. commanders in Europe have long wanted.

Under the agreement, the number of guided-missile destroyers at Naval Station Rota would grow from four to six, the Spanish Defense Ministry said in a statement Monday.

One of the destroyers would deploy in 2024, and the other would arrive in Spain in “the coming years,” according to the statement. The agreement was

signed by Spanish Defense Minister Margarita Robles and U.S. Ambassador to Spain Julissa Reynoso.

The Navy has not announced which destroyers it will send.

“Spain and the United States thus reiterate their commitment to the Atlantic alliance in this new context of the war in Ukraine and the security environment in Europe, while sharing their concern for the situation in the Mediterranean and Africa,” the Spanish Defense Ministry said.

The agreement does not change the missions, types of forces or maximum force levels for civilian and U.S. military personnel at Rota.

Jury finds Trump liable for sexual abuse

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A jury found Donald Trump liable Tuesday for sexually abusing advice columnist E. Jean Carroll in 1996, awarding her \$5 million in a judgment that could haunt the former president as he campaigns to regain the White House.

The verdict was split: Jurors rejected Carroll's claim that she was raped, finding Trump responsible for a lesser degree of sexual abuse. The judgment adds to Trump's legal woes and offers vindication to Carroll, whose allegations had been mocked and dismissed by

Trump for years.

She nodded as the verdict was announced in a New York City federal courtroom only three hours after deliberations had begun, then hugged supporters and smiled through tears. As the courtroom cleared, Carroll could be heard laughing and crying.

Jurors also found Trump liable for defaming Carroll over her allegations. Trump did not attend the civil trial and was absent when the verdict was read.

Trump immediately lashed out on his social media site, claiming he does not know Carroll and referring to the verdict

as "a disgrace" and "a continuation of the greatest witch hunt of all time." He promised to appeal.

Trump's lawyer, Joseph Tacopina, shook hands with Carroll and hugged her lawyer, Roberta Kaplan, after the verdict was announced. Outside the courthouse, he told reporters the jury's rejection of the rape claim while finding Trump responsible for sexual abuse was "perplexing" and "strange."

"Part of me was obviously very happy that Donald Trump was not branded a rapist," he said.

He defended Trump's absence, citing the trial's "circus

atmosphere." He said having Trump there "would be more of a circus."

Tacopina added: "What more can you say other than, 'I didn't do it?'"

In a written statement, Kaplan said the verdict proved nobody is above the law, "not even the president of the United States."

Carroll, in her own statement, said she sued Trump to "clear my name and to get my life back. Today, the world finally knows the truth. This victory is not just for me, but for every woman who has suffered because she was not believed."

Rep. Santos arrested on federal criminal charges

Associated Press

CENTRAL ISLIP, N.Y. — U.S. Rep. George Santos, the New York Republican infamous for fabricating his life story, has been indicted on charges that he duped donors, stole from his campaign and lied to Congress about being a millionaire, all while cheating to collect unemployment benefits he didn't deserve, prosecutors said Wednesday.

The indictment was a reckoning for a web of fraud and deceit that prosecutors say overlapped with Santos' fantastical public image as a wealthy businessman — a fictional biography that began to unravel after he won election last fall.

Santos surrendered Wednesday and was taken to a federal courthouse on Long Island, where he was expected to make an initial court appearance on charges of wire fraud, money laundering, theft of public funds and making false statements to Congress.

Among the allegations, prosecutors say Santos induced supporters to donate to a company under the false pretense the mon-

ey would be used to support his campaign. Instead, they say, he used the money for personal expenses, including designer clothes and his credit card and car payments.

Santos is also accused of lying about his finances on congressional disclosure forms and applying for and receiving unemployment benefits while he was employed as regional director of an investment firm the government shut down in 2021 over allegations it was a Ponzi scheme.

U.S. Attorney Breon Peace said the indictment "seeks to hold Santos accountable for various alleged fraudulent schemes and brazen misrepresentations."

"Taken together, the allegations in the indictment charge Santos with relying on repeated dishonesty and deception to ascend to the halls of Congress and enrich himself," Peace said.

Many of Santos' fellow New York Republicans called on him to resign after his history of fabrications was revealed. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., was more circumspect, saying "I think in America, you're innocent till proven guilty."

Sergeant who shot protester sentenced to 25 years in jail

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — A U.S. Army sergeant plans to appeal his 25-year prison sentence for fatally shooting an armed man during a Black Lives Matter protest in Texas, and will cooperate with efforts by the state's Republican governor to issue a pardon, his attorney said Wednesday.

Daniel Perry, 36, was convicted of murder in April for killing 28-year-old Garrett Foster during the downtown Austin protest in July 2020.

"After three long years, we're finally getting justice for Garrett," the victim's mother, Sheila Foster, told the court after sentencing Wednesday.

"Mr. Perry, I pray to God that one day, he will get rid of all this hate that is in your heart," she said.

Perry attorney, Clinton Broden, said in a statement that his client would appeal. He called Perry's conviction the product of "political prosecution" and said the defense team would "fully cooperate in the pardon process."

Perry's conviction prompted

outrage from prominent conservatives, and Gov. Greg Abbott, citing Texas' Stand Your Ground laws, has said he would sign a pardon once a recommendation from the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles hits his desk.

The board — which is stacked with Abbott appointees — is reviewing Perry's case on the governor's orders, but it is unclear when it will reach a decision.

District Judge Clifford Brown delivered a statement during sentencing that didn't address the potential pardon directly. But he insisted Perry had a "fair and impartial trial" and that the jury's decision "deserves our honor and it deserves to be respected."

Travis County District Attorney Jose Garza said it was Abbott "who decided to insert politics in this case."

Garza said he's been in touch with the board and has been assured that prosecutors will be allowed to present a case against a pardon, and that it will include a presentation from Foster's family.

US busts Russian cyber operation in many nations

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department said Tuesday that it had disrupted a long-running Russian cyberespionage campaign that infected computer networks in dozens of countries, including in the United States, and resulted in the theft of sensitive information from governments.

Prosecutors linked the spying operation to a unit of Russia's Federal Security Service, or FSB, and accused the hackers of stealing documents from hundreds of computer systems belonging to governments of NATO members, an unidentified journalist for a U.S. news organization who reported on Russia and other select targets of interest to the Kremlin.

"For 20 years, the FSB has relied on the Snake malware to conduct cyberespionage against the United States and our allies — that ends today," Assistant Attorney General Matthew Olsen, the head of the Justice Department's National Security Division, said in a statement.

The specific targets were not named in court papers, but the Justice Department said the affected networks were in more than 50 countries. U.S. officials described the espionage campaign as "very consequential," saying the hackers had successfully exfiltrated sensitive documents from NATO countries.

Prosecutors said the hackers, employing malicious software known as Snake, routed

data stolen from foreign governments through compromised computers in the U.S. as a way to cover their tracks. They operated from what the Justice Department said was a known FSB facility in Ryazan, Russia. In a separate statement, CrowdStrike Intelligence, a private cybersecurity firm that has studied the threat, said the sectors targeted by the hacking included government organizations, defense-related organizations and companies developing cryptographic hardware. It said countries all over the world had been affected, including in Europe, Australia, part of Asia and North and South America.

U.S. officials said they'd been investigating Snake for about a decade and came to regard it as the most sophisticated malware implant relied on by the Russian government for espionage campaigns. They said Turla, the FSB unit believed responsible for the malware, had refined and revised it multiple times as a way to avoid being shut down.

The Justice Department, using a warrant this week from a federal judge in New York City, launched what it said was a high-tech operation using a specialized tool called Perseus that caused the malware to effectively self-destruct.

Federal officials said they were confident that, based on the impact of its operation this week, the FSB would not be able to reconstitute the malware implant.

Event will let hackers test limits of AI technology

Associated Press

No sooner did ChatGPT get unleashed than hackers started "jailbreaking" the artificial intelligence chatbot — trying to override its safeguards so it could blurt out something unhinged or obscene.

But now its maker, OpenAI, and other major AI providers such as Google and Microsoft, are coordinating with the Biden administration to let thousands of hackers take a shot at testing the limits of their technology. Some of the things they'll be looking to find: How can chatbots be manipulated to cause harm? Will they share the private information we confide in them to other users? And why do they assume a doctor is a man and a nurse is a woman?

"This is why we need thousands of people," said Rumman Chowdhury, lead coordinator of the mass hacking event planned for this summer's DEF CON hacker convention in Las Vegas that's expected to draw several thousand people. "We need a lot of people with a wide range of lived experiences, subject matter expertise and backgrounds hacking at these models and trying to find problems that can then be fixed."

The idea of a mass hack caught the attention of U.S. government officials in March at the South by Southwest festival in Austin, Texas, where Sven Cattell, founder of DEF CON's long-running AI Village, and Austin Carson, president of responsible AI nonprofit SeedAI, helped lead a workshop inviting community college students to hack an AI model.

Carson said those conversations eventually blossomed into a proposal to test AI language models following the guidelines of the White House's Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights — a set of principles to limit the impacts of algorithmic bias, give users control over their data and ensure that automated systems are used safely and transparently.

Chowdhury, now the co-founder of AI accountability nonprofit Humane Intelligence, said it's not just about finding flaws but about figuring out ways to fix them.

"This is a direct pipeline to give feedback to companies," she said. "It's not like we're just doing this hackathon and everybody's going home."

Discord forces members to change usernames, causing conflict, strife

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The social app Discord, a favorite of gamers, inadvertently stirred internal strife after announcing last week that it will force its millions of members to pick new usernames. Now the question is whether the change will escalate into all-out warfare that could include players threatening one another in order to seize control of popular names.

The issue may sound trivial compared to real-life concerns such as mass shootings and killer storms. But it's a big deal for people who rely on the mid-sized social network to recruit fellow gamers, swap virtual weap-

ons and organize strategy in multiplayer games. A Reddit thread on the change drew more than 4,000 comments, the vast majority of them angry or at least unhappy.

Discord, which says it has 150 million monthly active users, has no plans to reconsider the new policy, according to a spokesman.

Discord users have long been free to choose any name they wanted, even ones already in use. That was part of the company's goal of letting users represent themselves freely, according to a detailed May 3 blog post by Discord co-founder and chief technology officer Stanislav Vishnevskiy.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

2 workers at plant hurt after 1 falls into lye

MI GRAND RAPIDS — Two workers were being treated for chemical burns Friday after one fell into a vat at a Grand Rapids electroplating plant, authorities said.

The Grand Rapids Fire Department was sent on a hazardous materials call at Advance Plating & Finishing at about 1:20 p.m., Capt. Bill Smith said.

An employee had fallen into a container of sodium hydroxide, also known as lye, a caustic liquid, and sustained critical injuries, according to Smith. The second worker was hurt when he pulled the first one out.

When fire department crews arrived, the two were being showered off by co-workers, Smith said.

Ductwork collapses, injures 6 at resort pool

CO AURORA — Six people were hurt — two critically — when part of a heating and ventilation system collapsed at a resort pool in Colorado on Saturday, fire officials said.

There were 50 to 100 guests in the pool when the collapse occurred at about 9:50 a.m. at the Gaylord Rockies resort near Denver International Airport, Aurora Fire Rescue said.

Large metal ductwork and mechanical parts mounted on the ceiling crashed down upon the pool deck and into the water, covering nearly the entire area of the pool, agency spokeswoman Sherri-Jo Stowell said.

The victims suffered injuries that ranged from penetrating wounds and cuts to “injuries

consistent with being crushed,” she said.

Author of book on death charged with murder

UT SALT LAKE CITY — After her husband died last year, she wrote a children’s book on grief. Now she’s charged with his murder.

Kouri Richins was arrested on Monday in Utah and is accused in charging documents of poisoning her husband with a lethal dose of fentanyl at their home in Kamas, a small mountain town near Park City.

Prosecutors allege that Richins called authorities in the middle of the night in March 2022 to report that her husband, Eric Richins, was “cold to the touch.”

The mother of three told officers she had made her husband a mixed vodka drink to celebrate him selling a home and then went to soothe one of their children to sleep in their bedroom. She later returned and upon finding her husband unresponsive, called 911.

A medical examiner later found five times the lethal dosage of fentanyl in his system.

Arrest made in shooting that killed 1, injured 6

MS OCEAN SPRINGS — Police in Mississippi have arrested a suspect in a shooting that left one person dead and six others injured at a restaurant during a Cinco de Mayo party.

Ocean Springs police announced the arrest in a statement Saturday evening. Police Chief Mark Dunston declined to release the suspect’s name,

citing the ongoing investigation.

The suspect was charged with first-degree murder, though additional charges were possible, Ocean Springs Police Capt. Ryan LeMaire told The Sun Herald.

Police said 19-year-old Chase Harmon, of Pascagoula, was fatally shot. Six others were wounded.

Police shoot, wound 2 people after shots fired

WI MILWAUKEE — Police officers trying to disperse a large, late night crowd in Milwaukee shot and wounded two people who were shooting handguns.

The crowd “was engaged in reckless behavior” and it was during the dispersal attempts at about 11 p.m. Friday that several individuals started firing shots, the Milwaukee Police Department said.

An officer shot a 22-year-old Greenfield, Wis., man after he refused commands to drop a handgun, the department said in a news release.

A gun was recovered.

A 17-year-old Milwaukee male was shot several times about the same time by another officer. The officer came upon the teen firing shots and gave him several commands to stop, the department said.

Plant fire sends 5 workers to hospital

TX HOUSTON — Fire erupted at a petrochemical plant in the Houston area Friday, leaving five workers hospitalized and sending up a huge plume of smoke visible

for miles.

Emergency responders were called to help at about 3 p.m. at the Shell facility in Deer Park, a suburb east of Houston. The city of Deer Park said in an advisory that there was no shelter-in-place order for residents.

Harris County Sheriff Ed Gonzalez said five contracted employees were hospitalized for precautionary reasons, adding that they were not burned. He said they were taken to a hospital due to heat exhaustion and proximity to the fire.

2 inmates escape jail, undetected for hours

PA PHILADELPHIA — Authorities are searching for two inmates — one accused of killing four people — who were gone from a Philadelphia prison for nearly 19 hours before officials knew they were missing.

Ameen Hurst, 18, and Nasir Grant, 24, escaped from the Philadelphia Industrial Correctional Center around 8:30 p.m. Sunday by cutting a hole in a fence surrounding a recreation yard, the Philadelphia Department of Prisons said.

Headcounts conducted at 11 p.m. Sunday, 3 a.m. Monday, and 7 a.m. Monday reportedly showed that all prisoners were accounted for, said Philadelphia Prisons Department Commissioner Blanche Carney.

The facility became aware of the escaped inmates at about 3 p.m. Monday, Carney said.

“We have protocols in place and those protocols were not followed,” Carney said. “That yard should have been secured, and the fence not breached.”

— From wire reports



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Nuggets win, on brink of eliminating Suns

Associated Press

DENVER — Nikola Jokic had a triple-double after making up with Suns owner Mat Ishbia and Michael Porter Jr. sank five three-pointers to help the Denver Nuggets beat Phoenix 118-102 on Tuesday night for a 3-2 series lead.

Joker had 29 points, 13 rebounds and 12 assists for his 10th career playoff triple-double, breaking a tie with Wilt Chamberlain for most by a center.

“To be honest, I just like to win the game, so whatever it takes,” said Jokic, who was coming off a 53-point effort in Game 4.

Game 6 is Thursday night in Phoenix.

“If we play the way we did today,” Jokic said, “we’re going to have a chance” to close out the series and advance to the Western Conference Finals for the first time since 2020.

The Suns are confident they can shake this one off just like

they did in bouncing back from two losses in Denver last week.

“Yeah. I’ve been in here a couple of times now,” Phoenix star Devin Booker said. “I love it. Every game has its own character. Every game is its own movie, its own different preparation and everything to go with it. We’re going to watch over film, see how we can be better for Game 6.”

The home team has won every game in the series. If that holds true again, the winner-take-all clash will come Sunday in Denver, where the Nuggets own the NBA’s best home record at 40-7, including 6-0 in the playoffs.

Nuggets coach Michael Malone devised a five-point plan for the Nuggets to regain control of the series after losing two in Phoenix: patch up their transition defense, slow down Booker, get more from his bench, unleash MPJ and knock down open threes.

Check, check, check, check

and check.

Porter bounced back from a quiet night in Game 4 with 19 points on 5-for-8 shooting from long range. Denver outscored Phoenix 31-23 in fast-break points; Booker scored 28 points but missed 11 of 19 shots; Bruce Brown boosted the Nuggets’ bench with 25 points and the Nuggets sank 13 of 27 from long range.

Jamal Murray added 19 points for Denver, and Kevin Durant chipped in 26 points for Phoenix but also had an uncharacteristic five turnovers.

The chippiness of the series reached a new level in the final minute of the third quarter when Nuggets swingman Brown antagonized the Suns as they huddled up on the court and Durant gave Jokic a forearm shiver. A double technical was assessed on Durant and Brown.

“Just to see what they were drawing up,” Jokic said when asked why he and Brown were

spying on the Suns.

Durant called the dust-up “absolutely nothing, it wasn’t anything serious.”

Before the game, Jokic shared a warm embrace — and the basketball — with Ishbia 48 hours after their kerfuffle over a loose ball in Phoenix in Game 4 resulted in a technical foul and a \$25,000 fine for the Nuggets big man.

“I was hoping he was going to pay my fine,” Jokic cracked after the game.

“I think he’s just making light of a situation that was way overblown,” Malone said. “The NBA handled it the right way and I give their owner, Mat Ishbia, a lot of credit when he came out after the game and said, ‘Listen, I don’t want anyone to be suspended. Let’s let the players decide this on the court.’ So, kudos to him for that.

“But yeah, I think it just speaks to Nikola’s personality and him being a little bit of a smart (aleck).”

Embiid scores 33 points, 76ers top Celtics for 3-2 lead

Associated Press

BOSTON — Having silenced the TD Garden crowd and put the defending Eastern Conference champion Celtics on the brink of a second-round exit, 76ers players barely cracked a smile as they walked off the court.

“It’s not over. We have to get one more,” Joel Embiid said. “All of us. We have to show up.”

They’ll soon get that chance.

Embiid scored 33 points and Philadelphia easily took a 3-2 lead in the East semifinals, beating Boston 115-103 on Tuesday night.

The 76ers led by as many as 21 points in the fourth quarter as home fans booed the Celtics, and can close out the series and advance to the conference finals when they host Game 6 on Thursday night. Philadelphia hasn’t reached that stage of the playoffs since 2001.

“What we did tonight, it’s easier said than done. But we have to do it again,” Embiid said.

It was the third straight 30-point game in the series for the reigning MVP, who used his

full array of offensive weapons to pick apart the Celtics defense. He also had seven rebounds, four blocks and three three-pointers.

Tyrese Maxey added 30 points and six three-pointers. James Harden finished with 17 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds.

Coach Doc Rivers likened Harden’s play to that of a catcher in baseball calling the perfect game, putting his teammates in optimal position while also scoring big buckets in key moments.

Rivers said it helped his team endure each of Boston’s attempts to get back into the game.

“You just have to breathe through it and our guys did that,” Rivers said.

Jayson Tatum led Boston with 36 points, but was just 11 of 27 from the field. Jaylen Brown finished with 24 points. The Celtics went 12 of 38 from the three-point line.

“I think we just didn’t have it today,” Tatum said.

If there’s any solace for Boston, it’s that the Celtics survived this exact scenario last year in this round, overcoming a 3-2 deficit to de-

feat the Milwaukee Bucks.

“If you’re not willing to get dirty, if you’re not willing to pretty much bleed, if you’re not willing to break something ... then you shouldn’t be on that court,” Celtics guard Marcus Smart said. “Because that’s what it is. That’s what the playoffs are about.”

The previous two occasions the 76ers were in a second-round series that was tied 2-2, they were blown out in Game 5 — a 36-point loss to Toronto in 2019 and 35-point loss to Miami last season.

Not this time.

Philadelphia made a concerted effort to get the ball to Embiid in the post from the outset. He was able to knock down midrange jumpers, helping to open the floor for his teammates as Boston’s big men were pulled out of the paint.

Harden said the Sixers’ mindset heading back home with a chance to closeout the series is clear.

“Don’t think too much of it, just go out there and play our brand of basketball,” he said.

5-goal 2nd gives Hurricanes 3-1 lead

Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. — All the Carolina Hurricanes needed to push the New Jersey Devils to the brink of elimination was a five-minute span in the second period where everything went right and the puck just kept going in.

Jordan Martinook had a goal and two assists, and the Hurricanes scored five times in the middle period to beat the Devils 6-1 on Tuesday night for a 3-1 lead in the Eastern Conference semifinals.

The Hurricanes have outscored New Jersey 17-3 in their three wins. The five goals in the second period were the most the Devils have given up in a period this season.

“The game was decided in a five-minute span and the rest of the game was eh-hh,” Hurricanes coach Rod Brind’Amour said.

Martin Necas scored twice and Brett Pesce, Jesper Fast

and Brent Burns added goals as the Hurricanes routed the young Devils for the third time in four games. Frederik Andersen made 21 saves in a relatively easy game after giving up an early goal to Jack Hughes.

The Hurricanes, who edged the Devils for the Metropolitan Division title, can wrap up the best-of-seven series Thursday night in Raleigh, N.C.

“We did what we wanted to do,” said Carolina captain Jordan Staal, who had two assists. “It’s great to see everyone contributing and winning battles.”

Despite being down 2-1, New Jersey seemed to have the momentum coming into Game 4. It posted an 8-4 win Sunday and had things and the crowd going their way after Hughes’ early tip for his sixth goal of the post-season.

Things changed late in the opening period when Martinook set up Necas with a deft flip pass for a shot in close that

beat Vitek Vanecsek.

Everything went the Hurricanes’ way in the second period. They got a couple of friendly bounces off Devils sticks, and then poured it on as a timeout by New Jersey coach Lindy Ruff and later a goaltender change to first-round hero Akira Schmid didn’t change the luck.

“We had guys that just went rogue,” Ruff said. “It’s hard to explain how poorly we skated and handled the puck. You can’t let one goal deflate a team. We didn’t skate.”

Martinook, who didn’t score a point in the six-game first-round win over the Islanders, was at the center of things in the big second period, which featured the first four goals in a 5:20 span.

Necas put Carolina ahead at 7:26 when Devils defenseman Jonas Siegenthaler deflected a cross-ice pass by Pesce and it went to the Carolina forward

alone in front.

Martinook, who has nine points in this series, had a hand in the final two goals. He had the secondary assist on Burns’ first of the postseason at 12:46.

Martinook closed out the five-goal spree by beating Schmid on a break at 19:36.

“It’s good to contribute, but being up 3-1 and going home is the main thing,” Martinook said. “In Game 3, we hung him out to dry (Andersen) and tonight, we slowly took over the game.”

Vanecsek allowed five goals on 17 shots.

Hughes got the Devils on the board at 1:55, tipping Timo Meier’s shot between Andersen’s pads for his sixth goal. Necas tied at 17:40 in close.

The second period changed the series.

“It obviously took the wind out of our sails,” Devils defenseman Damon Severson said. “It’s not fun to fall back like that.”

Stars use outburst in second to rout Kraken, tie series

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Joe Pavelski, Max Domi and Miro Heiskanen refused to let the Dallas Stars have two straight dud performances.

“This team doesn’t have two bad games in a row,” Domi said. “We showed that tonight.”

Pavelski scored his sixth goal of the series as part of a four-goal second period for Dallas and the Stars routed the Seattle Kraken 6-3 on Tuesday night in Game 4 to even the Western Conference semifinal series.

After a pair of tight games in Dallas to open the series, Games 3 and 4 in Seattle were blowouts. The Kraken rolled to a 7-2 win in Game 3 and the Stars responded with their best performance of the series in a dominant Game 4 victory. Game 5 is Thursday night in Dallas.

“We weren’t ready to play in in Game 3,” said Heiskanen, who returned from a nasty facial cut on his left cheek that knocked him out of Game 3. “Tonight was whole different story and we had a real good effort at the beginning, got the goals, played well.”

Pavelski scored four goals in the series opener, added a fifth in Game 2 and gave the Stars a 4-0 lead midway through the second period of Game 4.

Pavelski’s goal came on a power play after Seattle and challenged for goaltender interference on Domi’s second goal of the playoffs that gave Dallas a 3-0 lead. The challenge failed and Pavelski made Seattle pay on the ensuing power play.

Seattle coach Dave Hakstol said he felt goalie Philipp Grubauer had been bumped twice by Jamie Benn and led to his deci-

sion to challenge.

“I have no idea what the hell goalie interference is anymore,” Seattle forward Jared McCann said. “I really don’t. I don’t think anybody does in this league.”

Pavelski’s goal was his 70th career playoff goal, tying him with Steve Yzerman for 19th place. The only active players with more playoff goals are Alex Ovechkin (72) and Sidney Crosby (71).

Benn scored late in the first period to give Dallas the early advantage, just his third goal in his past 23 playoff games, and defenseman Thomas Harley made it 2-0 early in the second period. Harley had one career goal in 40 regular-season games, but beat Grubauer high on the stick side.

Roope Hintz capped Dallas’ big second-period outburst with his sixth of the playoffs at 19:07 of

the period.

“We were better everywhere than we were the game before, and I think that was the goal,” Dallas coach Pete DeBoer said. “When we’re playing well, that’s what we look like. We’re not giving up much, we’re putting pressure on the other team. We fixed a lot of things.”

Seattle’s Jaden Schwartz scored late in the second period to cut it to 4-1 and added a second goal early in the third period. Adam Larsson scored with 4:11 remaining to pull Seattle to 5-3 after Dallas goalie Jake Oettinger had made several key saves earlier in the period.

Domi scored an empty-net goal with 2:21 left for the Stars.

“We didn’t get to our game until the third period. They had a higher desperation to start the game,” Schwartz said.

Astros' Valdez outpitches Angels' Ohtani

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Framber Valdez says he probably threw too hard and made too many mistakes early in his career when he got into mound matchups against a pitcher of Shohei Ohtani's caliber.

These days, the Houston Astros' ace rises to such challenges with poise and precision.

Valdez racked up 12 strikeouts in eight innings of three-hit ball and sent Ohtani to his first mound loss of the season in the Astros' 3-1 victory over the Los Angeles Angels on Tuesday night.

Ohtani (4-1) passed Babe Ruth in career mound strikeouts while giving up six hits in seven innings, but the two-way superstar allowed five straight Astros to reach base in a three-run fifth, highlighted by Martín Maldonado's two-run homer.

Ohtani finished with seven strikeouts, but he has yielded at least three runs in three consecutive starts for the first time in his major league career.

"(Valdez) is a great pitcher," Ohtani said through his inter-

preter. "I knew it was going to be a low-scoring game, and I felt like I had some at-bats that could help us score some runs, but obviously I failed on that. But he's a good pitcher."

Yordan Alvarez had an RBI single for the defending World Series champion Astros, who snapped their three-game losing streak.

Valdez (3-4) was back in ace form after a few up-and-down starts. He held Ohtani hitless at the plate, limited Mike Trout to one single and didn't issue a walk while finishing one strikeout shy of his career high, also established against Los Angeles last July.

Reds 7, Mets 6: Buck Showalter was ejected for the first time as New York's manager as the visiting Mets lost for the 12th time in 15 games.

Orioles 4, Rays 2: Adley Rutschman homered, Grayson Rodriguez pitched into the sixth inning and host Baltimore's bullpen was solid as it beat Tampa Bay to snap a three-game skid.

Yankees 10, Athletics 5:

Gleyber Torres homered for the second consecutive game and drove in three runs as host New York overcame three homers by Oakland rookie Jordan Diaz.

Dodgers 6, Brewers 2: Mookie Betts, Will Smith and Miguel Vargas homered as visiting Los Angeles withstood Noah Syndergaard's early exit to beat Milwaukee.

Cardinals 6, Cubs 4: Paul DeJong, Nolan Gorman and Lars Nootbaar homered, and visiting St. Louis beat Chicago for its third straight win.

Braves 9, Red Sox 3: Matt Olson crushed a two-run homer in a four-run first inning as host Atlanta overwhelmed Boston.

Rockies 10, Pirates 1: Jurickson Profar had his first multi-homer game in four years, Connor Seabold got his first major league win and visiting Colorado sent Pittsburgh to its eighth loss in nine games.

Guardians 2, Tigers 0: Shane Bieber struck out a season-high nine in six innings, Amed Rosario had an RBI triple among his four hits, and

host Cleveland beat Detroit.

Mariners 5, Rangers 0: George Kirby struck out nine in seven sharp innings, Tom Murphy hit his first homer in more than a year and host Seattle beat Texas.

Giants 4, Nationals 1: Casey Schmitt homered in his major league debut and host San Francisco beat Washington.

Marlins 6, Diamondbacks 2: Jorge Soler smashed two long homers and had five RBIs, Jesus Luzardo threw six effective innings and visiting Miami beat Arizona.

Padres 6, Twins 1: Visiting San Diego used savvy baserunning and three Minnesota errors to score twice in the seventh inning, giving Michael Wacha his first win in five starts.

Phillies 8, Blue Jays 4: Nick Castellanos went 3-for-4 with a homer and two RBIs as host Philadelphia beat Toronto.

White Sox 4, Royals 2: Andrew Vaughn's two-run homer in the sixth inning broke a 1-1 tie and lifted visiting Chicago past Kansas City.

Jags will play twice in London; Germany to host 2 games

Associated Press

Trevor Lawrence and the Jacksonville Jaguars will become the first NFL team to play two international games in the same season when they spend back-to-back weeks in London this year.

The Jaguars will "host" the Atlanta Falcons at Wembley Stadium on Oct. 1 and "visit" the Buffalo Bills at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium on Oct. 8. The Jaguars were set to play two designated home games in London in 2020 but the pandemic canceled those plans.

"Hosting the Falcons at Wembley Stadium will be awesome only to be followed by playing on the road against the Bills at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium,"

Lawrence said in a statement. "I'm pumped for the experience and know the support from Duval will be strong at both games."

The Jaguars have played nine games in London, including a 21-17 loss to the Denver Broncos last October in front of an NFL-record international crowd of 86,215 fans at Wembley Stadium. Under first-year coach Doug Pederson, who guided Philadelphia to a Super Bowl title in 2017, the Jaguars last year became the first team to win a playoff game after having the worst record the previous season.

The NFL also announced dates for three other international games.

The Tennessee Titans will "host" the Baltimore Ravens at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium on Oct. 15. It'll be the second trip to London for the Titans.

"It's exciting to witness and play a role in the NFL's rise in popularity across the globe," Ravens president Sashi Brown said. "This is an incredible opportunity to play in front of and connect with Ravens fans in the United Kingdom and throughout Europe."

NFL MVP Patrick Mahomes and the defending Super Bowl champion Kansas City Chiefs will "host" the Miami Dolphins in Germany at Eintracht Frankfurt Stadium on Nov. 5. The New England Patriots will "host" the Indianapolis Colts on Nov. 12,

also in Frankfurt.

"We are thrilled to be headed to Frankfurt this fall to play the Dolphins," Chiefs owner Clark Hunt said. "The Chiefs have a long history of helping to grow the game of football around the world, and we have been eagerly anticipating our chance to play in Germany."

The Patriots are 3-0 in international games while the Chiefs are 2-0.

"Germany has some of the most passionate sports fans in the world and has always been an international leader in enthusiasm for American football and the NFL," Patriots owner Robert Kraft said. "I'm thrilled to play a home game in this new market."